



WAG Tales



NEWSLETTER OF THE CHIEF'S WILDERNESS ADVISORY GROUP

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The Tools of Our Trade

WAG Chair Jonathan Erickson

7his edition of WAG Tales is dedicated to the art of traditional skills; the use of crosscut saws, axes, animal-packing, blasting, and much more.

In 2004, I was hired onto the Sisters Ranger District wilderness and trails crew. It was my first year working in wilderness and I was green. The other three members of my crew had at least 20 years of collective experience. Our crew would cross-cut, rock-bar, and axe our way through hundreds upon hundreds of down burned trees after the B&B fire (90,769 acres). I listened to their instruction and watched their ways. The old school method of learning by doing. Sizing up trees for tension, bind, cut order, and angle. Jason Stegner, Brandon Haraughty, and Justin Ewer patiently mentored me in the art of traditional skills. The 'sching' of the cross cut, the satisfying whack of the axe, and the long-lasting function of well-placed stone.

Both then and now, wilderness and recreation programs are going through huge funding and structural changes, resulting in fewer personnel conducting trail stewardship work. There's more to do than any of us can keep up with, even with over 400 partner groups assisting the effort. As veteran trail specialists retire, decades of technical trail expertise leave the Forest Service which further deepens the challenge of our current situation. The WAG has heard from coast to coast there are mounting pressures to improve access into wilderness and to abandon traditional tools for motorized ones.

The Forest Service has been a leader among land management agencies when it comes to wilderness stewardship, and for maintaining or improving the undeveloped quality of wilderness character. The Forest Service determined the minimum tool for day-to-day operations is the use of non-mechanized and non-motorized tools. While the policy hasn't changed, wilderness access is driving conversations and decisions to authorize motorized tool use for everyday wilderness work. Some argue it's for efficiency, others for safety, and some express the challenges of training and maintaining qualifications. WAG and WIMST has recognized this as an important issue for wilderness and we are eager to engage through an unbiased inquiry. Because of this need, a collective "Supergroup" was formed to collaborate with the National Saw Coordinator, National Technology Development Center (NTDC), the Trail Advisory Group (TAG), and key individuals. Our goal is to share with you and leadership our key findings so that we can all have an informed conversation of the importance of maintaining traditional tool use in Wilderness. As this conversation evolves, the WAG hopes for a safe and productive season of water bar clearing, cross-cutting, axe-swinging, stone-placing, blowing things up and most importantly, to Keeping Wilderness Wild!

Wilderness Advisory Group Task Team Updates

WSP Funding

Wilderness Stewardship Performance funding proposals for FY19 were successfully received, reviewed, and awarded by the WAG and our counterparts in the Washington Office in 2018.

Many of the selected projects are on track to be successfully completed this year, however, some units either did not receive the intended funds for this important stewardship work or saw the loss of the interdisciplinary nature of that funding source. Besides prioritizing funding that gets put directly into tangible “on the ground” projects, one of the strongest elements of this program is that it recognizes that the nature of our stewardship work behind the Wilderness boundary is not solely tied to recreational impacts. Land managers of many disciplines have an important role to play in successfully preserving the Wilderness Character of our designated Wilderness areas. In the few years that this program has been moving forward it is serving to not only accomplish important work on the ground, but also bring additional partners and management specialists into the backcountry environment. This program is at a crucial juncture as our Agency decides how and if they will implement this program in FY20 and beyond. If you have witnessed good work getting done with these WSP funds then we encourage you to tell your story. It is our job as field level personnel to communicate up the chain of command the aspects of our jobs that work and those that do not. Lead from where you are, stand up for what is important, and keep it wild.

Wilderness Desk Guide

The Wilderness Stewardship Desk Guide Task Team is working to complete the reviews that begun last year. At the end of April 2019, the desk guide was sent to the Washington Office for a final review. Once the WO has completed their review, the guide will be released for publication on the [National Wilderness Program Site](#).

Partnerships

The partnership task team’s briefing paper was completed and presented to the directors and staff of the Wilderness, Wild & Scenic Rivers (Sue Spear),

National Partnership Office (Jacqueline Emanuel), and the Recreation, Heritage and Volunteer Resources (Michiko Martin). The presentation highlighted capacity, funding, and morale. We felt the team met the objective of informing leadership about the current state of volunteer and partnership usage in wilderness programs, however, there is no closure to this complex issue. The briefing paper is ready for dissemination, and a copy has been sent to each WAG representative and stored on the WAG SharePoint site.

