



## **Great Sand Dunes National Preserve**

**National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior  
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### **Superintendent's Compendium 2024**

**Of Designations, Closures, Permit Requirements and Other Restrictions Imposed Under Discretionary Authority.**

In accordance with regulations and the delegated authority provided in Title 36, Code of Federal Regulations, Chapter 1, Parts 1 through 7, authorized by Title 54, United States Code, subsection 100751, the following regulatory provisions are established for the proper management, protection, government and public use of the portions of Great Sand Dunes National Preserve under the jurisdiction of the National Park Service.

Unless otherwise stated, the regulatory provisions apply in addition to the Requirements contained in 36 CFR, Chapter 1.

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Recommended by: Zachary Parkes –Chief Ranger

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Date

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Approved by: Andrea Compton - Superintendent

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

### 36 CFR § 1.4 –DEFINITIONS

***Bear Pepper Spray*** – Also known as bear deterrent, bear repellent or bear spray. Bear pepper spray is a chemical formula designed specifically to deter aggressive or attacking bears. It must be registered with the Environmental Protection Agency and individual states. It must be commercially manufactured and labeled as “Bear Pepper Spray”. Bear spray must contain between 1% and 2% of the active ingredients capsaicin and related capsaicinoids.

***Krumholtz tree***- Type of stunted, deformed vegetation encountered in subarctic and subalpine tree line landscapes, shaped by continual exposure to fierce, freezing winds. Under these conditions, trees can only survive where they are sheltered by rock formations or snow cover.

***Noxious weeds*** - Those weeds, including any weed seed or propagative plant parts, designated by the Colorado Commissioner of Agriculture as noxious and which are prohibited pursuant to Title 35 Article 27.5-103.

***Weed free*** - Free from propagative plant parts or weed seed from plants identified in state and regional lists of weeds published by Colorado Department of Agriculture Weed Free Forage Crop Certification Act, Title 35 Article 27.5-103, CRS (1993 Supp.) Sections 1.01 and 1.02.

***Weed free certification*** - Those crops inspected and certified as free of noxious weeds by a Commissioner of Agriculture from either Colorado or those states identified in Title 35 Article 27.5-103 C.R.S. Section 1.02 Regional List.

### 36 CFR § 1.5 – CLOSURES AND PUBLIC USE LIMITS

**(a)(1) The following closures and public use limits are established for all or listed portions of the Preserve to all public use or to a specific use or activity for reasons of public health and safety, protection of environmental and scenic values, and protection of natural and cultural resources:**

#### **Closures**

##### **Unmanned Aircraft:**

Launching, landing, or operating an unmanned aircraft from or on lands and waters administered by the National Park Service within the boundaries of Great Sand Dunes National Preserve is prohibited except as approved in writing by the superintendent:

- The term “unmanned aircraft” means a device that is used or intended to be used for flight in the air without the possibility of direct human intervention from within or on the device, and the associated operational elements and components that are required for the pilot or system operator in command to operate or control the device (such as cameras, sensors, communication links). The term includes all types of devices that meet the definition (e.g., model airplanes, quadcopters, and drones) that are used for any purpose, including for recreation or commerce.

*Determination: Great Sand Dunes National Park and Preserve was created to provide extensive opportunities for educational activities, ecological research, and recreational activities; and are publicly used for hiking, camping, and fishing, and for wilderness value*

*(including solitude). This closure is to facilitate and maintain the public health and safety, protection of environmental and/or scenic values, protection of natural and cultural resources, and to avoid conflict among visitors use activities.*

#### Fire Closures:

- Any portion of the Preserve may be temporarily closed, due to wildfire and/or fire management activities, which pose a threat to visitor safety.

#### Public Use Closures:

Specific areas within the Preserve may be closed to visitors or both visitors and employees by posting appropriate signs when, in the opinion of the superintendent, there are conditions that warrant such a closure. These conditions may include, but are not limited to, extreme fire danger, fires, hazardous conditions, aviation operational needs or construction. This determination is made for both visitor and employee safety.

*Determination: The closure is to provide for visitor and employee safety and preclude interference with emergency and administrative operations by visitors.*

#### Hunting:

Hunting/Trapping is permitted within Great Sand Dunes National Preserve in accordance with 36 CFR 2.2.

