

WAG *Tales*



NEWSLETTER OF THE CHIEF'S WILDERNESS ADVISORY GROUP

SPRING 2017

In Wildness is the Preservation of the World*

By Sandra Skrien, National Wilderness Program Manager

When I was too young to know better, about 5th grade, I changed this quote to "Wilderness is the Preservation of the World." At that young age, just three or four years before passage of the 1964 Wilderness Act, I didn't make a distinction between wildness and wilderness. My parents had started a canoe outfitting business in northern Minnesota next to the Boundary Waters Canoe Area a few years prior. At that time canoe paddles were commonly made from wood and canoe parties often returned from trips with broken paddles. We were always looking for ways to use broken paddle pieces and I was learning calligraphy. We also were a household that reused many things so I had access to large parchment colored envelopes that protected the Fisher canoe maps my Dad sold to customers. So my project became lettering the adjusted quote on map envelope paper, burning the edges and decoupageing it onto a broken paddle. My Dad had this broken paddle in his canoe outfitting office until he sold

the business and returned the paddle to me.

While my young mind may not have picked out the difference between wildness and wilderness at the time, nor known the importance of not plagiarizing someone else's words – what was apparent is that wilderness was important to me then as it is still today.

I've contemplated wildness and wilderness many times since then and I know I'm in good company as the very meaning of each of those words is often a subject written about by wilderness contemporaries.

Wild places hold my heart and I believe wild places will remain important and valued long into the future. Folks like my Dad, who were adults when the Wilderness Act was passed, wonder if there is a younger generation who will carry on the torch of caring for and valuing wild places. I don't doubt it! Just look around. The Wilderness Fellows program is bringing bright young people into

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(Wilderness is Preservation of the World, continued) wilderness work, and the new entry level temporary employees and volunteers we sign up to work on wilderness crews are excited to learn and share their experiences. Youth programs like Outdoor Explorers Mentoring Program, Youth Conservation Corps, Job Corps, 21st Century Conservation Service Corps, and Pathways are bringing new young people into conservation

work and we can help make sure part of that work is focused on protecting wilderness.

What are you doing to bring new people into the wilderness or teach young people about wild places?

** "In Wilderness is the Preservation of the World" —Henry David Thoreau*

Wilderness Advisory Group Task Team Updates

WSP Funding Team

Our team reviewed and recommended grant proposals for the internal Wilderness Stewardship Performance (WSP) and National Wilderness Stewardship Alliance WSP grant programs for FY17. Our team also worked with the Washington Office (WO) to put the WSP grant funding cycle on a new schedule which awards grants one year ahead of the fiscal year in which projects must be completed. This gives units a full fiscal year to spend the money.

Desk Guide Team

Our team is nearly finished reviewing and updating the Wilderness Stewardship Desk Guide. Every Desk Guide chapter will have new 'common challenges' and 'management practices' sections intended to help managers and line officers make better use of the information. The team also updated all of the web links and additional resources sections. Once the team has finished the content updates, the WO will review the Desk Guide as a way to provide additional guidance to employees. Stay tuned for the official release of the 2017 Wilderness Stewardship Desk Guide. The Desk Guide will be posted on the [WAG page of the National Wilderness SharePoint site](#) and Wilderness.net.

Tools & Templates Team

Our team is continuing work from FY16 developing tools and templates to assist wilderness staff implementing the various elements of WSP. The "Protocols, Tools, Templates" folder is on the [WSP Share-Point Site](#), with subfolders for each WSP element. Our team will continue this work in FY17. One new template will showcase high quality WSP proposals that were funded to serve as examples for others to follow in future years. **New national templates for [wildlife](#) and [social trails](#) are also now posted.** These tools and templates have proven helpful, so before you begin work on a specific element check out the SharePoint site and see if there is a template you can use!

Wilderness Stories Team

Our team has captured stories from wilderness stewards, visitors, and professionals by recording audio interviews. The purpose was to explore cultural relevance and share stories that build connections between people and wilderness. A website linked to the WO Wilderness page focused on the story of wilderness is currently being developed. It will feature video and interview clips. Full interviews will be made available on the WAG SharePoint site.