Wilderness Permit Systems

The Wilderness Permit System team reviewed several existing diverse wilderness permit systems to develop brief descriptions of permit system types with helpful references and links for wilderness managers. The team also reviewed visitor use permit systems from across the nation, spoke with managers using them, and studied three main types: Voluntary self-registration, mandatory non-limiting and mandatory limiting. Phase 1 will serve as a starting point for managers to assist in the development of a wilderness visitor use permit system. Phase 2 will entail more detailed instruction with specific planning examples of all three types of permit systems.

The Visitor Use Permit Systems Summary Paper will include:

- Descriptions of the three aforementioned visitor use permit types
- Discussion on the application and implementation process of these visitor use permit types
- Description of the process to implement next level permit type
- On-line references



Why Use Traditional Tools?

The use of traditional tools and skills for necessary administrative activities in wilderness is a basic principle of wilderness stewardship.

The basis for this principle is found in the Wilderness Act and implemented through agency regulations and policy.

There are many tool options available and many are currently being used in wilderness. Using the minimum tool combined with skill and experience can maintain wilderness character and can still get the job done. Wilderness is like any

other resource that has special provisions to care for that resource. Simply using traditional tools and skills can protect these special areas from impacts caused by humans and other natural events.



The Wilderness Act does not prohibit mechanized tools, such as block and tackle or a hand drill, though it does prohibit mechanical transport and motorized equipment use in Wilderness. Traditional tools do provide wilderness crews a mechanical advantage to complete tasks and is appropriate in Wilderness. The use of mechanical or motorized equipment may be authorized by the appropriate line officer, and some instances will require a Minimum Requirement Analysis (MRA) to determine if the minimum tool is appropriate.

Forest Service Policy definitions are:

Mechanical Transport: Any contrivance for moving people or material in or over land, water, or air, having moving parts, that provides a mechanical advantage to the user, and that is powered by a living or nonliving power source. This includes, but is not limited to, sailboats, hang gliders, parachutes, bicycles, game carriers, carts, and wagons.

It does not include wheelchairs when used as a necessary medical appliance. It also does not include skis, snowshoes, rafts, canoes, sleds, travois, or similar primitive devices without moving parts.

Motorized Equipment: Machines that use a motor, engine, or other nonliving power sources. This includes, but is not limited to, such machines as chain saws, aircraft, snowmobiles, generators, motorboats, and motor vehicles.

It does not include small battery or gas powered hand carried devices such as shavers, wristwatches, flashlights, cameras, stoves, or other similar small equipment.

For more Policy direction, review Forest Service Manual 2320 ([FSM 2320 - Wilderness Management](#))

The Value of Traditional Tools



Crews using traditional tools and skills to accomplish work in wilderness not only help ensure the 'minimum tool' is utilized, but can also provide other values. The use of traditional tools and skills typically requires more human-powered effort and therefore requires the consideration of whether the task really needs to occur in wilderness. If it does, then what would be the minimum tool for the task?

The use of these tools creates an environment that demands problem solving skills, detailed planning, and improved collaboration efforts before the project begins. Traditional tools help preserve valuable skills among wilderness managers, crews, contractors, and volunteers.

When the public observes the use of a traditional tool in wilderness or at demonstrations outside wilderness the reaction is often of pride and of their connection to wild and primitive places. If these tools were not used in and for wilderness, it's quite possible these skills would be lost forever. Future generations would never be able to appreciate the hard work of a time without the use of motorized or mechanized equipment, and never be able to marvel at the skill and dedication of those who work hard in wilderness.

Ultimately, traditional tools and skills retain the heritage and culture of wildlands and of the Forest Service.

Traditional Tools

- Rock Bar
- Crosscut Saw
- Double Bit Axe
- Felling Axe
- Block and Tackle
- Pulaski's
- McLeod's
- Shovel
- Hand Winch
- Grip Hoists
- Indian Pump
- Native Materials
- Pack Animals
- Explosives

Traditional Skills

RIGGING and ROCKWORK

- Tree Climbing • Rigging Portable Backcountry Tripod • Hand Drilling • Breaking Rock • Rock Carriers • Stone Masonry

EXPLOSIVES and DRILLING

- Using BMS Micro-Blaster for Trail Work • Explosives for Trails and Snags • Obliterating Animal Carcasses • Boulder Busters

TRANSPORTATION

- Packstock Use For Wildland Fire Support • Packstock Use To Transport Supplies • Resources Project Field Support • Stock Drawn Equipment • Rafting • Canoeing • Dog Sleds

CARPENTRY • BLACKSMITH • TRAIL CONSTRUCTION

Do You Have An Inventory Of Your Traditional Skills? Evaluate It [Here](#)

Traditional Tool Resources



Resources can vary and the following does not intend to capture every opportunity available for crews working in Wilderness.