Areas of Great Sand Dunes National Preserve that are closed to hunting will be posted on the hunting maps located at the Visitor Center or by special proclamation. Closed areas include:

- Within ½ mile east along the shared boundary between Great Sand Dunes National Park and Great Sand Dunes National Preserve starting at ½ mile north of the Point of No Return and continuing south to the southern boundary of the Preserve. (See page 15)
- Within 50 yards of any campsite on the Medano Pass Primitive Road.

*Determination: This prohibition is intended to prevent impacts of noise and potential safety issues in areas with high concentrations of visitors or where residents reside within the Park.*

#### **Public Use Limits**

##### Group size limits:

- The overnight group size limit for all Wilderness areas of the Preserve is 15 people. Additionally, groups with livestock may have a combination of up to 25 people and livestock, of which no more than 15 of the group can be people.

*Determination: Group size limits are set to minimize or prevent undue impacts to individual campsites and surrounding areas; to prevent campsites from growing to prevent increased social trails; to prevent intrusions on other visitors enjoying backcountry or campground experiences; to manage human waste accumulations in backcountry areas; and to protect water quality and wilderness values.*

- The total number of livestock allowed overnight in the Cold Creek Drainage is limited to six (6) head.

*Determination: The limit in Cold Creek is due to the confined space and limited forage.*

### Medano Pass Primitive Road

The Medano Pass Primitive Road may be closed to motor vehicle traffic under the following conditions:

- When stream crossings become hazardous due to weak ice or excessive runoff
- Snow accumulations make travel hazardous or may result in motorists traveling off-road in an attempt to bypass snowdrifts
- When muddy and wet conditions may result in road damage or motorists traveling off-road in an attempt to bypass muddy sections
- When the road washes out due to flooding or landslide
- When hazard trees have fallen across the road
- Sand conditions become too dry to allow travel without vehicle becoming stuck
- Other hazardous conditions as determined by Ranger staff

*Determination: During the late fall or early winter when stream crossings begin to ice over, an ice condition often results wherein the ice cannot support the full weight of a vehicle. During this time one or two wheels of the vehicle may break through causing the wheel or wheels to get stuck behind a ledge of ice from which it is impossible to get out without significant help. Closing the road at these times is intended to protect drivers who may get stuck at remote crossings during cold weather.*

*Snow accumulations can cause the road to become impassable, thereby presenting a safety hazard should motorists become stuck. Patrol resources are limited, and stuck motorists may not be discovered for days. Also, experience has shown that many motorists will attempt to drive off road around snowdrifts so this measure will prevent associated off-road travel impacts.*

*During spring snowmelt or warm periods, the road frequently becomes very muddy and snowmelt often runs down or across the roadway. During these periods' vehicle traffic can cause damage to the road in the form of rutting or by causing additional erosion due to increased runoff. This temporary closure is intended to minimize road damage. Also, during runoff, stream flows may reach a point where vehicles could be swept downstream when attempting to cross.*

*Due to past wildfires in the area, thunderstorms can cause flooding that creates debris flows that cover the road making it impassable due to rocks, dirt and trees. Fires have also created areas of dead standing trees. Winds from thunderstorms can cause these trees to fall across the road.*

### Motor and Non-motorized Vehicles:

The following roads are closed to the use of two-wheel and all-wheel drive vehicles:

- The Medano Pass Primitive Road between the *Point of No Return* and the Preserve boundaries.

*Determination: The Medano Pass Primitive Road traverses a section of creek crossings that results in even four- wheel drive vehicles becoming stuck. These crossings may be deep and have unsolid bottoms. Much of the road is also only one lane in width. When vehicles become stuck, traffic can be obstructed until the roadway is cleared. This restriction is intended to prevent two-wheel and all-wheel drive motorists from becoming stuck with the subsequent inconvenience to them and other motorists, as well as preventing them from incurring costly tow bills. This restriction may also prevent damage to private property that may occur while trying to free a stuck vehicle, and damage to natural resources as other motorists may travel off road to get around the stuck vehicle.*

All-terrain vehicles (ATVs), off highway vehicles (OHVs) and utility terrain vehicles (UTVs):

All-terrain vehicles (ATV) and utility terrain vehicles (UTVs) and any other type of motorized conveyance manufactured for recreational, non-highway, off-road or all-terrain travel, including those licensed by a state for street/highway use, within Preserve boundaries is prohibited. The prohibition includes any vehicles defined by Colorado revised statues 33-14.5-101.

