

# Wilderness Stewardship Plan: Campfires

National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior

Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks  
California



Campfires are currently restricted by elevation to help protect park resources. Campfires can result in significant loss of woody debris on the ground, which is important to the environment. They also lead to damage to trees, impacts on ecosystem components, and the permanent loss of paleo-resources (in this case, very old remnant dead wood, which preserves climate information). All of these changes affect the natural quality of wilderness. However, restricting campfires can also affect the primitive and unconfined recreation quality of wilderness. The five alternatives consider a variety of methods to balance both of these qualities.

*Desired Condition for Campfires* – Visitors would have the opportunity to enjoy campfires where campfires are compatible with the protection of vegetation and paleo- and downed-wood resources.

## Status Quo (Alternative 1)

Currently, recreational campfires are allowed in foothill and montane forest areas where adequate wood supplies exist – in 398,829 acres of the 837,806 acres of wilderness. They are allowed:

- in the San Joaquin and Kings river drainages up to 10,000 feet in elevation;
- in the Kaweah River drainage up to 9,000 feet;
- in the Kern River drainage up to 10,400 feet.

Additional site-specific prohibitions are in place in the Kings, Kaweah, Kern, and Tule river drainages.

## Alternatives – Recreational Campfires

<b>Alternative 2 (NPS Preferred): Emphasize Site-Specific Actions to Protect Wilderness</b>	<b>Alternative 3: Emphasize Opportunities for Primitive Recreation</b>	<b>Alternative 4: Emphasize Undeveloped and Noncommercial Recreation</b>	<b>Alternative 5: Emphasize Opportunities for Solitude</b>
Allowed up to 10,000 feet in the San Joaquin, Kern, and Kings river drainages, and up to 9,000 feet in the Kaweah and Tule river drainages.  In areas where available wood could be burned without unduly depleting ground fuels or consuming important resources, variances could be established.  Site-specific prohibitions at Hamilton Lakes, Mineral King Valley, Pinto Lake, Redwood Canyon, and in selected sequoia groves.	Allowed up to 9,000 feet wilderness-wide.  No variances would be established.  Site-specific prohibitions in the most popular areas (e.g., PCT/JMT, Rae Lakes Loop, HST, Mineral King Valley, and Rock Creek drainage) and in selected sequoia groves.	No campfires in wilderness.	Allowed up to 10,000 feet wilderness-wide.  No variances would be established.  Site-specific prohibitions in selected sequoia groves.
Allowed in 395,710 of the 837,806 acres of wilderness.	Allowed in 293,840 of the 837,806 acres of wilderness.	Allowed in 0 acres of wilderness.	Allowed in 425,276 of the 837,806 acres of wilderness.
Change: 3,119 fewer acres open to campfires.	Change: 104,989 fewer acres open to campfires.	Change: 398,829 fewer acres open to campfires.	Change: 26,447 more acres open to campfires.

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## Why restrict campfires in wilderness?

Restrictions on campfires protect old living trees and downed wood resources. Effects related to campfires are most notable on vegetation at higher elevations where firewood is scarce. Not enough wood grows there to replenish what gets used in fires; it is not a sustainable resource. In these areas, downed trees would remain as a paleo-resource, as well as providing water, nutrients, and potential habitat for seedlings. There would be less trampling of existing vegetation due to reduced searches for firewood. Of particular importance is the high-elevation habitat that supports the four slow-growing subalpine or upper-montane long-lived tree species: whitebark pine, foxtail pine, limber pine, and Sierra juniper.

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## Where can I find more information?

Campfires are addressed as Element 3 in each alternative in the WSP/DEIS. The effects from implementing campfire restrictions are in Chapter 3: Affected Environment: Vegetation and Visitor Use, and in Chapter 4: Environmental Consequences: Vegetation, Wilderness Character, and Visitor Use.

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## How can I submit comments?

The National Park Service uses a web-based system, called the *Planning, Environment, and Public Comment* (PEPC) system, to give people access to current plans and related documents that are open for review and comment. Go to <http://parkplanning.nps.gov/sekiwild> to find the WSP/DEIS and other documents and maps that will be helpful in your review.

We encourage you to use this system to submit your written comments on the plan. Written comments will also be accepted by mail or hand delivery, or by fax to:

Superintendent  
Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks  
Attn: WSP/DEIS  
47050 Generals Highway  
Three Rivers, CA 93271  
Fax: 559-565-4202

*. . . to secure for the American people of present and future generations  
the benefits of an enduring resource of wilderness.*