It is the hope of WAG to generate a conversation on the importance and the value of these tools and skills in order to perpetuate wilderness character for future generations.

Agency Trainings

- Wilderness Connect Toolboxes

A compilation of resources on current issues in wilderness management.

- Ninemile Wildlands Training Center (NWTC)

Classes cover all different types of traditional skills: care and handling of traditional tools, horsemanship and packing, historic building preservation and maintenance, and low impact backcountry stock use.

- Arthur Carhart National Wilderness Training Center

Classroom courses, self-paced and instructor led E-learning courses, and free webinars. Access to wilderness core competencies are also available.

- Region 5 Packstock Center of Excellence

Education and training offerings focus primarily on the use of pack stock as a minimum impact traditional tool. Additional emphasis is placed on the Wilderness Act and the use of primitive tools.

- Regional Wilderness Ranger Academy

Contact your Regional Program Managers for dates and information. Academies typically offer trainings for crosscut saw, packstock orientation, Leave No Trace, first aid, and orienteering.

Partner Trainings

- The SCA Traditional Skills Trainings

Offerings for crosscut saw, saw sharpening, trail maintenance, Leave No Trace, and first aid.

- Chapman's Sharp Crosscut Saws

Offering crosscut saw sharpening instruction by Dolly Chapman

- Backcountry Horsemen of America

Courses vary by local units. Offerings include Leave No Trace, trail maintenance, and stock packing.

- Pacific Crest Trail Association

Offerings the fundamental skills of trail design and maintenance

- Wilderness Skills Institute

Offerings crosscut saw, first aid, rock splitting shaping, Leave No Trace, and trail maintenance.

- Northern Rockies Wilderness Skills Institute

Offerings include first aid, horsemanship, trail maintenance, crosscut saw, and axemanship.

Media

- Boulder Busting (mp4)
- Snag Dropping (.mov)
- Fuzzy Stumping (PPT)

Research

- International Journal of Wilderness
- Aldo Leopold Wilderness Research Institute

Forms and Manuals

- Traditional Skills Inventory for 'Workforce Capacity'
- Missoula Technology and Development Center
- Minimum Requirements Analysis (MRA)
- San Dimas Technology and Development Center

Ranger to Ranger

Traditional Tools: A Real World Application

Jeremy Evans, B.S.

Wilderness Manager

Humboldt - Toiyabe National Forest

Mountain City - Ruby Mountains - Jarbridge Ranger District

Let me start by saying that I am biased. I love Wilderness and spending time outdoors, and wild places has been my passion my whole life. I learned woodworking from my Dad and always enjoyed building things the ol' fashion way. I love the feel of a well-used hand tool. The feel of the weight of an axe when you swing it and the song a crosscut saw blade makes when being used well. These are things that make me feel all warm and fuzzy inside. I love traditional tools in Wilderness; from axes to pack animals. As a manager of four Wilderness Areas, they also are literally the tools I use to manage the trails, trailheads and other places in these special areas. Using these tools all help to preserve the character of our Wilderness Areas and binds us to the primitive, non-motorized mandates of the Wilderness Act itself.

The Law doesn't require us to go back to the Stone Age! Maybe only the Iron Age! We can use tools, just the minimum necessary to do the job. As a manager, I am often faced with trying to change folk's perception that traditional tools are inefficient, outdated, too cumbersome, and too uneconomical. In fact these tools, if used by trained professionals, can be quite efficient and safe. However, in my short time working for the Forest Service, roughly 14-years all together, I have noticed the folks who have the knowledge and skills are fading from our agency. It also seems to be getting harder to get the training and experience to gain and use these skills. If we are to manage our Wilderness areas and stay true to the Wilderness Act, we cannot let this happen. We need to spread the love and knowledge of these traditional skills and tools to everyone willing to learn. We also cannot leave it up to our partners to shoulder the burden. If we do not have more people trained, including firefighters and people outside of Recreation and Wilderness Management, there will be less incentive for our leadership to not use motorized tools in Wilderness.

