

chief's



wilderness advisory group

WAG TALES

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WORDS FROM THE WASHINGTON OFFICE:

Editors Note: Discussion from the Nov WAG meeting, along with input from field rangers working across the US, informed the following interview questions that Katie Armstrong, Director of Wilderness and Wild and Scenic Rivers, posed to Chris French, Deputy Chief of the Forest Service, for this article:

Katie: Thanks for taking time for this conversation. The Chief's Wilderness Advisory Group (WAG) has provided some questions to get us started. Chris, what do you personally value about Wilderness?

Chris: Always happy to engage with the Chief's Wilderness Advisory Group! Early in my career I had the opportunity to oversee the Chiricahua Wilderness Area on the Coronado National Forest. This ranged from visiting the trail crews to learning about the ongoing research taking place in the Wilderness. That was probably my first experience really understanding what it means to spend time in designated Wilderness Areas. I would spend days alone out there with my horse visiting crews, historic cabins, and checking things out. I came to appreciate large landscapes that are essentially untouched. It gave me one-on-one experiences with nature that created a deeper connection that I carry with me to this day.

Katie: That sounds delightful! Now, I'm sure you are aware of this, but nationally, only 22% of designated wilderness areas are meeting baseline performance for preserving wilderness character. What do you see as the most important step the agency can take to move toward meeting these important baseline targets?

Chris: I can't help but think about how Chief Randy Moore would answer this question! When asked questions like this he often answers, "Can you tell me? You're the experts. What are the highest leverage moves we could be making?" I really appreciate that approach. Here's the thing: I know we have limited resources to get all the needed work done. We don't have enough. We just don't. This is a problem we all have to work through. What I need from the WAG and from Forest Service Wilderness staff, is help identifying high-leverage moves we should be taking to address this situation. Of those, within the reality of what we have, what can move out on? Are there opportunities to reprioritize or reemphasize? Are there incremental moves we can take that will make a big difference over the next 10 years? I really am looking for your advice.

These issues are not unique to Wilderness. Aside from fire and vegetation programs in the Forest Service, none of our programs are getting the capacity to accomplish everything we know needs to get done. So, help me understand what is needed to get the work done. It's not always money, it may be a shift in how I communicate, how we work with partners, or even changes in policy.



Deputy Chief, Chris French with Katie Armstrong, Director of Wilderness and Wild and Scenic Rivers.

Photo Credit: Bill Hodge

WORDS FROM THE WASHINGTON OFFICE...

Katie: Thanks, Chris. That gives us a lot to think about. Within the Forest Service, there's currently a largescale effort underway called the Reimagine Recreation Campaign. How do you see Wilderness fitting into this?

Chris: To me, this relates back to the previous question about resources, I know there is recreation infrastructure in Wilderness - be it trails or camping areas- that's being overrun. We need to think about how we are addressing those needs. We have a central dilemma. On one hand, we see how recreation can overwhelm and impact Wilderness character. On the other, we want to attract new and diverse visitors. I need your help to connect these opposing realities into coherent management. We need to improve how we are relating the importance of Wilderness areas to people who are unfamiliar with the concept of designated Wilderness. We need to connect with the person in Los Angeles who is pouring themselves a glass of tap water that originates from a wilderness area up in the Sierra, as well as with those actively recreating in wilderness areas. We need to better communicate the values of wilderness and how those values relate to everyday Americans.

Katie: Yes, and how the benefits of Wilderness extend far beyond designated areas. As we embark on "reimagining recreation" we're trying to reach people who haven't visited our public lands, let alone wilderness areas. How do we ensure that when they do make that first visit, it's a positive experience, that they feel welcomed and want to come back? We need to make sure our land managers have the tools to do that.

Chris: For me, it goes back to communication. We need to talk about Wilderness in a way that's relatable. To give an example, I've seen this myself in public meetings. When people are worried about risks to their home due to fire, we can't immediately discuss "trammeling" -they have no idea what it means or how it could have more value than what they are afraid they are going to lose. We're going to be more effective if we can meet them where they are. This way we can problem-solve together. That's not to say the text of the Wilderness Act isn't important! I'm just saying we need to do a better job of connecting with people. And I see that connection as the biggest goal of the Reimagining Recreation campaign.

Katie: How are we investing in partners so they can help support wilderness stewardship goals?

Chris: I'm going to turn this back around on you. How are you facilitating partnerships and finding new ways to get the work done? We all know how important Wilderness Character Monitoring (WCM) is. I'm really pleased by our efforts to think of new ways to support WCM work. For example, increased investment in the National Wilderness Stewardship Alliance now provides grants for this work.

WORDS FROM THE WASHINGTON OFFICE...

Katie: Last, but not least, there's no denying wildfires have reached crisis proportions in the West. The Chief and the agency are under extreme pressure to change that trajectory. To that end, our Wildfire Crisis Strategy selected the 21 landscapes at highest risk as our focus. These landscapes, represent 134 of the 250 highest-risk firesheds in the western United States and certainly contain wilderness areas.

Chris: We are calling on the agency as a whole to work together quickly and carefully to address this crisis. One of our tasks is to figure out a way to connect with our colleagues and partners, to make sure we are at the table with a solution-oriented stance. We've now entered year two of implementing the Wildfire Crisis Strategy. This is our top priority.

Designated Wilderness accounts for nearly 8% of these landscapes with 84 Wilderness areas contained within their borders totaling approximately 4 million acres. There are also 39 designated Wild & Scenic Rivers within the priority landscapes and approximately 300 study rivers. Combined, these areas serve as the headwaters to critical sources of drinking water for millions of Americans.

Katie: There's no debating that Wilderness is there! What work can we do in Wilderness to help the agency address the wildfire crisis within these priority landscapes?

Chris: First, I would say, share in the outcome of reducing wildland fire risk and creating long-term forest resilience. We all own that. To successfully steward wilderness in the long-term, we have to recognize that some of the forces heavily impacting the landscape are not natural. For example, climate change and fire exclusion. It's ok to consider short-term interventions to create long-term resiliency in these areas.

Second, don't sit on the sidelines. Understand what it means for us in our space, what it means for the landscapes we steward, what can we collectively do to protect the long-term values of these areas. We need the Wilderness community's help to do this.

Katie: Thank you Chris, that's really helpful.

Chris: And I want to thank the Chief's Wilderness Advisory Group for their continued work and dedication to our Wilderness Areas. I know I asked a few questions during our talk- and I look forward to hearing some great ideas in response!

THIS IS WHO WE ARE

Connecting Agency Core Values to Wilderness and Wild & Scenic River Programs

The Forest Service is built upon a set of core values :
SERVICE, INTERDEPENDENCE, CONSERVATION, DIVERSITY, and SAFETY.