***Determination:** The public use of all-terrain vehicles (ATVs) and utility terrain vehicles (UTVs) and other motorized conveyances manufactured for recreational, non-highway, off road, or all terrain travel within the Preserve boundaries poses a significant risk to visitor safety, Preserve resources and values which cannot be appropriately mitigated and which cannot be sustained without causing unacceptable impacts. The use of such vehicle is, therefore, not consistent with the protection of the Preserve.*

Animals or livestock that may be ridden

Horses, mules and burros are designated as authorized for riding within the National Preserve.

*Determination: The animals listed have historically and traditionally been ridden within the area now encompassed by the National Preserve. All other animals capable of being ridden have neither a traditional presence in the area nor have they been evaluated for the possibility of being a disease vector to wildlife.*

Curfew

Visitors seventeen years or younger must be accompanied by a parent or legal guardian after the hours of 11:00 p.m. within the boundaries of Great Sand Dunes National Preserve.

*Determination: The purpose of this public use limit is to maintain consistency with the surrounding communities' curfew times.*

**(a)(2) The following areas have been designated for a specific use or activity, under the conditions and/or restrictions as noted:**

## Wildlife

For Informational Purposes: **Bear Pepper Spray** as defined in Section 1.4 of this document may be carried by individuals within the Great Sand Dunes National Preserve for the strict purpose of protecting one's self or others from bodily harm against aggressive wildlife. It should not be applied to people, tents, packs, or other equipment or surrounding area as a repellent.

Willfully approaching within **50 yards of bear or elk, or within any distance that results in their disturbance or displacement**, is prohibited.

*Determination: Wild animals have behavior that is often unpredictable. Engaging in any activity which places a person in close proximity to wild animals places the person at risk for injury or death. Wildlife may interpret this human behavior as threatening or aggressive, which in turn jeopardizes the well-being of the animal. This restriction does not apply to inadvertent or casual encounters with wildlife in developed areas where foot traffic is normal and routine, e.g. sidewalks and established walkways, campground roads, etc. or in other areas where there is no reasonable alternative route.*

## **36 CFR § 1.6 – PERMITS**

**(f) The following is a compilation of those activities for which a permit from the superintendent is required:**

- § 2.1 Wood Sales/Collection
- § 2.5 Research Specimens
- § 2.12 Audio Disturbances
- § 2.17 Aircraft and Air Delivery
- § 2.37 Noncommercial Soliciting
- § 2.38 Explosives
- § 2.50 Special Events
- § 2.51 Public Assemblies, Meetings
- § 2.52 Sale or Distribution of Printed Matter
- § 2.60 Livestock Use and Agriculture
- § 2.61 Residing on Federal Lands
- § 2.62 Memorialization
- § 4.11 Load, Weight, and Size Limits
- § 5.1 Advertisements
- § 5.3 Business Operations
- § 5.5 Commercial Photography
- § 5.7 Construction of Buildings or Other Facilities

## **36 CFR § 2.1 - PRESERVATION OF NATURAL, CULTURAL, AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESOURCES**

**(a)(4) Dead wood on the ground that is less than four (4) inches in diameter may be collected for use as fuel for campfires within the Preserve in the following areas:**

- All areas within the Preserve at elevations below the lowest extent of the krumholtz tree zone.

