

Management Zoning System

The Management Zoning System consists of five zones (designated 0 to 4) ranging from areas closed to the public use to “focal areas” prescribed for intensive public use. A modifier is added to the zoning designation to describe whether on-trail only or off-trail use will be permitted.

Management Zones:

Zone 0 – Closed Natural Area: The entire natural area is not open for public access. The natural area is either not intended for public use or is not yet open due to lack of public amenities (e.g., trails, parking lots), which require construction prior to opening.

Zone 1 – Closed Zones: Portions of a natural area that are not open to the public due to one or more reasons specified below. In closed zones, trails and other public amenities either do not exist or are intended for maintenance purposes only. All Zone 1 – Closed Zones are modified as “C – no trails available.” Reasons for closures may include:

- Areas closed for conservation or wildlife refuge
- Areas where no formal access is provided
- Areas closed due to public safety concerns
- Areas under long-term restoration (typically 10 years or more)
- Areas closed due to the presence of cultural artifacts
- Areas closed on leased land because public access is not allowed by the terms of the lease

Zone 2 – Resource Protection Zones: Portions of a natural area where conservation and resource protection are the highest priorities. Visitor access is generally limited to on-trail or trailside activities. Public amenities are limited or nonexistent. Temporary or seasonal closures may be enacted for resource protection, restoration, safety, or other reasons.

Zone 3 – Natural Experience Zones: Portions of a natural area intended to provide visitors with a place to connect with nature and enjoy site appropriate recreation. Off-trail use is generally allowed and public amenities may exist, though, not to the scale or frequency of a focal area. Temporary or seasonal closures may be enacted for resource protection, restoration, safety, or other reasons.

Zone 4 – Focal Recreation Zones: Portions of a natural area that provide intense and directed recreation. These are developed areas intended to provide defined recreation or access to recreation. Focal areas generally include parking lots, picnic areas, boating or fishing access points, designated rock-climbing areas, etc. Temporary or seasonal closures may be enacted for resource protection, restoration, safety, or other reasons.

Trail Modifiers (Regulatory Zoning):

- A – On-trail only
- B – Off-trail use allowed
- C – Closed, no trails available (Zone 1)