These values are not just “ours;” they are often shared by the people and communities we serve. They connect us to each other and often provide common ground and support productive working relationships that further stewardship efforts. In this case, the common ground stems from a deep appreciation for the values inherent in wild lands and wild waters.

Below are examples of how these core values show up in Wilderness and Wild and Scenic River (WSSR) programs, through many of the stewardship efforts we undertake. How do you see these core values surface in your program? Do the examples provided below reflect your experience?

SERVICE: To each other. To the American people. To the planet.

- Offering access and adequate information (trail condition/fire status/ scoping opportunities etc.) for visitors to engage with their public lands.
- Supporting cross program and cross agency coordination for training and integrated project development

INTERDEPENDENCE: Of all things. People and nature. Communities and colleagues. The past, present, and future.

- Efforts to retain landscapes with natural processes while accommodating a desire for human interactions with those landscapes
- Acknowledging past actions, identifying current challenges, and, with humility, strive to retain intact ecosystems for present and future generations to enjoy as wilderness.

CONSERVATION: Protection when necessary. Preservation when appropriate. Restoration, when needed, and wise management for multiple use and enjoyment always.

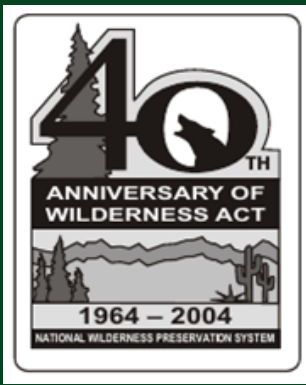
- Stewardship to protect river's outstandingly remarkable values and natural and undeveloped qualities of Wilderness
- Providing large scale habitat for keystone species, such as grizzly bears and bull trout
- Preservation of traditional skills, knowledge, and tools that support WWSR stewardship efforts
- Valuing and allowing natural ecological processes to persist across portions of the landscape, while working to minimize negative impacts of non-native populations

DIVERSITY: People and cultures. Perspectives and ideas. Experiences and

- Diversity of landscapes and water ecosystems in the National Wilderness Preservation System and WSR designations
- Working to expand partnerships and collaborative efforts that acknowledge and improve inclusivity, equity and diversity in WWSR program development and implementation.

SAFETY. In every way: physical, psychological, and social.

- Monitoring and protecting water and air quality, dark sky sanctuaries
- Maintaining facilities to safe standards for continued use and enjoyment by citizens and agency employees



60TH ANNIVERSARY PREPARATIONS

SAVE THE DATE!

Sept 3, 2024 will mark the 60th anniversary of the signing of the Wilderness Act. Have you started thinking about how you/your wilderness/your forest is going to mark this milestone? Could a little advertisement help prepare visitors for an excursion to your area? Perhaps this offers an opportunity for you to highlight an accomplishment or challenge that is unique to your wilderness area. Maybe you are looking for a way to engage new volunteers, or connect with youth in your community. This anniversary offers unlimited opportunities to draw positive attention to the work your wilderness needs, or is doing! And, you have a whole year to plan! Need a little inspiration? We've provided a few ideas that might resonate. If you are looking for something different, gather up your co-workers or friends for a brainstorming session to expand this list. The WAG is working with the WO to create a logo for the 60th anniversary that can be shared online, as a way to present a unified and professional image for the National Wilderness Preservation System. We challenge you to take on one anniversary project that fits your program's capacity!

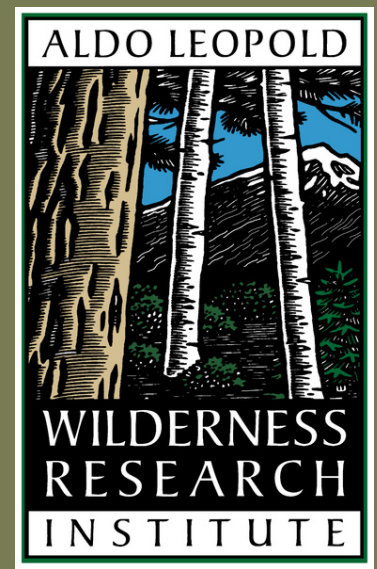


Selway Bitterroot Wilderness- 40th Anniversary Wilderness Quilt
Photo by Kearstin Edwards

- Create a special logo for your wilderness area.
- Highlight wilderness facts for your Wilderness or all the Wilderness areas in your state with a poster series and look for opportunities to share your message, perhaps at a local library, county fair, or school classroom.
- Create a Jr. Wilderness Ranger program specific to your wilderness area ([Click here for a BLM/FS example](#) or [here for a NPS sample](#) to work from!) If you already have a Jr. Wilderness Ranger Program, look for ways to increase participation. Perhaps you could offer the booklet or program online, or set up a celebratory Jr. Ranger event!
- Reach out to local quilt guilds and sponsor a “wilderness quilt block” challenge, asking for input from each quilter about what inspired their wilderness quilt square and create a quilt from the squares.
- Create a 2024 Wilderness Calendar with pictures from your Wilderness area. This is a great gift to share with volunteers or to use as a keepsake award.
- Facilitate a “60 for the 60th project” asking each wilderness visitor to spend 60 seconds picking up trash/pulling weeds; soliciting 60 pieces of art from local school kids, listening to a 60 second video about wilderness values... you get to create the idea!
- Host a discussion on, partnership project, or management meeting focused on diversity, equity, and inclusion in wilderness management.
- Design a Wilderness Travel guide with information specific to your area, this can be an especially useful product to relay important information that can help visitors prepare for an adventure in your wilderness area. ([The Boundary Water's Canoe Area Wilderness offers a professional, comprehensive example.](#))

ALWRI Update

The Aldo Leopold Wilderness Research Institute (ALWRI) is an interagency, national research facility located on campus at the University of Montana. Administered by the USDA Forest Service, Rocky Mountain Research Station, ALWRI is the only federal research group in the United States dedicated to development and dissemination of knowledge needed to steward the nearly 112-million-acre National Wilderness Preservation System (NWPS). ALWRI has a long history of conducting and sharing science with the Forest Service in support of stewarding the NWPS, as well as collaborating with other management, academic, non-profit, tribal, community, and other partners within the US and internationally.



In Fiscal Year 2022, with input from many partners including Forest Service colleagues across the nation, ALWRI completed a new Science Charter and Strategic Plan, and, in conjunction, adopted an updated mission statement: “Advancing wilderness stewardship through transformational science”. Over the next decade, the following Research Priority Areas will form the basis of the Institute’s research and are linked to each other through interrelated research questions.