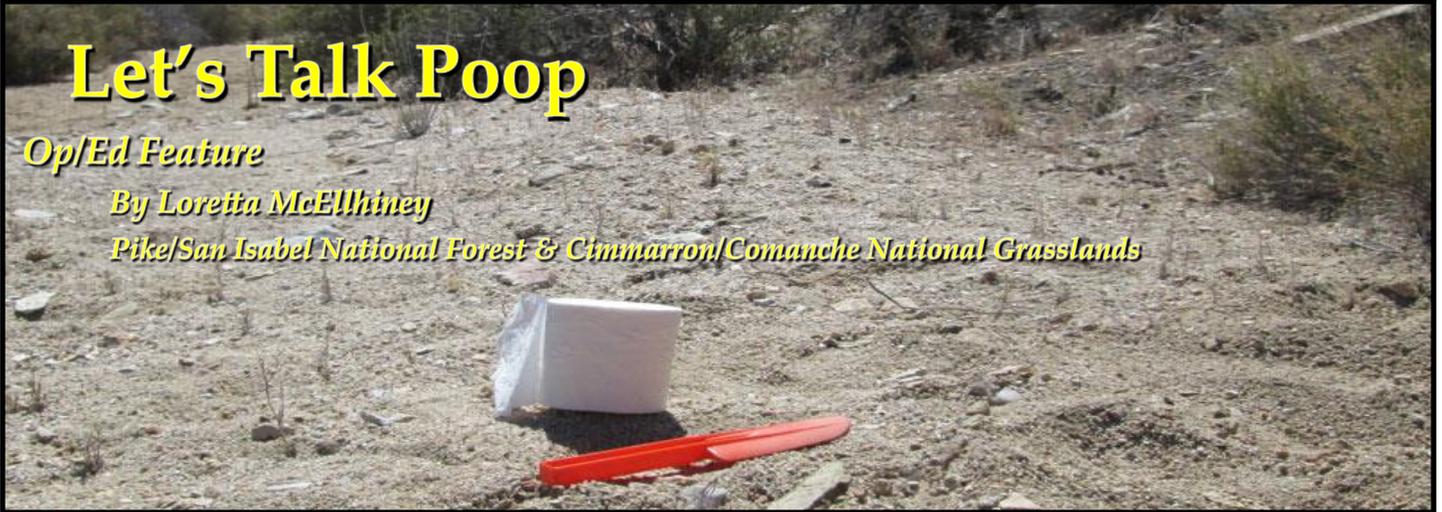


Let's Talk Poop

Op/Ed Feature

By *Loretta McElhiney*

Pike/San Isabel National Forest & Cimarron/Comanche National Grasslands



Human waste disposal in our heavily visited wildlands is a concern for many land managers. But the available research still leaves unanswered the question of the impact from backcountry human waste, including threats to surface water and soil contamination, as well as potential transmission of disease-causing pathogens. We need more research. Could we get visitors to accept the practice of mixing feces with soil to help reduce the survival rate of disease-causing pathogens? Are visitors willing to pack out their human waste? Until we have hard data we will continue to see this topic buried in the proverbial cat

Have a comment?

Send your comments on this Op/Ed and the WAG Tales [winter issue Op/Eds](#) to your regional WAG representative. Comments will be compiled and published in a following issue of WAG Tales.

Have an opinion?

Submit your own Op/Ed! WAG-Tales is accepting Op/Eds for the next spring and winter issues. Contact your regional [WAG representative](#) to submit your Op/Ed today.