Using traditional tools and skills are important, and are required when conducting administrative activities in Wilderness. Using traditional tools and skills to work in Wilderness requires problem solving, collaboration, and planning. Currently, with diminished budgets and fewer Recreation and Wilderness crews, performing this kind of work has been getting more difficult. It's important for all of us to recognize that there are benefits to using these traditional tools and skills. The public benefits by being able to enjoy wilderness that is as free of human interference, and at the same time the public appreciates that these skills are preserved and used. Other benefits are that we preserve Wilderness Character, preserve the feeling of solitude, and keeps Wilderness untrammled. We should all be traditional tool advocates and try to keep these tools and skills alive for future generations of wilderness lovers.





The Public's View of Deferred Maintenance

Taylor Orr

Former Wilderness Ranger (1980-1985)

Eagle Cap Wilderness, Wallowa-Whitman National Forest

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[Content edited for space, full unedited letter is available]

Fast forward 30-odd years to my being recently retired from cattle ranching with a yearning for the mountains and my old stomping grounds. I spent considerable time planning my return to Eagle Cap by combing over old maps and studying my tattered field notes to develop a ten-day loop itinerary in my old wilderness ranger territory, the Minam River and Catherine Creek drainages.

The moment I arrived at Moss Springs Trailhead I knew the game had changed; picnic tables overgrown with weeds, garbage cans overflowing, bulletin boards and wilderness permit boxes in disrepair. Besides Little Minam Trail #1942 and Cartwheel Ridge Trail #1907, where some good work had recently been done, and the Horse Ranch Trail #190 all the trails I travelled or attempted to travel were in abominable condition. It appeared that many trails had not been cleared in years with user created re-routes around fallen trees commonplace, water bars and drainage dips choked with debris causing extensive erosion in places. Some of the higher elevation trail sections are passable but the tread has become dangerously narrow and in some cases is sloughing away. I consider most of the trails I travelled in the Minam River and Catherine Creek drainages hazardous to stock travel with extensive resource damage occurring in some areas. Some trails are flagged impassable to stock. Trails represent a huge investment and some of that is being lost due to a lack of annual Level-1 maintenance. I found wilderness boundary and trail signing to be poor to non-existent. Some trail junction signing is absent, illegible, or misleading.

Equally disturbing is the poor condition of guard stations and backcountry administrative cabins. At Catherine Creek cabin, there was no signing to indicate it was Forest Service property. The door was unlocked and held shut by a T-post. Judging by the graffiti the cabin has been routinely used by the public for years. The cabin was dirty and messy, and unfit to use. Millard, Standley, and Bear Creek cabins were locked and secured but looked as though they had not be used, maintained, or supplied in a long while. The pasture fence at Millard cabin is gone, the hitch racks at all four backcountry cabins are gone or in disrepair. The "modern" chinking at Standley cabin is failing leaving open gaps in the cabin walls. These cabins were an important component of our backcountry work in the 1980's and used by wilderness rangers, trail crews, range folks, Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife employees, as well as being used during management reviews and show-me trips. Plus, they hold tremendous historic value. Backcountry administrative sites are crucial to the efficient management of Wilderness. Working in the backcountry is far different from recreating there, with the focus on project accomplishments, not camping chores.

To add insult to injury was the evidence of blatant illegal activities that are occurring in the backcountry. From fresh mountain bike tracks, to a preponderance of chainsaw use to clear trail, fell standing trees and cut firewood in fall hunting camps. On the surface, it seems awfully bold of someone to ride a mountain bike deep into the Eagle Cap, or to pack and use a chainsaw in camp or along the trail but perhaps not, if it is well known the Forest Service doesn't have, at the very least, a custodial presence to preserve wilderness character.

What was once a shining star in wilderness and trails management, Eagle Cap now has the appearance of an impoverished third-rate program. I am haunted by these revelations and it is lost on me how this could have been allowed to happen. I live in the Bitterroot Valley of Montana and do volunteer work for the Bitterroot National Forest thru the Backcountry Horsemen organization, so I am well aware of the Forest Service trail maintenance backlog and budget shortcomings. The use of volunteers has its place, especially in the frontcountry, but not back to back ten-day hitch wilderness work. And that is what it takes to manage backcountry and provide a custodial Forest Service presence.