- **Biodiversity Conservation:** Develop an understanding of the values, opportunities, and challenges for wilderness to support biodiversity conservation in an era of unprecedented change.
- **Climate Change and Disturbance:** Improve knowledge about the impacts and consequences of climate change and climate-disturbance interactions, including wildland fire, relevant to wilderness stewardship.
- **Stewardship Effectiveness:** Examine the effects and effectiveness of wilderness stewardship decisions, including the potential for and effects of management interventions.
- **Relevance and Inclusivity:** Expand our understanding of wilderness relevance, experiences, inclusivity, and use, amid social-ecological change.
- **Shared Stewardship:** Improve our understanding of co-production approaches and abilities to harmonize multiple knowledge systems toward more inclusive wilderness stewardship

ALWRI staff also collaborated on roughly 40 projects related to conservation science and wilderness stewardship, many in conjunction with Forest Service partners. For a full accounting of our accomplishments from last year, please review our FY22 Annual Report; here we highlight just a few:

Bridger-Teton National Forest, Recreation Thresholds for Wildlife:

Research has associated non-consumptive outdoor recreation activities such as hiking, mountain biking, running, and horseback riding, with negative effects on wildlife. Impacts to wildlife include decreased survival, reproduction, and population sizes. However, most studies present scant information on effect thresholds, such as type of recreation, number of recreators, and distance to trails. This type of quantitative information is important for those managers who are tasked with reducing negative effects on wildlife and must make multi-use recreation decisions. As recreation on public lands and wilderness areas increase, the need for quantitative information becomes more pressing.

To address this knowledge gap, and to better quantify the behavioral effects of non-consumptive recreation on wildlife, ALWRI scientists initiated an audio playback experiment in the Bridger-Teton National Forest. Researchers positioned motion-sensors, attached to playback devices and paired cameras, along game trails.

When sensors were triggered by movement, cameras initiated video recording of the area within view, while playback devices transmitted pre-recorded sounds of different recreation types (e.g., hiking, mountain biking, running, and horseback riding), differing group sizes, and group dynamics (e.g., quiet vs. talkative).

During the project's pilot year, scientists collected thousands of videos of mammals, almost 400 of which resulted in noise triggers and recorded behavioral responses. They also obtained over seven-thousand hours of bird community data to test the changes in bird community presence before and after experimental recreation noise playbacks. Researchers are currently in the planning stages of the second field season, but preliminary analysis of the first year's data suggest that wildlife show varying levels of responses to noises created by different types of recreation.

Pyrodiversity and Aquatic Biodiversity in Wilderness:

Pyrodiversity describes the temporal or spatial variability in fire effects across a landscape. In the context of post-fire systems, high pyrodiversity has been linked with high biodiversity. Wilderness areas are an ideal place to study this relationship because fire regimes in wilderness areas are largely unmanaged. ALWRI scientists are using environmental DNA in the Bob Marshall Wilderness Complex to explore how pyrodiversity influences presence and distributions of sensitive aquatic species such as bull trout. ALWRI scientists, in collaboration with University of Montana, will work with citizen-scientists from Bob Marshall Wilderness Foundation, Latino Outdoors, and Here Montana, to collect environmental DNA and record fire history of the BMWC.

Supporting a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Toolbox for Wilderness:

ALWRI scientists, in close collaboration with Arthur Carhart National Wilderness Training Center staff, were asked to support the USFS Wilderness Information Management Steering Taskforce (WIMST) and the Chief's Wilderness Advisory Group (WAG) to help them identify what wilderness managers might expect and need from a toolbox to support diversity, equity, and inclusion in wilderness. As part of Carhart's Emerging Professional's program, which seeks to connect early career professionals from across the land management agencies with wilderness-related opportunities, the team recruited 11 Forest Service Resource Assistants and trained them on how to run and transcribe notes from focus groups. Together, they ran five focus groups with representatives from various agencies and partners to identify what wilderness managers need from a toolbox, what a toolbox can and cannot address in terms of increasing diversity, equity, and inclusion, and what additional approaches might help increase DEI in wilderness. Results were shared with various committees and task forces in a short write-up and in presentations.

In FY22, ALWRI staff produced 21 peer-reviewed publications and technical reports; delivered numerous presentations to a myriad of audiences, including professional organizations, to academic seminar series; and engaged with wilderness managers across agencies and regions, throughout the United States. In recognition of their exemplary efforts, several of our scientists were granted awards by the Rocky Mountain Research Station.

Kellie Carim was presented with "Best Early Career Scientist Publication", Chris Armatas with "Outstanding Technology Transfer of Published Scientific Research", and Lisa Holsinger with an award for "Outstanding Science Support".

We look forward to further collaborative efforts as we strive together to advance wilderness stewardship through transformational science.



Visitors to the Congaree National Park walk along The Boardwalk Trail, adjacent to Congaree's Wilderness Area.

The DEI toolbox for wilderness will identify and collate case studies and guiding principles from across the country and the NWPS to support innovation and best practices, to ensure that staff, Tribal citizens, and our country's diverse publics can access, feel connected to, and are welcome in, wilderness.

PHOTO Credit: Lauren Redmore

The Mission of the Arthur Carhart National Wilderness Training Center is to equip and inspire agency leaders and partners to ensure that America's National Wilderness Preservation System endures for future generations. We do this through training, information, and education. Carhart is taking advantage of the lessons learned during the pandemic and the challenges of ongoing ecological, social, and organizational change to shape a more effective and efficient Wilderness Stewardship Center of Excellence. Stay tuned for more information or take an active role to join the conversation and help elevate Carhart to new levels of Wilderness Excellence!



Staffing:

- Tim Fisher, working through the ACES Program, is the Interim Director at Carhart. He has committed to working through June while the search for a new Director at Carhart continues.
- Elaine Poser, who retired last year, continues to help Carhart through the ACES Program as the Administrative Officer while Position Descriptions are updated and recruitment continues.
- Tim Devine, long time National Park Service (NPS) Representative, retired in December 2022. We are anticipate filling this NPS Representative at Carhart in the coming months.
- Dan Abbe is the Forest Service Representative at Carhart.
- James Sippel is the Bureau of Land Management Representative at Carhart.
- Michelle Reilly is the Fish and Wildlife Service representative (currently on detail)
- Kimm Fox-Middleton is the Interpretation and Outreach Specialist at Carhart.
- Holly Metzger is the Administrative Assistant at Carhart.

Projects:

As a response to the WAG/WIMST request to identify needs and opportunities for a DEI Toolbox, a focus group and additional agency by agency reviews continue to help define what a DEI Living Toolbox will look like and eventually reside on Wilderness.net.

A review is occurring on the Interagency Wilderness Messages, published in late 2019. The intention is to update the document's effectiveness with speaking to all audiences and ensuring it reflects current initiatives such as tribal collaboration and challenges associated with pandemics, increased visitation, climate change, and fires.

Trainings Opportunities!

The National Wilderness Skills Institute is happening the week of May 22-26.

Regional Wilderness Stewardship Training : Ely, NV – Fall, TBD

National Wilderness Leadership Training :Missoula, MT – June 11 -17, 2023

Wilderness Unit Courses (in person) have returned with BLM, FS, and NPS helping with 2-3 day unit courses in FY23! Call if you are interested in having Carhart support your unit Wilderness Training Courses.

