

A4WDA Info #2 - What are Public Lands?



Let's begin with who owns what in Arizona. I am sure some of you know who owns and oversees public lands, but some of you may not.

What are public lands?

Bureau of Land Management (BLM) are federal lands administered under the US Department of the Interior. The BLM has five district offices in Arizona, Arizona State Office (Phoenix), Arizona Strip (St George Utah), Colorado River (Lake Havasu), Gila (Tucson), Phoenix – Hassayampa (Phoenix). Each of these district offices has field offices. More information can be found at: www.blm.gov/arizona.

National Forest Service (USFS) are federal lands administered by the US Department of Agriculture. There are six national forests in Arizona, Apache-Sitgreaves, Coconino, Coronado, Kaibab, Prescott and Tonto. Each of these has their own Motor Vehicle Use Map (MVUM) that shows open roads and trails in each forest. More information can be found on their website at: <https://www.fs.usda.gov/>.

National Parks (NPS) are created by Congress and managed by the National Parks Service, administered under the US Department of the Interior. National parks only have designated roads and trails, have the latest maps so you know where it is legal to drive. Recreational shooting is not allowed.

National Wildlife Refuges (NWR) are administered by the US Fish and Wildlife Service, created by President Roosevelt in 1903. There are eight refuges in Arizona, Bill Williams River (Parker), Buenos Aires (Sasabe), Cabeza Prieta (Ajo), Cibola (Mesa), Havasu (Needles, CA), Imperial (Yuma), Kofa (Yuma) and San Bernardino/Leslie Canyon (Douglas.). Refuges are for wildlife viewing, fishing, boating and hunting. Check with the Refuge you will be visiting for camping and fire regulations. Refuge regulations are not the same at all refuges.

National Conservation Areas (NCA) are designated by Congress, managed by the Bureau of Land Management to conserve significant natural and cultural resources. These areas have restrictions on activities such as mining and motorized vehicle use. There are three NCAs in Arizona: Gila Box Riparian NCA, Las Cienega NCA and San Pedro NCA.

National Monuments are protected areas designated by the president or congress to preserve significant natural, cultural and historical resources. They can be managed by the NPS, USFS, US Fish and Wildlife Service or BLM. Arizona has 18 monuments. Monuments can be very restrictive on usage.

Wilderness areas are managed by the NPS, USFS, US Fish and Wildlife Service, BLM. These areas are closed to motorized and mechanical recreation. They are federally owned, consist of at least 5,000 acres, human influence is substantially unnoticeable, provides opportunities for solitude and recreation, and must maintain primeval character without permanent human improvements or habitation.

Wild and scenic rivers were designated by the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act of 1968. These areas are also managed by many agencies: BLM, US Fish and Wildlife Service, National Park Service

Rules, regulations and Information can change at any time, refer to each agency's website for the latest information.

The AZ 4 Wheel Drive Association (A4WDA) has been around since 1976; we are a not for profit association that is funded entirely by our members and donations.

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