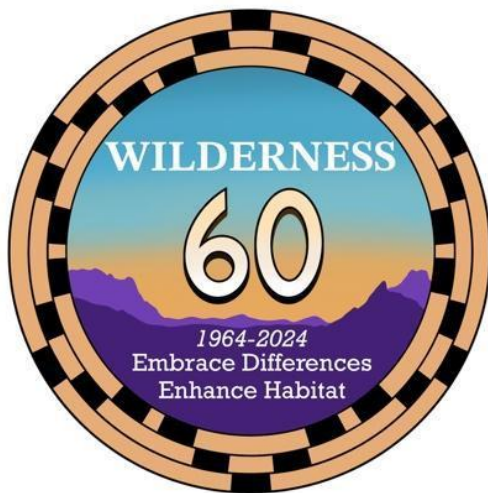


Celebrate the wild! The Wilderness Act Turns 60

*By Vicky Hoover, Sierra Club
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2024 has arrived and with it the 60th anniversary of the Wilderness Act that established America's National Wilderness Preservation System.

It is time to begin celebrating SIXTY YEARS of WILDERNESS PRESERVATION!



On September 3, 1964, when President Lyndon Johnson signed the Wilderness Act, he brought into being a brand new national wilderness system protecting 54 areas in 13 states—places that had already been administratively protected by the Forest Service. But because such administrative protection was temporary and haphazard, wildlands advocates saw that a national law was needed for enduring protection of wild, natural land from development.

Today, that wilderness system has grown to 806 areas in 44 states plus Puerto Rico—with stewardship by all four federal land agencies. There is plenty of reason to celebrate—and to work for even more.

Sierra Club Chapters around the country are encouraged to use public interest in a BIG round-number anniversary to promote wilderness and wildlife in a crisis era of species extinction.

During 2014, for the 50th, many Chapters conducted outings in honor of wilderness, held joint events with one or more federal wilderness-managing agencies or with in-state partner wilderness organizations, and wrote descriptions of trips to wilderness areas into their newsletters or on their websites. They got speakers to talk about the history of wilderness. They held photo contests or put up nature photo exhibits. The Santa Lucia Chapter celebrated the 50th anniversary at its annual fundraiser and received a plaque from the County Board of Supervisors commemorating the anniversary.

This year, in addition to local events throughout the nation, our nation's wild places will be celebrated as part of the 12th World Wilderness Congress, taking place in Rapid City, South

Dakota, on August 24 to 31, 2024. <https://wild.org/wild12/> At least one full day will have a special focus on North American Wilderness.

New awareness that preserving nature can combat both the climate crisis and the world's species extinction crisis gives us even more reason to fight to protect large swaths of natural land in our national 30 by 30 campaign. Let's start by celebrating what we have achieved! To join the Sierra Club's nationwide effort in YOUR chapter, contact Vicky Hoover, Wildlands Team Sixtieth co-coordinator, vicky.hoover@sierraclub.org.

A Wilderness Quote:

One of the fathers of the Wilderness Act, Senator Clinton Anderson of New Mexico (the state where the Forest Service designated its first administrative wilderness – the Gila – whose centennial we'll mark in 2024) wrote: *"wilderness is an anchor to windward. Knowing it is there, we can also know that we are still a rich nation, tending our resources as we should, not a people in despair searching every last nook and cranny of our land for a board of lumber, a barrel of oil, a blade of grass, or a tank of water."*