What I hope to learn from your response to my letter is not how bad the budget has been, I get that, but your thoughts on the future of the management of the Eagle Cap Wilderness, addressing how you plan to fulfill the mandate to preserve wilderness character and provide reasonable access to the public. And if you can offer any advice on how I, as a member of the public, can help improve things at Eagle Cap, please share that as well.



A Hurculean Task

Kit Dickey and Janet Fullwood

Pacific Crest Trail Association

PCT Communicator, February 2010

In spring of 2009, Wayne Chevalier, Trail Crew Supervisor for the McKenzie River Ranger District of Oregon's Willamette National Forest, was assigned a daunting task. A freak wind storm in October 2007 had mowed down a 150-foot wide swath of old-growth timber along the main equestrian-access trail leading up to the Pacific Crest Trail and the Three Sisters Wilderness Area from the west side of the Cascades.

"It was like a big tornado had come over the mountains. It traveled straight down the Foley Ridge Trail for about two miles at a location about three miles from the PCT," Chevalier explained during a presentation given at the Pacific Crest Trail Association's recent Trail Operations Conference in Eagle Creek, Ore.

Along a 1.5-mile section of trail in the most severely impacted area, between 300 and 400 old-growth trees were uprooted and fell, essentially closing the route. An equestrian hunting party camped nearby told rangers of huddling in their tents, listening to the incredible crash of falling trees. The following day they discovered their exit route impassable, forcing them to take a detour of more than 20 miles.

The High Cascades receive heavy snowfall, and the winter of 2007-2008 experienced above average precipitation. It wasn't until mid-August that members of the Forest Service and the Emerald Empire Chapter of the Back Country Horsemen of Oregon (BCHO) could conduct a scouting trip to assess the damage. The extent of the devastation was staggering.

"It was solid blowdown; you could walk from tree to tree." Chevalier said.

Becky Hope with the BCHO put it this way: "From Google Earth it looked like footprints left by a huge giant that had stomped its way through the forest."

Clearing the trail would require a large crew working for a long period of time, perhaps years. The Emerald Empire BCHO pledged to take on the project in tandem with the Forest Service. Through the efforts of Marlene Orchard, BCHO's Public Lands chair, and Steve Otoupalik, Wilderness and Trails Manager with the McKenzie River Ranger District, Oregon's Title II program, which funnels timber revenues into community development projects, approved a grant to reopen the trail.

A project of this scope requires not just strategy and faultless logistical planning, but creative outreach. Chevalier, seeing a way to turn adversity into opportunity, decided to market the project as an advanced crosscut saw training event. He sent out an e-mail soliciting volunteers interested in honing their skills on large, technical trees with multiple binds in rough, remote terrain.

(Continued on page 9)





A Hurculean Task

Kit Dickey and Janet Fullwood

Pacific Crest Trail Association

PCT Communicator, February 2010

(Continued from page 8)

“We had volunteers lining up to get on the list and get out there and cut these logs,” Chevalier said. “I had Helitack teams from Eastern Oregon calling to see if they could bring crews out to train. Opportunities to train on trees like this are hard to find.”

Chevalier’s request also was picked up by Dana Berthold, the PCTA’s regional representative for the Columbia Cascades Region. The event was announced at the annual PCTA-Forest Service training weekend at Allingham Station in mid-May. More than 40 volunteers committed to the late-June project.

Mother Nature had other ideas, however. A late snowmelt postponed the scheduled work party, and only six PCTA representatives were able to free up time to participate when work actually got under way later in the summer. The Emerald Empire chapter of BCHO provided stock and experienced packers who made multiple trips transporting maintenance tools and camp supplies.

“They brought in just about everything but the kitchen sink,” Chevalier said. “We had hoists, jacks, saws, Peaveys, block and tackle and pry bars to go around. Without the support of the Back County Horsemen, the project would have been a flop. There was no way we could have hauled all that gear up there, so we were real grateful.”

In July, three Forest Service cutting teams along with the PCTA and BCHO volunteers simultaneously tackled the job. “Most of the trees were over 24 inches; it was pretty technical, There was a lot more to it than just cutting.” Chevalier said. “Removing the cut log rounds alone was a challenge.”