*Determination: Adequate quantities of dead and down wood exist to provide fuel for campfires in these areas without causing significant negative resource impacts. Wood that is less than four inches in diameter can be easily sawn or broken into manageable pieces and help ensure that firewood is burned completely. This requirement also reduces smoldering and subsequent fire hazards associated with larger pieces.*

**(c)(1) The following fruits, berries, or nuts may be gathered by hand for personal use or consumption:**

- Edible nuts
- Edible mushrooms
- Edible berries

**(c)(2)(i) Quantities of designated fruits, berries, or nuts that may be gathered by one person during a calendar year is as follows:**

- Nuts – 1 gallon
- Berries – 1 quart each
- Mushrooms – 2 pounds

*Determination: Adequate quantities of the named fruits exist to allow for personal use in the designated quantities without causing undue competition with wildlife for their food needs.*

**36 CFR § 2.2 - WILDLIFE PROTECTION**

**(b)(1) Hunting is allowed in the Preserve.**

While registration is not required; registration is suggested and encouraged.

*Determination: Registration of hunters provides the Preserve with a mechanism by which the National Park Service can better monitor access areas, use and game transport through the National Park. In addition, it would provide Rangers a tracking system in the event of a search and rescue.*

**(d) The following areas are closed to the viewing of wildlife with the use of an artificial light:**

- All areas within the Preserve.

*Determination: This closure is intended to prevent frightening or disturbing wildlife engaged in their normal activities and maintain natural lighting conditions for wildlife to the extent possible. It is also intended to prevent using light as an aid in the unlawful taking of wildlife and to maintain natural darkness for the enjoyment of other visitors.*

**36 CFR § 2.10 - CAMPING**

**(a) The sites and areas listed below have been designated for camping. Conditions for camping and camping activities are in effect as noted:**

Designated Camping Areas

- Camping is allowed anywhere EXCEPT:
  - Within 200 feet of roads and trails, and 300 feet of lakes. (Camping within 200 feet of trails is allowed in campsites that were established by popular use prior to 11/22/00. These sites are identified by a Carsonite© stake with international campsite symbol affixed.)
  - All areas in krumholtz tree zones and above timberline. Timberline is defined as the limit of elevation above which trees do not grow.

*Determination: These requirements are intended to prevent unnecessary visual intrusion on other visitors, prevent cumulative impacts associated with heavy visitation patterns to shoreline areas of lakes, and to maintain consistency with regulations in place on neighboring U.S. Forest Service administered lands to the extent possible. Vegetation and soils in krumholtz tree zones and above are too fragile and easily damaged by foot traffic and other activities associated with camping.*

- Along Medano Pass Primitive Road camping is allowed only in designated site delineated by Carsonite© stakes.
  - All vehicles must fit within the delineated parking area.
  - All tents must be within 40' of, and within the view of the front of the bear proof food storage locker.

*Determination: These requirements are intended to prevent cumulative impacts associated with heavy visitation patterns on the Medano Pass Primitive Road. Vegetation and soils in the areas of the campsites are easily damaged by tents and other activities associated with camping.*

#### Cold Creek Drainage

- Camping in the Cold Creek Drainage with livestock is limited to a total of 6 head of livestock. To ensure this limit is not exceeded, parties with livestock must reserve spots. This is done through the Visitor Center and cannot be made prior to three months to the dates they wish to camp.

*Determination: The limit in Cold Creek is due to the confined space and limited forage. The reservation system ensures that groups do not exceed the livestock limit.*

#### **(d) Food Storage**

Except while being consumed or being prepared for consumption, food and lawfully taken fish, plus garbage, toiletries, and equipment used to cook or store food, must be kept sealed in a vehicle; in a camping unit that is constructed of solid, non-pliable material; suspended at least 10 feet above the ground and 4 feet horizontally from a post, tree trunk, or other object; or in provided bear-proof storage lockers; or in a hard-sided, commercially-made carry in/carry out bear-resistant food storage container approved by the Department of Interior and Agriculture's Interagency Grizzly Bear Committee: <http://igbconline.org/certified-products-list/>.

Ice chests/food coolers are not appropriate food storage devices.

Park Rangers may inspect all unattended items that have the appearance of being used for food storage, food preparation, or food waste.



*Determination: Incidents within Great Sand Dunes National Park and Preserve with black bears accessing food due to improper storage by campers and day-users have been reported from 2003-2017. Proper food storage will reduce the likelihood of the area being temporarily closed to public use, a negative encounter between the public and a bear, and/or a bear being removed through trapping or euthanasia.*

#### Annual Camping Limits:

The overnight stay limit within the Preserve for all persons, groups, and organizations is 14 consecutive days and 21 total days per calendar year. This limit does not apply to holders of Commercial Use Authorization (CUA) permits or their employees who are conducting business operations under the terms and conditions of the company's CUA, but it does apply to their clients. The total days is to reflect time within the National Park and National Preserve combined.

