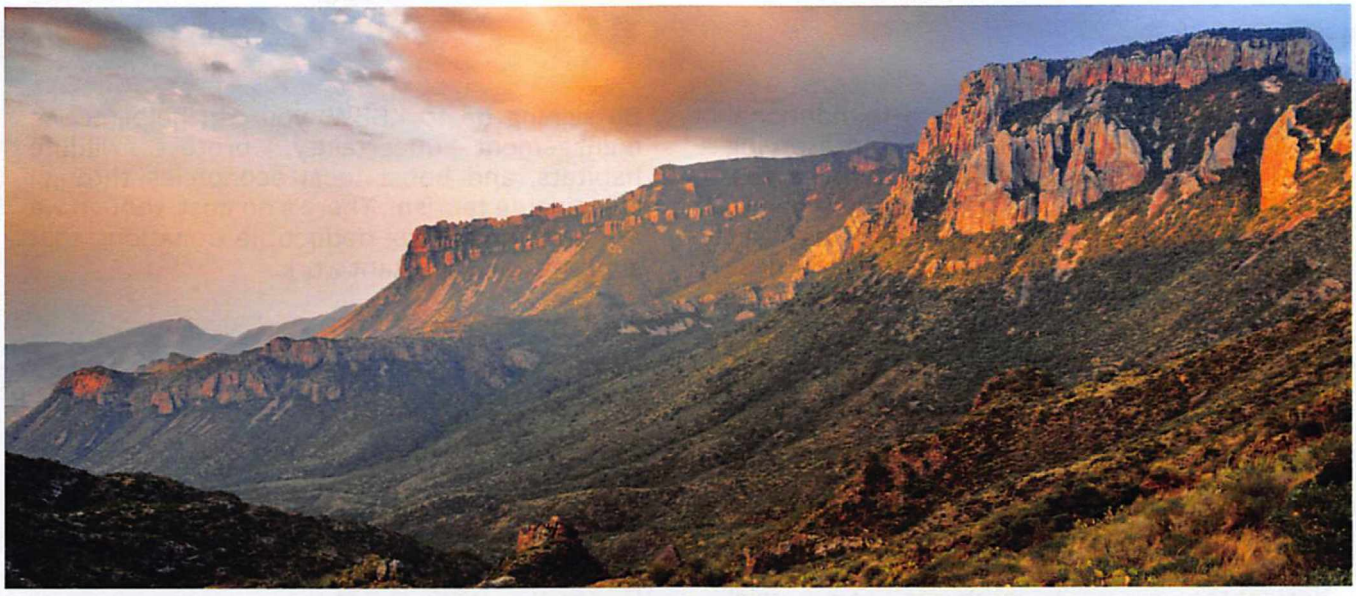


KEEP BIG BEND WILD

"Once our natural splendor is destroyed, it can never be recaptured. And once man can no longer walk with beauty or wonder at nature, his spirit will wither and his sustenance be wasted." - Lyndon B. Johnson

Our Mission

Wilderness has been designated at most large national parks, such as Yosemite, Olympic, Rocky Mountain, Death Valley, and Everglades. So, why not Big Bend? This question drives the efforts of many who love Big Bend National Park and seek to raise visibility for its preservation. The vision to designate Wilderness areas in Big Bend National Park has been around for over 40 years without resolution.

A grass-roots coalition, "Keep Big Bend Wild" (KBBW), has formed to advocate for this cause. KBBW aims to see action on a recommendation the National Park Service (NPS) made to Congress in 1978 to formally designate most of the undeveloped federal lands of Big Bend National Park—more than 80% of the park—as Wilderness. This designation would keep those undeveloped areas wild without impacting existing developments, private inholdings, or public uses.

Since 1978 the NPS has informally managed these areas as wilderness to limit development, but because this protection is not legally required and is highly vulnerable to political change, KBBW aims to secure consistent, long-term management and reduce future policy uncertainty.

All existing developments, including all paved and unpaved public roads and current uses, would continue in any proposal the group presents to Congress. None of the Chisos Basin development or the Rio Grande would be included in the Wilderness or affected by this proposal.

Congressional action would ensure consistent management into the future, regardless of changes in administration. The NPS has supported a legislative resolution since 1978. The legally protected rights, access, and religious freedoms of American Indians would not be affected by this designation, and the NPS and KBBW are seeking input from tribes to address any concerns.

Wilderness designation is often misunderstood, but Wilderness law and policy are pro-people and pro-recreation, encouraging people to experience nature without modern conveniences. Future development in the park, outside of existing roads and developed areas, would focus on trails and campsites, which are permitted in Wilderness.

What is Wilderness?

The Wilderness Act of 1964 is a foundational U.S. environmental law aimed at preserving the country's most pristine natural areas. Signed into law by President Lyndon B. Johnson on September 3, 1964, the act established the National Wilderness Preservation System, initially protecting 9.1 million acres of national forest lands.

This system has since expanded to include over 111 million acres across various federal lands managed by the National Park Service, the Forest Service, the Fish and Wildlife Service, and the Bureau of Land Management.

The Wilderness Act imposes protections on designated areas. It prohibits commercial enterprises, permanent roads, motor vehicles, motorized equipment, and new structures, with exceptions for fire management and safety emergencies. Commercial guide services, research, and other activities may be permitted provided they are appropriate and consistent with the preservation of the area's Wilderness purposes.

While the NPS has recommended lands within Big Bend National Park for Wilderness designation, only Congress can make it binding and permanent. Designated Wilderness lands within Big Bend National Park would continue to be managed for the benefit of the American people according to the laws applicable to the national park system, with the added protections provided by the Wilderness Act.

Join the Movement

Join the movement to protect one of Texas's most treasured landscapes by supporting Keep Big Bend Wild. This dedicated grass-roots coalition aims to fulfill a decades-old vision to designate much of Big Bend National Park as Wilderness, preserving its pristine beauty for future generations.

By advocating for the formal protection of these lands, we can ensure that the undeveloped areas remain wild and continue to provide opportunities for solitude, recreation, and connection with nature.

Your support is crucial in urging Congress to act on the National Park Service's 1978 recommendation, safeguarding these areas from future development threats.

By signing on to KBBW, you can help reduce management uncertainty, protect wildlife habitats, and boost local economies through sustainable tourism. There's no cost, though we are grateful for tax deductible donations that support this important work.

TAKE ACTION: Visit Keep Big Bend Wild's website at **keepbigbendwild.org** or scan the QR code and sign on as a supporter to help protect Big Bend National Park's undeveloped wilderness-quality lands and ensure they remain free from future development.

81%

of Big Bend's 801,000 acres are currently being managed as Wilderness

561k

Visitors at Big Bend National Park (2024)

$64m

Benefit to the regional economy (2024)