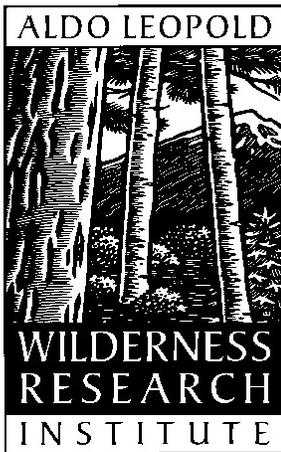
In terms of education, the difficult exercise was a smashing success.

“Classic log jams teach quite a bit about where and why and how,” Chevalier explained. “Using this kind of thing as an opportunity for training is really worthwhile. You’ll learn more cutting trees like this in a week than you will in a whole summer or two of cutting smaller trees.”



In the end, a log-out project estimated to require two seasons was accomplished in just 60 days with the help of the previously mentioned crews and a special tread reconstruction crew from the Northwest Youth Corps that spent more than three weeks on site building new sections of trail around some of the worst areas of blowdown.

The trail became passable to hikers and stock users by September. Remaining tread problems are due to be resolved in June, or as soon as snowmelt permits.



Aldo Leopold Wilderness Research Institute

www.leopold.wilderness.net

The Mission is to provide high quality, credible science that responds to the priority needs of wilderness managers, planners, and wilderness organizations—while also advancing scientific scholarship. We work with managers and other scientists to address the big issues in wilderness stewardship. Our knowledge of wilderness law and policies, and resource planning, aids collaborations between the Leopold Institute and the wilderness community.



The Leopold Institute became an interagency (DOA and DOI) research unit in 1993 and recently celebrated its 25th anniversary in 2018, and funding now comes from a variety of competitive and base sources. Before 1993 it was a Forest Service research unit, but with broad responsibility for research to support management of all units in the National Wilderness Preservation System. With a strong history in both social and biophysical research to inform recreation use allocation, controlling visitor impacts, managing conflict and implementing fees, in more recent years research has expanded to include fire restoration, ecological intervention, and environmental and land use change effects.

Current projects cover a broad range of persistent and newer issues:

- Sustainability of Pacific Crest Trail campsites
- Values and benefits of Wilderness
- Visitor use trends and predictions
- Fire as a natural process
- Fire risk
- Threats to Wild and Scenic Rivers
- Influences on recreation experiences
- Wildlife habitat protection

The Wilderness Advisory Group has historically included one member from the Leopold Institute, to facilitate the link to past studies and to ensure that science is responsive to managers' needs. One project that blends past studies with future needs is our data archiving project, which provides access to all Leopold Institute studies. This has proven useful to answer questions that extend across multiple sites (e.g., how do visitors perceive permit systems or group size limits?), get in-depth answers to questions at one site (e.g., over past studies, how have perceptions of impacts changed in relation to user experience levels?), or to help plan future studies at any site (e.g., how have we determined the impact of user numbers on experiences in the past?). To view archived research data, [click here!](#)



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WAG Representative for Leopold Institute





Arthur Carhart National Wilderness Training Center

www.carhart.wilderness.net

The Mission 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.

Our Goals:

- Improve consistency and collaboration in on-the-ground wilderness decisions among managers, stewardship skills among wilderness staff, and wilderness awareness among agency employees through training.
- Enhance communication and consultation among the natural resource workforce, scientists, educators, students, and the public through ready access to a broad base of current and timely wilderness information.
- Foster development of a personal stewardship ethic, and support for the National Wilderness Preservation System among the American public by increasing awareness, knowledge, and understanding of their wilderness heritage through education.
- Increase worldwide capacity for protected area management through training, information and education.
- Increase awareness and support of Carhart Center efforts among all levels of the wilderness-managing agencies and partner organizations.

In FY2018, the Carhart Center celebrated its 25th anniversary!



We continue to provide our training sessions at the local, regional and national levels. Our training sessions cover Wilderness stewardship, Historic Preservation and specialized work with Border Patrol.

We reintroduced Wilderness Interpretation and have begun incorporating it into our training programs.

Our online course inventory is growing! Our eCourse on cross-cut saws, developed in partnership with the National Technology and Development Program and the University of Montana has proven very successful as a pre-requisite to agency hands-on training programs.

We have submitted a proposal to begin developing a similar eCourse for axe training.

We are working steadily through the Wilderness Connect revision and hope to unveil its new look and features soon!

