

NATIONAL PARK SYSTEM
PREPARATION OF WILDERNESS MAPS AND BOUNDARY DESCRIPTIONS

Acts of Congress designating wilderness generally state that, "... As soon as practicable after this Act takes effect, maps of the wilderness areas and description of their boundaries shall be filed with the Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs of the House of Representatives and the Committee of Energy and Natural Resources of the United States Senate, and such maps and descriptions shall have the same force and effect as if included in this Act: Provided, that correction of clerical and typographical errors in such maps and descriptions may be made...."

The boundary description and map will comprise the official documentation of the boundary location as passed by the Congress and enacted into law for each unit of the National Wilderness Preservation System. The written description will be a running boundary description following features identifiable on the accompanying map and on the ground, insofar as this is possible. Where such features are not available, the boundary may be described by metes and bounds. The boundary description will have a common point of beginning and ending. The wilderness boundary will be shown on a map based upon U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) topographic quadrangles and General Land Office (GLO) surveys whenever these are available. When such surveys are not available, other suitable maps may be used.

I. Wilderness boundary methods

Wilderness boundaries should be defined by using one or more of the following methods which are listed in descending order of desirability:

- A. Natural features which are locatable on the map and on the ground. Examples are:
 - 1. Streams
 - 2. Well-defined ridges
 - 3. Mountain peaks
 - 4. Shorelines of lakes

- B. Semi-permanent man-made features which are locatable on the map and on the ground. Examples are:
 - 1. Offsets from road centerlines
 - 2. Offsets from utility line centerlines
 - 3. Trails

- C. Previously surveyed or legally determined lines. Examples are:

1. Township and section lines
 2. Section subdivision lines
 3. Metes and bounds property lines
 4. National Park System unit boundaries
- D. Point to point -- A straight line from one locatable point to another.
- E. A series of bearings and distances between locatable points (metes and bounds).
- F. Countour lines
- G. Parallels of latitude, meridians or plane coordinate systems

II. Comments on specific applications

A. Parallel lines or setback lines:

Boundaries may be drawn parallel to linear features such as roads, trails and streams. The starting and ending points of setback parallel lines should be locatable on the map and on the ground. Example: "... along the thread of Klickitat Creek to a point at 4500 feet elevation which is 300 feet west of Mather Parkway, thence along a line parallel to and 300 feet west of Mather Parkway...."

B. Water boundaries:

The thread (centerline) of a stream or river, the bank or shoreline of a body of water, as well as setbacks from these lines, may be used.

C. Metes and bounds:

This method should be limited to boundary segments which are difficult or impossible to locate by more definite means. Each end of such a line should be a readily locatable point.

D. Countour lines:

When countour lines are used, the end points should be readily locatable. An example would be the point where a specific contour line crosses the thread of a stream.

E. Projected landlines:

Projected landlines such as projected section lines should be avoided since such projections may be inaccurate.

III. Wilderness boundaries proposed prior to legislative action:

Experience has shown that the description and on-the-ground identification of wilderness boundaries is greatly enhanced if the proposed boundaries referred to during the legislative process are shown on topographic maps in a reasonably precise way. While such boundary maps on a topographic base are not contained in the report sent to the Congress, copies of this type of map should be available in the park, Regional Office, Denver Service Center, and in the Washington Office. Without such maps, the precise location of the proposed wilderness boundary cannot be adequately explained during the legislative process. The availability of such maps also facilitates discussion of boundary adjustments which may be advocated during the legislative process. It is suggested that the proposed boundary be shown with black pencil lines and that notations be added to explain the intent of boundary locations. For example, a note would explain that a boundary is parallel to and 200 feet west of a certain road, or follows a 200 foot offset from a ridge, canyon rim or shoreline.