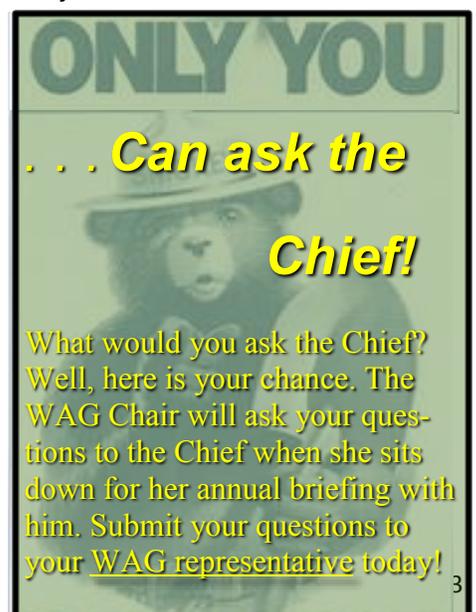
hole. This lack of information makes it difficult for land managers and visitors to determine specific practices that are best in each individual environment.

Few studies have analyzed the aesthetic and potential human health impact of the ever increasing number of outdoor recreationists and the solid human waste they leave behind. As a backcountry worker for nearly 30 years, I can say anecdotally that I am seeing more exposed and buried human waste in our backcountry areas and that much of this waste is near our precious waterways. In some heavily visited areas it is not uncommon to dig into someone else's cat hole and it is getting increasingly difficult to find a place to set up your tent in an area that hasn't already been used as someone's toilet.

Unfortunately there is scant scientific research on this important topic and what research is available should concern anyone who relies on

backcountry water sources for their survival or sleeps on the ground in heavily visited recreation sites.

A variety of solutions to the human waste problem have been instituted, from providing rustic toilets in the backcountry to requiring campers to pack out their waste in bags with desiccant and odor control, to education in the construction of cat holes and trench toilets. New research is needed to determine the effectiveness of these approaches. The problem must be addressed and funding of effective methods is necessary.



Partner Spotlight

Down and Dirty: Job Corps Students Get the Job Done

By Adam Washebek, Wilderness ranger, Bitterroot National Forest

The mission of Forest Service Job Corps Civilian Conservation Centers (JCCCCs) is to train eligible youth who are ages 16-24 in educational, professional, and vocational skills while assisting in the conservation of our nation's natural resources and contributing value to our communities. With recreation program budgets in the Forest Service steadily declining, Job Corps saw an opportunity for their students who are young, diverse, and energetic to improve our national wildernesses and trail systems. In early 2015, Job Corps, the Arthur Carhart National Wilderness Training Center, and other Forest Service staff teamed together to pilot test a Wilderness Discovery Certificate training for students at Trapper Creek Job Corps Center in Darby, MT.



The Certificate program was built, created, and implemented by Steve Archibald, education specialist at the Carhart Center, and Adam Washebek, wilderness ranger on the Bitterroot National Forest. The comprehensive, multi-phase curriculum teaches the history of wilderness, reasons for the protection of wild places, managing recreation in wilderness, and proper use of wilderness-appropriate tools. The training culminates with students working on public lands, improving trails in wilderness, and providing unique, potentially life changing experiences.

Phase One is classroom training where students learn what wilderness is and why it's important. Students learn how in less than 200 years the American west went from

cultures often with no word for wilderness to Congress designating 9 million acres of land as wilderness to preserve the wild places we were quickly losing. Phase Two is a self-guided training for students to learn about the history and use of wilderness, and also provides an opportunity for personal reflection. Phase Three focuses on field work where students learn Leave No Trace principles and all aspects of basic trail maintenance, how to live and work out of a backpack, how to use a crosscut saw and axe and other wilderness tools, and then do the trail work. This certificate program received the Forest Service's National Wilderness Partnership Champion Award in 2016.

Students are eligible to be placed on Forest Service districts for a season of work alongside Forest Service crews. The students come to a district

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“Who Ya Gonna Call?”

By Alice Cohen, Watauga Ranger District, Cherokee National Forest

As a Wilderness Manager in the South, I find myself mostly challenged by heavy use and wildland/urban interface issues. The Big Laurel Branch and Pond Mountain Wilderness areas on the Watauga Ranger District are surrounded by communities, roads, popular recreation lakes and most significantly private land boundaries abutting the Wilderness boundaries. We are considered a “Recreation Forest.”