*Determination: Overnight stay limitations are a 'standard industry practice' to ensure the equitable use and allocation of campsites and campground facilities.*

### 36 CFR § 2.13 - FIRES

**(a)(1) The lighting or maintaining of fires is generally prohibited, except as provided for in the following designated areas or receptacles, and under the conditions noted:**

#### Designated Areas:

- In designated Wilderness, campfires are allowed in existing fire rings below the lowest limits of the krumholtz zone, or, where krumholtz does not exist, below timberline.
- In the non-wilderness corridor along the Medano Pass Primitive Road, campfires are allowed only in metal fire grates (or, if no metal grate exists, within existing fire pits) in designated campsites. Campsites are designated as such by a post at the campsite entrance.

*Determination: Tundra vegetation and soils above timberline are too easily damaged and would take too long to recover from the effects of campfires. Fires are allowed only in fire grates in established campsites along the Medano Pass Primitive Road as a wildfire prevention measure in this relatively heavily visited corridor and to prevent the proliferation of unsightly and resource damaging fire pits.*

### 36 CFR § 2.14 - SANITATION AND REFUSE

**(b) Conditions for the disposal, containerization, or carryout of human body waste:**

- Toilet paper must be carried out of backcountry and Wilderness areas except where toilet facilities are provided.
- Human body waste shall be disposed of in the following manner:
  - Buried in six (6) inches of soil at least 100 feet from any water source.
  - Removed in EPA-approved methods for disposal in landfills (WAG bags, etc. may be deposited in a park receptacle at the trailhead or other appropriate location).

*Determination: These requirements are intended to maintain sanitary conditions for both humans and wildlife.*

### **36 CFR § 2.15 - PETS**

#### **(b) Conditions under which dogs may be used in support of hunting activities:**

- Dogs may only be unrestrained while engaged in legitimate hunting activities.

*Determination: Hunting is allowed by law within the Preserve and using dogs to hunt mountain lions or game birds is a legitimate activity. Otherwise, to protect wildlife and for the safety and comfort of other visitors, dogs must be leashed.*

### **36 CFR § 2.16 - HORSES AND PACK ANIMALS**

#### **(a) The following are designated as pack animals:**

- Horses
- Mules
- Burros, donkeys, asses
- Llamas, alpacas

*Determination: The Superintendent has determined that the use of equine pack animals is a historical use within the Preserve has limited impact on Preserve resources and offers a significant benefit and visitor activity supported by the Preserve. Goats are not permitted due the sensitivity of the local bighorn sheep population and the risk of goats serving as a disease vector.*

#### **(b) The use of horses or pack animals is permitted on the following trails, routes, or areas:**

- All trails and areas within the Preserve, except within 300 feet of lakes.

*Determination: The use of horses and other pack animals is a traditional and historic use in the area. However, increasing damage associated with multiple trailing, soil compaction, and tree root exposure is occurring around the lakes which are popular destinations for visitors. This closure is intended to prevent additional resource damage caused by heavy animals, prevent visitor conflicts, and maintain consistency with regulations in place on neighboring U.S. Forest Service administered lands to the extent possible.*

#### **(g) Other conditions concerning the use of horses or pack animals:**

- Livestock must be picketed at least 100 feet from streams.
- Livestock must be picketed or corralled in a manner as to prevent damage to trees and pawing around tree trunks, grazing to an extent that plants are eaten to ground level or individual plants pulled up by the roots, denuding the area of vegetation by grazing or trampling, and damage to natural or cultural resources.
- Livestock must be picketed at least 300 feet from lakes or tied to hitch rails where provided.

- Stock must be fed weed-free hay at least 24 hours before entering the Preserve. Only certified weed-free hay, grain, or processed pellets may be packed into the Preserve.
- Livestock must be picketed at least 100 feet from designated primitive campsites along the Medano Pass Primitive Road.