In addition, there are online courses, webinars, and a compressive amount of information on [Wilderness Connect\(wilderness.net\)](http://wilderness.net).

Wilderness Character Monitoring (WCM) Central Team Updates

Since last spring’s 2022 WAG Newsletter update, 70 additional WCM Baseline Assessments have been completed bringing the total, as of March 2023, to 191 (42%) of all USFS wilderness to have completed WCM baselines. With an additional 43 WCM baseline assessments just awaiting final signatures, completion rates are projected to reach 52% (234 out of 448) in the near future, meeting a halfway milestone. Additionally, 34 wildernesses have WCM work in progress and many of those are scheduled for completion later in 2023.

	DOCUMENTATION (WSP WC Baseline Element 2-pt. level)	NARRATIVE (WSP WC Baseline Element 4-pt. level)	MEASURE SELECTION (WSP WC Baseline Element 6-pt. level)	BASELINE ASSESSMENT (WSP WC Baseline Element 8-pt. level)
COMPLETED	312 (70%) ²	325 (73%)	238 (53%)	191 (42%)
COMPLETED - UNSIGNED	N/A	N/A	17 (4%)	43 (10%)
IN PROGRESS	6 (3%)	23 (5%)	26 (6%)	34 (8%)
NOT YET STARTED	120 (27%)	100 (22%)	167 (37%)	180 (40%)

In 2023 the regions and the Washington Office successfully secured funding and support for continued WCM work, which should result in dozens of wilderness areas working with national, regional, and local partners, to start or continue WCM implementation this year. While there are 180 areas (40%) which still need to complete their WCM baseline assessments, many of these locations show progress at the 2, 4, and 6-point accomplishment levels. This progress has continued to steadily elevate the mean WSP score for the WCM Baseline Element from 1.1 in 2015, to 5.1 at the end of the FY 2022 NRM WSP reporting period. Congratulations to Region 10, which looks like it will be the first region to complete WCM baseline assessments for all their wilderness areas; another great milestone!

When the Forest Service began working to complete WCM Baselines in 2018, the expressed leadership intent (via a 2018 letter signed by Leslie Weldon) was that 29 pilot areas start the process and all remaining wilderness areas would begin their baseline efforts between 2019 and 2023, to create a five-year rotation cycle that could be used to schedule each wilderness area’s recurring 5 year WCM review.

As we began to implement WCM we discovered numerous factors that affected the time needed to complete WCM narratives and baselines. Taking these factors into consideration, most WCM baselines are being completed within 1-2 years, however the two years may stretch across three fiscal years. For these reasons, not all WCM baselines will be completed by 2023, but it is critical that work continues to meet that goal in the next 2 to 3 years.

The WCM Central Team is currently focusing on improving NRM-WCM reporting. The first round of 5-year WCM trend assessments will begin in 2024, which has highlighted the importance of completing annual data tasks to maintain, enter, review and rollover WCM data. This process includes dependencies that require coordination with data stewards for other NRM modules, and managers of those programs, to ensure that data linked to NRM-WCM is correct and complete. Active management of the data during the interval years between the completion of the WCM baseline and the first 5-year assessment will make the process of completing the 5-year assessment much easier. During FY 2022 NRM-WCM reporting, the lead wilderness data stewards with responsibility for the NRM-Wilderness and WSP reporting were also identified for the first time as the lead data stewards for the NRM-WCM reporting. In 2023, the WCM Central Team will be providing information, guidance, and training for wilderness data stewards and managers to support them and better their understanding of the needs and timing of these data management tasks to improve NRM-WCM reporting. The ultimate goal of improved data management and reporting is better data that will identify trends in wilderness character that can inform management decisions.

While the WCM Central Team provides ongoing support and training for those working on WCM, the Team is also busy working on a number of other tasks including: assisting WIMST to develop a white paper on best practices for working with partners to complete WCM; updating and improving the organization of online files and WCM implementation resources; improving the WCM baseline tracking status document; developing a 5-year assessment schedule; and developing standardized naming conventions for WCM documents. WCM Program Specialist, Jim Edmonds, continues his work gathering and processing the most up-to-date data from national datasets and those that are sourced from outside the USFS databases, such as data for impaired waters, ozone, and visibility, and developing customized reports for each wilderness area to inform baseline development and 5-year assessments. At the interagency level the WCM Program Manager is working with BLM, NPS, and USFWS, Aldo Leopold Wilderness Research Institute and the Wilderness Institute at University of Montana to improve the interagency WCM database and begin identifying research and analysis needs for baseline and trend data.

WCM RESOURCES:

The WCM Central Team is here to help and support you through the WCM process. We can work with you to better understand specific needs for your situation and provide information about available resources. The WCM Toolbox on Wilderness Connect and the WCM External Pinyon Site both offer great training as well as access to templates and completed examples. If you are looking for an avenue to connect with others working on WCM baselines, the WCM Central Team offers bi-weekly Office Hours, a virtual meeting place where you can ask questions, and learn from questions others are asking. If you do not already receive an Outlook calendar invitation for these calls, you may contact the WCM Central Team at pd_l_wo_nfs_WCM_team@usda.gov and request a meeting invitation. You can also use this address to email the team questions at any time. Please reach out to us at any time!

WILDERNESS ADVISORY GROUP

YOUR REGIONAL REPRESENTATIVES



The Chief's Wilderness Advisory Group (WAG) consists of representatives from each Forest Service Region, along with members from the Washington Office, Aldo Leopold Wilderness Research Institute and Arthur Carhart National Wilderness Training Center. The group was established in 1989 for the purpose of providing advice and counsel to the Chief of the Forest Service on matters related to wilderness stewardship from the perspective of field level managers.

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2023

WAG TASK TEAMS

DESIGNATED CAMPSITES IN WILDERNESS

Designating campsites in wilderness areas is a strategy that has been used to protect solitude, limit resource impacts and manage visitor use. Increasingly, wilderness managers have shown interest in designating or assigning campsites as a tool to mitigate impacts in high-visitation areas. There is currently no known repository of information on this. This task team gathered existing information and intends on providing context for wilderness managers on how designated campsites impact Wilderness character.

This sign alerts visitors to the designated campsite policy in the Carson Pass Management Area of the Mokelumne Wilderness.

Photo Credit: Don Morrill



The task team compiled a list of wilderness managers across the country that have enacted designated or assigned campsites in their wilderness areas. We are developing a list of questions that we intend to submit to the wilderness managers. Their answers are meant to provide insight into:

- The factors that were considered that led up to making the decision to institute designated or assigned campsites in their managed wilderness area. This includes but not limited to WCM and WSP elements and measures.
- The scope of the problem(s) that were being addressed.
- Was the policy implemented in phases over time or all at once, on a set date?
- Were there other restrictions involved (fees, rotation of sites, length of stay,)?
- The administration of policy and any additional maintenance issues.
- Feedback from the public and overnight wilderness users.