2016 was a banner year for our developed recreation program. With that popularity comes demands to focus our time on developed rather than dispersed recreation such as trails and wilderness. The season was progressing when a huge storm struck fast and hard along the Watauga Lake corridor in early July. Trees fell on tents and trailers. Downed trees blocked miles of road in the surrounding area. People were trapped at the end of narrow roads where they had launched their boats into the lake and campers were soaked and scared. Everyone was called to respond to this natural disaster.

While forest staff were focused on the front country where the majority of the visitors were, our volunteer partners were hitting the trails! The Tennessee Eastman Hiking and Canoeing Club (TEHCC) and Southern Appalachian Wilderness Stewards (SAWS) responded quickly to the need. TEHCC was in the field, crosscut saws and axes in hand, to survey the damage along

the Appalachian National Scenic Trail (AT). TEHCC is the managing partner with the Appalachian Trail Conservancy in partnership with the US Forest Service.

The AT traverses both Pond Mountain and Big Laurel Branch Wilderness areas. AT trail section maintainers teamed up with TEHCC to assess the storm damage and remove obstructions to allow passage. Reports were coming in that the AT within the Big Laurel Branch Wilderness had hundreds of trees down.

SAWS called me to offer the support of their seasonal crews to tackle the backcountry challenge. Recognizing the enormity of the task, they diverted several crew hitches to the affected area. SAWS was able to cut out approximately 300 stems along the eight-mile stretch of the trail bordering Watauga Lake.

Shout out to you volunteers for your huge contributions and quick response to the July 2016 storm impacts to Wilderness trails in East Tennessee.



Interdisciplinary Wilderness Management:

Working with Range Staff to Make Progress on WSP

*By Dan Morris, Recreation Officer
Region 4, Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest*

The Carson Iceberg Wilderness (CI) was designated by the California Wilderness Act of 1984. As with many wilderness areas, the practice of livestock grazing predated the legislation. This Wilderness is managed by the Humboldt – Toiyabe National Forest (Carson RD) in Region 4 and the Stanislaus National Forest (Summit RD and Calaveras RD) in Region 5; and both forests have active grazing allotments within the CI.

The CI is not a heavily visited wilderness by Sierra standards, but does have some busy trails as well as the Pacific Crest Trail (PCT). About 35 miles of the PCT cuts through the Wilderness area. There are also many trail-less valleys and areas that are seldom visited, which is somewhat unique in the Sierra Nevada.

There are 12 active grazing allotments within the Wilderness and many areas where visitors will encounter the sights, sounds, and evidence of live-

stock. The Forest Service receives many complaints from PCT hikers about the damage caused by livestock in the Wilderness.

Because livestock grazing is an allowable use, but there are ongoing impacts to wilderness character, the Forests felt that grazing would be an important element for Wilderness Stewardship Performance.

The Forests received a WSP grant that included funding to address some portions of the Grazing element for FY16. These funds provided a tremendous opportunity to wrestle with some of the issues related to grazing from an interdisciplinary perspective.

The key deliverable of the funding was developing and testing a protocol to monitor wilderness-specific concerns related to grazing allotments within the Wilderness. On each Forest, the wilderness managers worked with the range specialist to go through the Wilderness Grazing Checklist tem-

plate for each allotment and identify areas of concern.

Working through the checklist was a learning opportunity for both the range specialists and the wilderness managers as we learned a little about each other's programs and could clearly see the benefit of working across disciplines to improve grazing management in the CI.

The protocol was developed by the Carson Ranger District wilderness manager in coordination with the Carson Ranger District Range staff and a seasonal botany technician who was hired to complete the monitoring. The botany tech brought a data collection background from many seasons working for the Forest Service in botany, wildlife, and range, as well as experience working in wilderness.

The protocol was also used on the Stanislaus, and both Forests are in the process of reviewing a modified protocol developed after the first field season. The

(continued on next page)

(Interdisciplinary Management, continued)



Short Term Visual Effects

protocol is simple and repeatable based on photo plots, overall health of the allotment from an ecological perspective, and tangible effects to wilderness character.

