Exploring the Park from Streams to Summits

The park is open 24 hours a day, all year. Visitor center hours vary by season: Call 719-378-6399. Entrance fees, $3 per person aged 16 and up, are good for one week. Several park and federal passes are honored: See the park newspaper or check www.nps.gov/grsa.

You can enjoy ranger-led programs and events, go birding, swim, picnic, hike, backpack, photograph, stargaze, ride horses, climb dunes, or go sandboarding, skiing, sledding, or high-clearance four-wheeling (ATVs prohibited).

We strive to make facilities and programs accessible to persons with disabilities. For details ask at the visitor center or ask a park ranger. The Dunes parking lot has accessible mats to the creek and viewing platform. Ask at the visitor center about sand wheelchairs for loan and accessible campsites.

More than Sand Dunes
You can explore the mountains, foothills, diverse forests, and grasslands here as well as sand dunes. Groups may reserve free ranger-led programs in advance: Call 719-378-6399.

Safety *Don't trust computer road mapping here.* The only paved-highway access is via US 160 and CO 150 from the south, or CO 17 and County Lane 6 from the west. • Lightning strikes can be fatal: If you see a thunderstorm, get off the dunes! Storms and cold weather can occur any time of the year. • Summer sand surfaces reach 140°F. Hike dunes in early mornings or evenings then. Wear closed-toe shoes and monitor pets' feet. • Elevations range from 7,500 to nearly 14,000 feet: Seek medical advice about doing vigorous exercise. Elevation sickness symptoms are short breath, headache, and nausea. Drink lots of water.

Get a copy of "Wild Ways" at the visitor center to learn about bears and mountain lions. Store food, toiletries, and trash in bear-proof boxes in campgrounds.

Do not feed any wildlife. It is dangerous for you and unhealthy for them.

Medano Creek wave surges (seasonal)

More Information
Great Sand Dunes National Park and Preserve
11999 Highway 150
Mosca, CO 81146-9798
719-378-6300
www.nps.gov/grsa

Great Sand Dunes is one of over 390 parks in the National Park System. To learn more about national parks and National Park Service programs in America's communities, please visit www.nps.gov.

Emergencies call 911

Tall trees, Montville Trail

Sand Creek Lakes area

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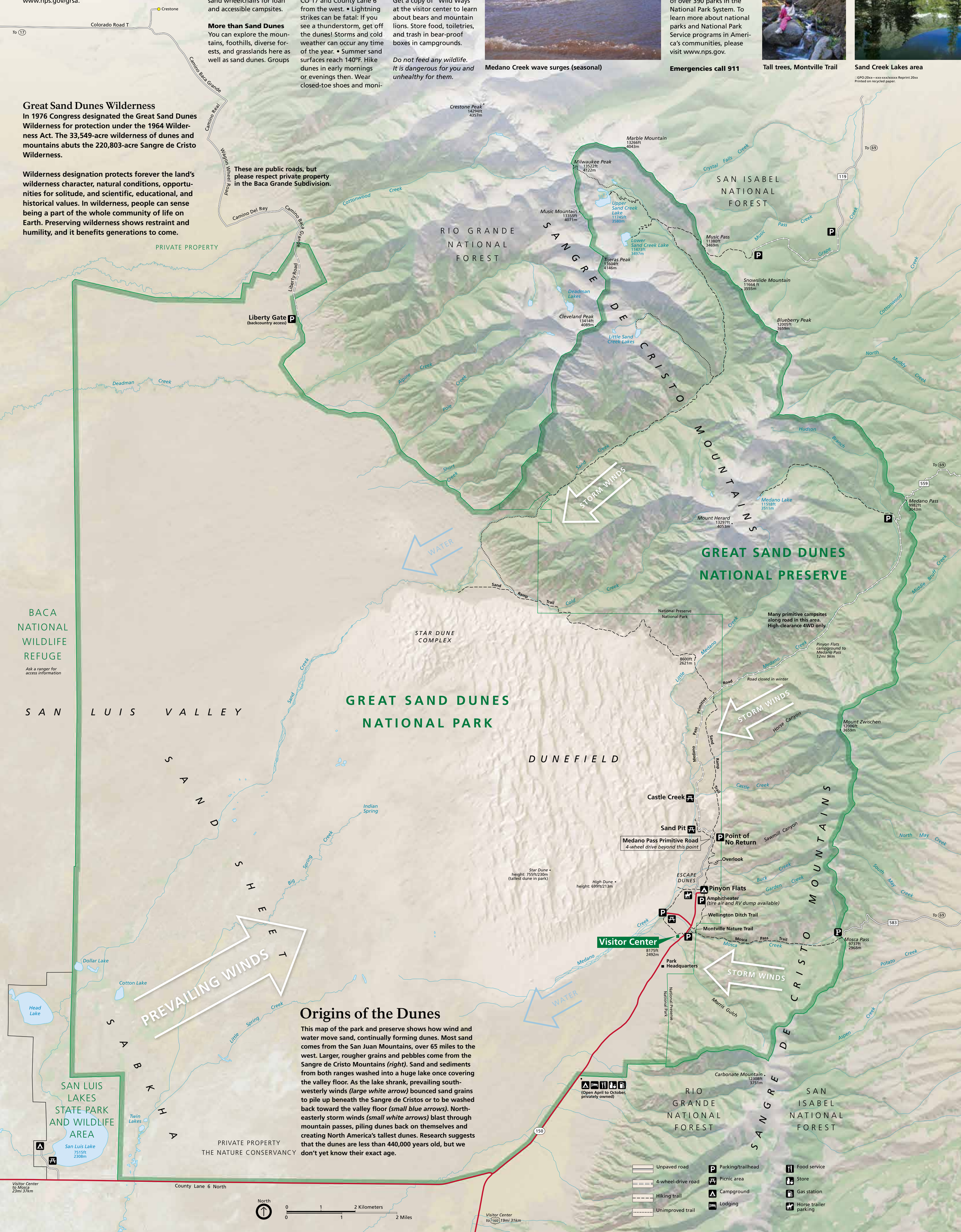
Great Sand Dunes Wilderness

In 1976 Congress designated the Great Sand Dunes Wilderness for protection under the 1964 Wilderness Act. The 33,549-acre wilderness of dunes and mountains abuts the 220,803-acre Sangre de Cristo Wilderness.

Wilderness designation protects forever the land's wilderness character, natural conditions, opportunities for solitude, and scientific, educational, and historical values. In wilderness, people can sense being a part of the whole community of life on Earth. Preserving wilderness shows restraint and humility, and it benefits generations to come.



Origins of the Dunes

This map of the park and preserve shows how wind and water move sand, continually forming dunes. Most sand comes from the San Juan Mountains, over 65 miles to the west. Larger, rougher grains and pebbles come from the Sangre de Cristo Mountains *(right)*. Sand and sediments from both ranges washed into a huge lake once covering the valley floor. As the lake shrank, prevailing southwesterly winds *(large white arrow)* bounced sand grains to pile up beneath the Sangre de Cristos or to be washed back toward the valley floor *(small blue arrows)*. Northeasterly storm winds *(small white arrows)* blast through mountain passes, piling dunes back on themselves and creating North America's tallest dunes. Research suggests that the dunes are less than 440,000 years old, but we don't yet know their exact age.