*Determination: These conditions are intended to prevent conflicts with other users, damage to campsites, damage to or degradation of natural resources, and introduction or proliferation of invasive plant species.*

### **36 CFR § 2.22 - PROPERTY**

**(a)(2) The following are areas where property may be left unattended for periods longer than 24 hours and the conditions under which property may be left:**

- Caches of food and equipment may be made anywhere in the Wilderness portion of the Preserve provided that the Superintendent or their representative is notified in advance of when and where the cache is to be made. Caches may be set in no longer than one week in advance of a planned trip and must be removed within one week after the trip concludes. Caches must be stored in a wildlife proof manner and without digging or otherwise altering natural conditions.

*Determination: This provision is intended to provide a mechanism for hunters or other visitors who plan a longer-term trip to remote areas in the Preserve to lay in caches of supplies and food while at the same time establishing conditions to protect wildlife and other resources and ensure that caches are not left unattended for an unreasonable period of time.*

- Motor vehicles may be left in designated parking areas at trailheads for more than 24 hours while the vehicle operator is using the backcountry.

### **36 CFR § 4.10- Travel on park roads and designated routes**

- (a) Electronic Personal Assistive Mobility Device (EPAMD), motorized scooters and similar devices, as defined under 36 CFR 1.4 are motor vehicles. The Preserve has imposed a restriction on the use of EPAMDs, motorized scooters and similar devices from all park areas including roads, sidewalks and trails.

However, any visitor or employee with a disability is permitted to use EPAMDs, motorized scooters, motorized wheelchairs or similar devices in park buildings and developed areas, such as campgrounds and parking lots, when the sole purpose for use of such devices is mobility assistance. For safety reasons, EPAMDs, motorized scooters and similar devices may not be used on any park road or trail.

Individuals with disabilities who operate one of the above described devices must operate the device in a safe and responsible manner so as not to endanger one's self or other park visitors. The maximum speed for such devices is 8 mph. The operator of an assistive mobility device will have the same rights applicable to a pedestrian under the same circumstances, except the operator must yield to other pedestrians.

Wheelchairs (either manual or motorized) are not considered motor vehicles or mechanized vehicles and are allowed on park trails, although this is not recommended.

*Determination: The Preserve wishes to provide as much access as possible to visitors with disabilities while maintaining an environment that is safe for all visitors and protects Preserve resources.*

### **36 CFR § 4.30 Bicycles**

- (a) Bicycle use within Great Sand Dunes National Preserve is permitted only on roads open to public motor vehicle use.
- (h) Off-trail riding or riding a bicycle off a permitted trail, and entering closed areas is prohibited.
- (i) E-Bikes  
“The term “e-bike” means a two- or three-wheeled cycle with fully operable pedals and an electric motor of less than 750 watts (1 h.p.).

E-bikes are allowed in Great Sand Dunes National Preserve where traditional bicycles are allowed. E-bikes are prohibited where traditional bicycles are prohibited. Except where use of motor vehicles by the public is allowed, using the electric motor to move an e-bike without pedaling is prohibited.

A person operating an e-bike is subject to the following sections of 36 CFR part 4 that apply to the use of traditional bicycles: sections 4.12, 4.13, 4.20, 4.21, 4.22, 4.23, and 4.30(h)(1)-(5).

Except as specified in this Compendium, the use of an e-bike within Great Sand Dunes National Preserve is governed by State law, which is adopted and made a part of this Compendium. Any violation of State law adopted by this paragraph is prohibited.”

*Determination: Bicycle use including e-bikes is permitted on all roads open to public motor vehicle use. They are not permitted on trails or roads closed to the public. Much of the preserve is designated wilderness where wheeled vehicles are prohibited.*

### **36 CFR § 4.31 - HITCHHIKING**

#### **Hitchhiking is allowed in the following areas:**

- Along all roadways.

*Determination: The Preserve is remote from the nearest city served by public transportation and so other transportation options are not available to some visitors. Up to now hitchhiking has been an infrequent occurrence that has not presented any problems related to criminal activity, traffic obstruction, or other safety hazards.*

Great Sand Dunes National Park  
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Colorado

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**Hunting Areas and Animal Transport Corridors**