- Were goals achieved? What changes to the character of the wilderness were observed?
- Are there changes to policy that need to be implemented?

This information will be compiled and made available on Wilderness.net to assist wilderness managers who are considering implementing a similar policy in their wilderness area(s).

SEASONAL WORKFORCE

WAG, WIMST, and TAG all identified a need to address workforce issues and the three groups are worked together to create a survey inquiring about government housing needs, barriers, and potential solutions. The group is working with the Washington Office on distribution of the survey to the field.

With unemployment rates at near record lows and the Forest Service adding hundreds of positions in recreation, wilderness, and trails, it has been very difficult to fill vacant positions. The Workforce task team wanted to share information on some of the possible ways to add to your workforce.

The Forest Service's Human Resource Management (HRM) website has several links with options and resources for hiring. They have a page describing different hiring authorities and the Hiring and Onboarding Timetable (HOT) Calendar schedule. The HOT Calendar is an annual schedule which identifies the timeline for hiring processes applicable to all units, this includes temporary, fire, and strategic, entry-level hiring schedules.

Outside the traditional permanent and seasonal hiring methods, other options for adding to your workforce include using the Pathways program, Job Corps, Youth Conservation Corps, and Resource Assistants Programs. Check the Human Resources Management (HRM) website for more details.

2023

WAG TASK TEAMS

RESOURCE ADVISOR COHORT

Have you heard about the Resource Advisor (READ) Cohort? The Cohort began in 2015 and is a community of people interested in all aspects of Resource Advising on wildland fire and all hazard incidents.

The READ Cohort is welcoming, open, and available to anyone interested in "Resource Advising" in the broadest sense:

anticipating the impacts of wildland fire or natural disasters, and the resulting suppression or management actions, on natural, cultural, social, and wilderness resources; minimizing adverse impacts; and rehabilitating and restoring resources when they are impacted.

The Cohort provides opportunities for: Learning, information sharing, and networking, by hosting monthly virtual topic meetings, posting meeting recordings on YouTube, maintaining an online READ resource library, which includes training opportunities, on Google Drive, maintaining an online listing of Cohort members, and an online list of active incidents that are requesting READ resources.

- Success of the READ Cohort depends on each of us:
- Join the Cohort (get MailChimp Meeting Notices): <http://eepurl.com/hGETOv>
- Participate in Monthly Topic Meetings - Live, or View on YouTube: 3rd Wednesdays, 8:30 pacific, 1-hr, via TEAMS. (Link is in Meeting Notice) https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCdOa27WiQ_Q517RgBFp6vSg
- Suggest a topic / Offer to Become a Presenter or Organizer for a Topic Mtg.



READ COHORT LOGO

Access and Contribute to the READ Cohort Resource Library: www.tinyurl.com/newREADCohort (on Google Drive)

FIELD GUIDE REVAMP

The Chiefs Wilderness Advisory Group and the National Technology Development Program have been working together to produce a Wilderness Ranger Field Guide that will be modeled after the Wilderness Ranger Field Guide produced by the Arthur Carhart National Wilderness Training Center in 1993.

The Original Guidebook provided valuable information for field going Wilderness Rangers including Wilderness history, management Principles, roles and responsibilities, safety, first-aid, public interactions and more. The new Wilderness Ranger Field Guide will still provide important information from the original guide, while incorporating new techniques and technologies, such as the utilization of National Data Collection Protocols, along with technologies including AGOL Field Maps and Survey 123. Once produced we anticipate that the new guide will be available both on a digital platform and have the potential to be printed for in-the-field reference. The print version for field use will have links with QR codes to surveys and collection tools.

Link to the original [1993 Wilderness Ranger Field Guide](#) Below

<https://winapps.umn.edu/winapps/media2/wilderness/toolboxes/documents/ranger/Wilderness%20Ranger%20Field%20Guide.pdf>

The [Wilderness Ranger Toolbox](#) on Wilderness.net is another resource that explains the diversity of work Wilderness Ranger positions may include and offers a listing of core competencies associated with these unique positions.

<https://wilderness.net/practitioners/toolboxes/ranger/default.php#:~:text=The%20Role%20of%20A%20Wilderness%20Ranger>

2023

WAG TASK TEAMS

WILDERNESS RELEVANCY

The Wilderness Relevancy Task Team focused on ways to reinvigorate interest in wilderness programs and support actions that would advance wilderness stewardship toward or beyond baseline performance for preserving wilderness character. To meet this goal, the team took on the following six subtasks:

1. Promote planning efforts for the upcoming 60th Anniversary of the Wilderness Act and use the anniversary as a vehicle to highlight current Wilderness Stewardship Performance (WSP) scores. The Team will be requesting that the Washington Office emphasize continued support for wilderness programs by setting a new target date for all Forest Service managed wilderness areas to meet the nationally recognized management standard for protecting wilderness character (a WSP score of 60 or higher).
2. Work with the Arthur Carhart Wilderness Training Center to clarify online descriptions of training sessions and better identify who sessions are targeted for, as well as identify ways the WAG can support the Carhart center to better align the number of training opportunities available with the number of staff who need training in each region.
3. Create and distribute a letter template that can easily be adapted and used by any forest to start addressing the WSP "Agency Management Action" element; a mandatory element in WSP used to measure the Untrammelled quality of wilderness. The first step for the measure requires Forest Supervisors to send a letter to all staff, every 2 years, describing the importance of the untrammelled quality of Wilderness character.
4. Create and distribute templates that field crews and managers can use to capture wilderness accomplishments and promote the amazing work that is already happening in wilderness areas. Marketing a program's accomplishments can help attract program support in the form of funding, supplies, and volunteer or employee assistance, to expand WSP implementation efforts.
5. Create a sample of performance measures tied to Wilderness WSP goals that could be used for GS-7 to GS-13 positions to help track accountability and prioritization of Wilderness management actions, to advance efforts aimed at managing wilderness to standard.
6. Present the efforts of this task team to all regional program managers for their information and dissemination to forests employees and leadership. Resources and information produced by the WAG will be published on the WSP SharePoint site and Wilderness Connect for Practitioners.



WAG members at Taggart Lake, Teton NP. WO Reps on either end, with Regional Reps 1-10, pictured left to right

UPDATES FROM WIMST



The Wilderness Information Management Steering Team (WIMST) consists of representatives from each Region, along with members from the Washington Office and academia. The group was established in 1999 for the purpose of promoting quality wilderness stewardship at all levels of the organization through the effective and efficient use of information.

During the Fiscal Year 2023 virtual planning meeting in November 2022, several outstanding ideas for possible tasks were identified. A brief description of the WIMST task teams are below. Additional information about WIMST can be found at the [WIMST SharePoint site](#).