In 2016, field staff were hired to test the protocol. Courtney Ghiglieri, the Carson Ranger District Range Specialist said “The Carson Ranger District successfully managed 6 grazing allotments within the CI in 2016. Forest Service personnel conducted short-term permit compliance monitoring, and additional ESA monitoring to satisfy Biological Opinion requirements. Overall, the allotments were grazed to standard, and there were no non-

compliance issues. Grazing effects to wilderness character were minimal but present, and visual effects are generally short term. The grazing season was a success due to the continued partnership between the Humboldt – Toiyabe National Forest and Stanislaus National Forest, the improved teamwork between wilderness and range programs, as well as improved stewardship shown by the permittees.”

The process of working together to develop this protocol has strengthened the interdisciplinary management of the CI and improved awareness of both resources for grazing and wilderness management.



Meadow T1-T3 at Om

(Partner Spotlight, continued from pg 4.)

with training, insurance, and food and are ready to swing an axe or pull a saw on day one. The Bitterroot National Forest supplemented a four-person Forest Service crew with two Job Corps students for the past two years to increase field productivity.

Currently, 19 of the 26 JCCCCs have had staff participate in the Wilderness Discovery Certificate training with the goal of having this training program at all 26 Centers over the next two years. Trapper Creek, Schenck and Cass Job Corps Centers have already graduated students through this program, providing students with a

certificate and credentials to help them acquire fun, rewarding jobs with the Forest Service. To become involved with a JCCCC, or find students who may be able to help your local wilderness or trails program, contact Cyndi Szymanski at 303-927-8235 or ceszymanski@fs.fed.us.



Wilderness Character Monitoring Update

*By Peter Landres
Aldo Leopold Wilderness Research Institute*

The Forest Service's Wilderness Character Monitoring Technical Guide will soon be published. It will provide one-stop shopping for what, why, and how the Forest Service will implement wilderness character monitoring (WCM). Consistent with the other three wilderness managing agencies, the Technical Guide is based on the interagency lessons-learned Keeping It Wild 2 WCM strategy that was then tailored to fit Forest Service needs and data. Appendices in the Technical Guide provide step-by-step instructions for gathering, processing, analyzing, and storing the data for every measure.

Work on the Technical Guide began in early 2015 with a core team of five Forest Service wilderness specialists and 14 current and retired Forest Service, and other resource specialists. The first draft was reviewed by 11 Forest Service wilderness specialists and 19 current and retired Forest Service resource specialists. Based on this review, the core team made substantial revisions and the Technical Guide was officially released in mid-2016 for broad internal and external review; consolidated comments from six Forest Service regions and two NGO groups were received.

From the outset, this monitoring was designed to be practical, cost- and time-efficient, and provide the opportunity for local flexibility while maintaining national consistency. Following the example of the former 10-year Wilderness Stewardship Challenge and the current Wilderness Stewardship Performance (WSP),

this monitoring is based on the local selection of a minimum of 15 measures from a pool of 28. Importantly, WSP and WCM complement one another: WSP tracks stewardship actions taken by the agency while WCM tracks the outcomes of those actions as well as selected outside forces acting on the wilderness.

The groundwork for implementing Forest Service WCM begins in FY17 with the National Wilderness Program filling two national level positions that will be crucial to facilitating field implementation of WCM, and a Wilderness Character Monitoring module is being built in NRM-Wilderness. In FY18, WCM training will begin. WCM baseline assessments will be completed in at least one wilderness per region, or all the wildernesses on one forest per region. In FY19, full implementation begins with 20% of Forest Service wildernesses completing WCM baseline assessments. Stay tuned, a lot will be happening!



Need help keeping up with WSP, grant opportunities and staying in the loop? Here are some useful links.

[WSP new grant schedule for FY18/FY19](#)

Get ready for it!

[WSP Guidebook \(v2017.1\)](#)

[Tools & Templates](#) — don't reinvent the wheel.

[NWSA Grants](#) — check for more opportunities.