Wilderness Stewardship Quality Control

If you get an email from one of the team members on WIMST that we want to discuss your Wilderness Stewardship Performance scores, don't get nervous. Every few years we conduct a "quality control" review of WSP scoring. In 2023, WIMST focused on wilderness areas with scores that dropped or stalled over the last few years. Is this impact to scoring related to the pandemic, vacancies, budget modernization, all of the above, or something else? These are the questions we are trying to answer to help develop a strategy to address slumping WSP scores.

Wilderness Stewardship Performance Education Plan update

The Wilderness Education Plan template was developed in 2005 and has not been updated since that time. While the template produced several quality education plans, helping managers address resource concerns and the needed education efforts or messages to guide education programs, the original template focussed on wilderness visitors as the primary target audience. WIMST is creating an updated template that will expand the target audience to also include people who don't visit wilderness, including those in underserved communities.

Seasonal Workforce

The WIMST task team, in conjunction with the Trails Advisory Group (TAG) and Wilderness Advisory Group (WAG), are identifying barriers that local units across the country are encountering in their efforts to employ a seasonal workforce. This joint task team is looking for ways to address or improve processes tied to hiring, housing, pay, retention, incentives, training, and other challenges that are affecting successful implementation of recreation, trail and wilderness programs.

Wilderness Character Monitoring

To accomplish targets for wilderness character baseline reports, many units collaborate with external partners. While this approach has many advantages, experience has shown that guidance is needed regarding timelines, roles and expectations, and tips for working with specialists, as well as how to ensure buy-in and ownership by USFS staff. Our task team is conferring with key people internal and external to the Forest Service, including the WC Central Team and friends groups to compile a white paper on lessons learned and best practices.

UPDATES FROM WIMST

Wilderness Narratives on the Tongass NF

All 448 Forest Service Wilderness Areas have a description located on [Wilderness Connect](#). Last year, WIMST developed a [self-evaluation](#) to assist wilderness managers review their description and make improvements as necessary. This task team is tackling the wilderness descriptions for the Tongass National Forest in Region 10. The wilderness description updates for the Tongass National Forest will help develop a suggested process for description updates that benefit from Tribal engagement, to properly depict the history of the wilderness areas.

NRM Modernization

The Wilderness Natural Resource Manager (NRM) database was identified as a high priority for modernization through the IT investment planning process. The modernization effort will be the first time since the database was developed in 2001 that a major upgrade will take place. This task team is reviewing all modules to determine which modules are no longer used, which ones are under used, address the need to add deferred maintenance information to the database, suggest upgrades to benefit field staff, and coordinate with the Trails program as part of that staff area database modernization/development.



Region 1: Colter Pence (Vice Chair), Flathead NF-Hungry Horse RD

Region 2: Andrea Maichak, Bighorn NF

Region 3: Pat McGervey, Coconino NF-Flagstaff RD

Region 4: Tim Farris, Bridger-Teton NF-Jackson RD

Region 5: Travis Mason, San Bernardino NF

Region 6: Molly Johnson, Deschutes NF

Region 8: Mason Boring, Cherokee NF-Ocoee/Hiwassee RD

Region 9: Stacy Duke, Hoosier NF

Region 10: Karisa Garner, Tongass NF, Petersburg RD

Academia: Troy Hall, Oregon State University, College of Forest Ecosystems and Society

WO: Portia Jelinek, Wilderness/Wild and Scenic Rivers

UPDATES FROM



The Trail Advisory Group (TAG) is a collection of field-going trail professionals, representing each region of the Forest Service. The group serves as a communication channel between the field to Forest Service leadership, elevating trail program-related concerns and providing a field perspective to national level trail initiatives. The TAG participates in National Trail Board (NTB) calls and works with the National Trail Board and Washington Office trail program on planning efforts.

2023 TAG Recent Happenings and Projects

- In February the TAG attended a week of meetings in Washington DC coinciding with the Hike the Hill event that brought many national partner groups to town. While in DC the TAG met with national partner groups, finalized the TAG program of work, and discussed trail related issues with RHVR leadership and the Deputy Chief, Chris French.
- TAG members are participating in 10 Year Trail Challenge Project Teams with the NTB. Various TAG members are part of project teams working on various trails related topics, including: Trail Management 101 for Line Officers, Developing Career Ladder Opportunities for Trails Professionals, Trail Sustainability Assessments, Guiding Principles for Trail management, Trail Workforce Analysis and updating the Trail and Construction Notebook.
- TAG led projects for 2023 include partnering with American Trails to identify entry level trail training needs, and working towards making training resources accessible to the trail community in a variety of formats. The TAG is also working to share trails-related resources with the trails workforce by helping populate the [Trail Program SharePoint](#) with helpful information for trail professionals. Two action items being worked on currently are populating the SharePoint with example trails related Risk Assessments and example project management workflows for working with Conservation Corp Crews.
- If you are curious about any of these projects, reach out to your regional TAG rep:

2023 TAG members:

- Region 1 Jess May
- Region 2 Christopher Bouton
- Region 3 Forrest Saville
- Region 4 Justin Blackstead
- Region 5 Tracy Knapp,
- Region 6 Kevin Rowell
- Region 8 Don Kelly (TAG Chair)
- Region 9 Cristin Bailey (TAG Co-Chair)
- Region 10 Laurent Deviche



Photo from 2023 Hike the Hill (Left to Right):

*Tracie Knapp, Don Kelly, Justin Blackstead, Chris Bouton,
Joe Welke, Jess May, Kerry Wood, & Cristin Baily*

Photo Credit Elisha Palmer.

Lindsay Frensz-
Cibola NF- New Mexico



RANGER TO RANGER

Are you creative, personable, empathetic, and kind? Do you have the self-discipline to push yourself when working independently? Do you have strong interpersonal and communication skills that can inspire others? Are you a traditional skills junkie with the tech skills to operate Field Map and Survey 123 computer programs? If some of these descriptions resonate with you, there's a good chance you are either part of the wilderness community, or you might want to consider a future position in wilderness stewardship!

In an effort to highlight what wilderness stewardship looks like today and how wilderness programs align with the Forest Service Core Values of: Service, Interdependence, Conservation, Diversity, and Safety, the WAG asked each region to nominate a field ranger to participate in a focus group call. Contributing participants were recognized by peers in their region as having the dedication and experience in field operations to provide insight about wilderness stewardship program successes and challenges. The WAG is pleased to introduce these dedicated wilderness rangers and highlight their perspectives. While they represent wilderness areas across the US, their feedback to questions yielded a number of common responses and suggestions on ways the agency could improve wilderness program delivery.

Where is passion for Wilderness created?

Most participants noted that childhood experiences in the outdoors with family were influential in shaping their appreciation for public lands. Although most noted that they didn't know what designated "Wilderness" was until their college years, their early experiences in the outdoors spurred an affinity for land stewardship. Rebecca explained, "I grew up in the midwest, in suburbia land. I was fortunate that my parents took me traveling a lot and we got to visit a lot of national parks...when I went to a national park and I saw a "Ranger", I thought wow, that's such a cool job! When I look back, I think that's where my interest in the outdoors came from. I actually went to school for art education... and then on to outdoor education and leadership and resource management. Once I got into that field, I quickly realized wilderness areas are the most heavily protected lands. I like being a part of that. I want to help manage it (wilderness) because I think it's really important."

Like Rebecca, the other wilderness rangers interviewed for this article shared a deep pride and commitment to their wilderness stewardship work. The adjectives used at the start of this article define what they saw as important traits and skills for wilderness rangers. Nick spoke to the challenge that wilderness work offers. He noted that, "I enjoy hiking and being outside, but I really like to work hard, and I like working in challenging conditions...it gives me the outlet to push myself. And it pays back the public...I'm kind of paying it back for all the time I've spent on public land using it and recreating (on it)."

Lindsay, a ranger from R3 explained, "I think in our world with bluetooth speakers and drones, that solitude is just becoming harder and harder to find, and it is something I really appreciate." On the flip side of the coin, Chelsea, a ranger from R4, noted that while solitude is an important aspect of wilderness to some, working towards a more inclusive wilderness program requires rangers to recognize that solitude isn't always seen as a positive attribute. She notes that: "I think one of the values I bring as a Wilderness Ranger is understanding that solitude is not all that wilderness is about, and that it (solitude) can actually, push some people away because that idea of wilderness and the wolf (as a wilderness icon) is scary." She points out the need for continued learning opportunities that are geared toward audiences who are new to the outdoors; opportunities where people can recreate in larger groups, outside of wilderness to gain positive, introductory, outdoor experiences, which may lead to an appreciation for values and opportunities protected by wilderness designation.

Increasing Visitor Use and the Continued Need for Education and Management Actions to Protect Wilderness Character:

All of the participants identified substantial increases in the overall amount of recreational use on their forests. In Wilderness areas, they noted that the increasing use is impacting both the opportunity for solitude and the natural condition of the wilderness resources they steward.

Rangers explained that many of the visitors they encounter are engaging in non-wilderness dependent activities, such as trail running and e-biking, or are driven by a desire to see a list of popular places, like summitting the New Hampshire 48, (48 peaks over 4,000ft in elevation), or are following popular long-distance trails like the Pacific Crest or Continental Divide trails, which intersect with wilderness areas. Nick from R8 explained that “a huge part of my job is public contact. I might go out and my sole objective is just talking to people. I know I can count on talking to 100 to 300 people in a mile of trail ... and I have an opportunity to educate these people that are coming into these spaces, because they don't know they're in wilderness.” Similar to reports from others, he shared that in addition to seeing more use, his forest is, “starting to see more people on the shoulder seasons and throughout the winter...people are pushing into these other seasons.”

The challenges associated with managing increasing use and expanding use seasons was forefront in ranger's minds. Mary described a situation that many locations seem to be experiencing where “parking is really the only thing that limits the use. There is just no parking at any trailhead anymore. It's to the point where it's almost hard to keep it a Wilderness, because there is so much use. You can see 600-700 people in a day, just day hiking on a trail in one area; seeing several thousand people just in one weekend.”

Whether they were talking about one-on-one field contacts, formal education programs, customer service provided by front desk personnel, onsite information boards or online resources, the agency value of “Service” resonated with these rangers. Cam, a ranger from R10, explained, “I think something I value most is education...just teaching people why this place exists. How wilderness is important and how they can continue to interact with wilderness areas.”

Rangers provided a few specific suggestions for improving the agency's outreach efforts. These included developing a messaging campaign that promotes non-wilderness public lands where visitors can partake in outdoor experiences that are not necessarily wilderness dependent. Rangers also felt the agency should increase efforts to provide updated online content specific to recreation sites, trailheads and wilderness areas, in order to be identified as the primary source for accurate information about public lands. This would allow agency personnel to refer to publicly available information sources when receiving information requests. It would also diminish requests from private entities to review material content about public lands for commercial websites, which are starting to influence use in many locations, and which may overlook regulatory or stewardship practices that the agency would like to promote.

Mary, a ranger from R2 explained, “I really want the public to understand the Wilderness as Wilderness. I think a lot of people use the word incorrectly. They think it's just a non-urban area and they really don't understand the significance of the Wilderness Act and how important it is that we protect areas like this; that we designate them and that we take care of them. One thing that I wish would be taken more seriously is that our interaction with the public (in person) is really critical... we're relying more and more on websites and self-serve everything.”



Rebecca Huncilman-
White Mountain NF- New Hampshire

RANGER TO RANGER CONTINUED

Chelsea Phillippe-
Uinta-Wasatch-Cache NF- Utah



The more we distance ourselves from the public, I think the less influence we have. Instituting use permits has been one way of limiting use in busy wilderness areas. Although it is a trammeling action, permits allow the agency to reduce visitor numbers, with the hope of subsequently reducing social and resource impacts. Dylan explained that once his forest, “implemented a permit system, use dramatically declined... I'd say (we have) roughly half as much use as we've had historically, and that's resulting in a big rebound in the wild conditions on the ground.” But he also noted that initiating a permit system is a slow process and one that requires ongoing administrative support.

In some wilderness areas where use has increased dramatically, managers are searching for ways to protect resources and wilderness character. Although implementing use permits constitutes a trammeling action, permits allow the agency to reduce visitor numbers, with the hope of subsequently reducing social and resource impacts. Dylan explained that once his forest, “implemented a permit system, use dramatically declined... I'd say (we have) roughly half as much use as we've had historically, and that's resulting in a big rebound in the wild conditions on the ground.” But he also noted that initiating a permit system is a slow process and one that requires ongoing administrative support.

Agency Support of Wilderness Programs:

Are we doing enough to protect Wilderness Character for future generations?

In 2022, Wilderness Performance scores showed 22% of designated wilderness areas are meeting a minimum management standard. A statistic that indicates there is a lot more work to do in the wilderness arena. Rangers noted general support from their immediate supervisors to address wilderness management issues they encounter but noted that Wilderness programs don't tend to compete well for resources (funding and staff support) relative to other program areas. These concerns speak to a continued need for leadership to champion programmatic interdependence as a Forest Service value. Meeting minimum management standards for these special places will require an enduring effort from all program areas, at all levels in the agency.