[National Wilderness Program Site](#) — where the WCM technical guide will be posted.

WIMST UPDATE



The Wilderness Information Management Steering Team on December 2016, in Troutdale, OR.

Back Row: Anne Mebane (NRM), Ivy Baker (NRM), Troy Hall (OR State University), Stacy Duke (R9), Steve Boucher (WO Emeritus), Nick Glidden (R4). **Middle Row:** Charis Parker (R5), Karisa Garner (R10), Sue Spear (WO), Colter Pence (R1), Justin Ewer (R6). **Front Row:** Tim Eling (R8), Kevin Cannon (R2).

Maintain WSP Guidebook

What does that phrase mean? How many points can I earn? I have this unique situation... After the first year of implementing WSP, there were some questions needing clarification. This task team reviewed the WSP Guidebook, paying particular attention to FAQs (Frequently Asked Questions). The guidebook has a FAQ section for each element. This April, check out the great WSP Guidebook for some enhanced FAQs. FAQs were answered by teams consisting of Subject Matter Experts and key Wilderness Program Representatives.

Wilderness Content on Forest Service Website

This task team worked with the Office of Communication to improve the information found on the [headquarters website](#). An entire new look with all new content, photos, and links will replace what is currently available to the public.

Complexity Class Rating

The Complexity Class Rating task team worked on updating and modifying the Wilderness Complexity Class Rating spreadsheet. The complexity rating spreadsheet has been in place since the early 2000's, but has not been updated since 2010. The updates are intended to reflect changes in program emphasis (WSP), improved availability of data, and the workload at the field level.

WSP Data Reporting Quality Assessment

The goal of this task team was to assess the quality and consistency of data reported for WSP. This will be used to identify areas where improvement may be needed and to identify products that are worth sharing with the broader wilderness community. The team expects to complete its task in late spring.

Wilderness Information Naming & Guide

If you are new to the Forest Service, took a new job on a different forest, or looking for a standard way to file information about your wilderness, please look into the recently updated ["Wilderness Information Filepath Naming Convention and Structure Guide."](#) This consistent file structure and naming convention will make it easier to find and access wilderness area information no matter what forest you are on. The recently completed white paper can be found on the [WIMST Share-Point site](#).

NRM Wilderness Character Monitoring

The Wilderness Character Monitoring application in NRM is currently being built! The goal is to have the application up and running by the end of 2017. Members of this team are working with NRM on a regular basis to create an application that will be user friendly and provide the data needed for wilderness character monitoring.

Get to Know Your Local WAG Representative



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



WAG 2016-2017 Left to right: (back row) Jon Erickson, Ken Straley, Peter Landres, Steve Boutcher (emeritus), Jennifer MacDonald, Dan Morris, Alice Cohen, (front row) Sandra Skrien, Becky Shufelt, Chief Tidwell, Ann Schwaller, Katie Knotek, Ros Wu, Annette Smits, Sue Spear, Dusty Vaughn (not pictured).

Region 1: [Katie Knotek](#)

Lochsa/Powell RD, Nez Perce-Clearwater NF

Region 2: [Ros Wu](#)

Pagosa RD, San Juan NF

Region 3: [Annette Smits](#)

Glenwood RD, Gila NF

Region 4: [Dan Morris](#)

Carson RD, Humboldt-Toiyabe NF

Region 5: [Becky Shufelt](#)

Pacific RD, Eldorado NF

Region 6: [Jon Erickson](#)

Columbia River Gorge NSA

Region 8: [Tom Fouts](#)

Watauga RD, Cherokee NF

Region 9: [Ann Schwaller](#) (Vice Chair)

Superior NF

Region 10: [Jennifer Mac Donald](#) (Chair)

Sitka RD, Tongass NF

Washington Office: [Sandy Skrien](#) (NWPM)

[Dusty Vaughn](#) (WW&SR Specialist)

Arthur Carhart National Wilderness Training Center: [Ken Straley](#), Wilderness Specialist

Aldo Leopold Wilderness Research Institute:
[Peter Landres](#), Ecologist