While these wilderness rangers expressed a deep appreciation for recent recreation-related surge hiring efforts, they shared their frustrations with the hiring processes and concern that unfilled positions may still leave staffing levels insufficient to address the work needed to manage wilderness areas to standard. Erika shared a bit about her recent hiring journey, as she transitioned from a temporary to a permanent seasonal position. She explained that she is, “encouraged by the amount of people that we're hiring and the national hiring event, but I echo a lot of what others have said... the (hiring) system itself is broken. I applied for my current job last April and didn't start until this January. It was extremely stressful to go through that lengthy process...not knowing what's going on, not having any, or very few, updates on what's going on for months and months... it's just not a system that I think is sustainable.”

With newly hired supervisors and field staff starting to arrive, participants also identified a growing need for wilderness training opportunities to bring new employees up to speed on wilderness processes and programs. They suggested that linking performance elements to progress on WSP scoring efforts would be one way to place more emphasis on improving the agency's progress toward meeting baseline wilderness stewardship measures.



Dylan McCoy- Willamette NF Oregon

Taking WAG up on the offer to move information from the field to the Washington Office:

In addition to the passionate responses these employees shared above, regarding stewarding the wilderness resource in their care, and working to embody the values the Forest Service embraces, rangers included a few questions to share upward with agency leadership. Their questions were provided to Katie Armstrong, Director for Wilderness and Wild and Scenic Rivers at the Washington Office to share with Chris French, Deputy Chief of the Forest Service, and inspired the leading article "Words from the WO" at the start of the WAG newsletter.

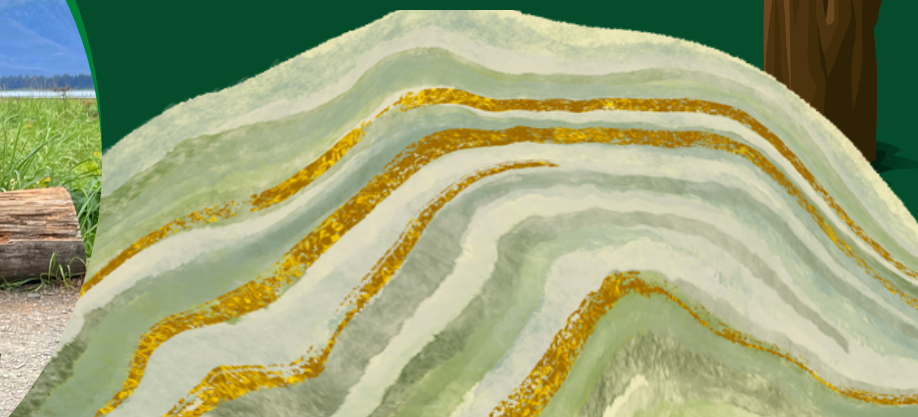
- What do you personally value about Wilderness?
- Nationally, 22% of designated wilderness areas (98 units out of 448) are meeting baseline performance for preserving wilderness character. What do you see as the most important step the agency can take to move toward meeting these important baseline targets?
- How do you see Wilderness fitting into the Reimagine Recreation Campaign?
- How are we investing in new and existing employees to help them advance, if they are looking for a wilderness related career with the agency?
- How are we investing in partners so they can help support wilderness stewardship goals?
- What work can we do in Wilderness to help the agency address the wildfire crisis within identified priority landscapes?

While Wilderness Rangers often work independently, it doesn't mean we work alone. The Wilderness Advisory Group (WAG) is here to help build community and foster communication channels among Wilderness Stewards, no matter your position or title. We thank those listed below for contributing their insights for this article and hope that it spurs additional conversations about wilderness management in your professional circles.

- **R1: Erika Leister**- Bitterroot NF- Montana
- **R2: Mary Kalendovsky**- Arapaho and Roosevelt National Forests - Colorado
- **R3: Lindsay Frensz**- Cibola NF- New Mexico
- **R4: Chelsea Phillippe**-Uinta-Wasatch-Cache NF- Utah
- **R5:** Nominated ranger was unable to attend
- **R6: Dylan McCoy**- Willamette NF -OR
- **R8: Nick Anderson**- SAWS Partner
- **R9: Rebecca Huncilman**- White Mountain NF- New Hampshire
- **R10: Cam Ogden**- Tongass NF- Alaska



Cam Ogden, Tongass NF -Alaska



WILDERNESS SPOTLIGHT

Irish Wilderness

In 1937, 47 years prior to its designation, the Irish Wilderness prompted a letter from Aldo Leopold to Bob Marshall. Aldo at the time was a professor of game management at the University of Wisconsin. He spent time in the area of the Irish Wilderness while surveying game populations of the southwestern United States and recreating on the Jack's Fork and Current River, where remnants of his cabin's steps still remain.

Aldo's letter to Bob Marshall, who at the time was the head of the Recreation Planning Division of the Forest Service, read:

Dear Bob,

When I visited the "Irish Wilderness" of Missouri in 1929 there was nearly a county of woods substantially roadless.

I have recently seen a map of recently constructed and projected state and federal highways in this area. The largest remaining fragment is 14,000 acres. This is officially labelled as a wilderness area and turkey refuge. I hear it is being fenced.

I need hardly point out to you that aside from the Superior and the Porcupine- whose history I need not recount- this was the only large wild spot in the upper Mississippi Basin.

There must, of course, be pros and cons in this question which I am unfamiliar with, and cannot easily find out. Except as a private citizen, it is also none of my business. On the surface, though, it looks like another case of chopping up a wild area and then labelling one of the chips as a wilderness.

I don't want to burden you, or Lyle Watts, with a report on the question I have raised. I don't even expect a letter. I would, however, like to make sure that somebody with a sympathetic view of all the conflicting interests has given the plans a "once-over" to make sure that the road engineers have not been running wild. I have a special affection for this area, and to an old Service man it is disquieting to feel that conversion into a National Forest or Park always means the esthetic death of a piece of wild country.

Yours sincerely,

Aldo Leopold

Professor of Game Management

The now 16,427 Irish Wilderness is not being managed as a Federally Designated Wilderness. The mixed hardwood forests, springs, and rolling hills that Aldo Leopold himself cherished as a wild place were protected in perpetuity in 1984 by Public Law 98-289 and is stewarded by the Mark Twain National Forest.

For more information on the Irish Wilderness check out [Wilderness Connect!](#)



THANK YOU

FOR YOUR CONTINUED WORK AS

STEWARDS OF

AMERICA'S ENDURING

WILDERNESS RESOURCE!

For more information please visit:

National Wilderness Program: <https://usdagcc.sharepoint.com/sites/fs-nfs-nwg/>

WAG: <https://usdagcc.sharepoint.com/sites/fs-nfs-nwg/SitePages/Chief's-Wilderness-Advisory-Group.aspx>

WIMST: <https://usdagcc.sharepoint.com/sites/fs-nfs-nwg/SitePages/Wilderness-Information-Management-Steering-Team.aspx>

ALWRI: <https://leopold.wilderness.net/>

ACNWTC: <https://carhart.wilderness.net/>

National Trails Program: <https://usdagcc.sharepoint.com/sites/fs-nfs-ntp/>