We are a group of people committed to the power of the promise of the Wilderness Act and to those within and outside the federal government who strive to keep that promise.



Left to right: James Sippel, Andrea Gehrke, Tim Devine, Holly Metzger, Janice Engle, Elaine Poser, Ken Straley, Sue MacDonald





National Wilderness Preservation System

Wilderness Character Monitoring Update

Wilderness Character Monitoring (WCM) is in year two for the Forest Service and 57 units are in progress to complete baseline monitoring 2-8pt by November 30. The WCM Pilot year was in 2018 and 30 units went through establishing WCM baseline, 28 of those units are complete and its data has been entered into the Interagency Database WCMD. Following are descriptions of the point levels:

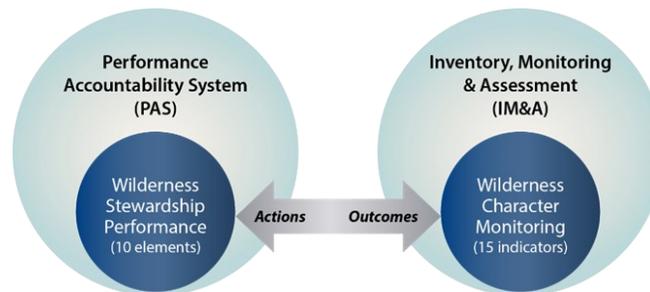
2 point level: Compile legislative and administrative documentation.

4 point level: Complete wilderness character narrative.

6 point level: Identify all measures to be monitored and evaluate data.

8 point level: Complete wilderness character baseline report, provide baseline values for entry into interagency Wilderness Character Monitoring Database (WCMD).

10 point level: Assess trends in wilderness character (at least 5 years after baseline).



The **Wilderness Character Monitoring Technical Guide** was utilized by Units during 2018 in “Draft” and was not published in 2018 as projected in the 2018 WAG newsletter. The Tech Guide is still in the queue for publishing but needs some updates based on things we learned during the 2018 pilot year. The plans are for it to be revised, and will be in the queue once again for publishing in the spring 2019.

The Wilderness Character Monitoring program manager position was staffed through details until Oct 1, 2019. Tim Eling of the Danial Boone NF in R8, Adam Barnett Recreation Program Manager for the Red Rock Ranger District of Coconino N.F. in R3, Mark Emerick of Enterprise Teams, and Togan Capozza Deputy R5 Wilderness/Recreation Staff served in the position during FY2017 and FY2018. As of August 2018 Jim Edmonds was hired as the Central Data Manager for the Team and Julie King was hired as the WCM program manager. The Society for Wilderness Stewardship (SWS) has been funded to provide two WCM specialists during FY2018 and that arrangement will continue through June 2019. Plans are to staff these two positions internally as NTE positions and to have in place by end of June 2019.

The WCM Core Team is conducting kickoff Webinars for the 2019 units the week of March 11, 2019. Office Hours calls will be scheduled twice a month for questions and discussion. The core team is always available for questions and assistance through the WCM mailing list: pdl_wo_nfs_WCM_team@ms.fs.fed.us

The Wilderness Information Management Steering Team (WIMST) assisted units to prepare for WCM implementation during the pilot year. A sub-team of WIMST is currently assisting the WCM program manager to evaluate feedback from the pilot year and to improve processes for 2019 and beyond.

A five year rotation of all wilderness units has been established, and in five years the first round of trend and 10-point level will be available.

There are resources, toolkits, and examples in the Pinyon files for WCM, anyone who would like access please send an email to Julie King @ Julie.King@USDA.gov

WIMST Update



Front Row – Kevin Cannon (R2), Portia Jelinek (NRM), Charis Parker (R5), Stacy Duke (R9), **Middle Row** – Dr. Troy Hall (OR State University), Colter Pence (R1)
Back Row – Sue Spear (WO), Zach Maughan (R4), Tim Eling (R8), Ivy Baker (NRM), Karisa Garner (R10), Eric Sandeno (WO), Justin Ewer (R6)

Wilderness Character Monitoring

This task team has conducted an evaluation of Wilderness Character Monitoring (WCM) to identify lessons learned during the pilot year of implementation. The lessons learned will direct updating products and guides to assist forests completing implementation in FY19 and those working on the Wilderness Character Baseline element in Wilderness Stewardship Performance (WSP). The team is working on these items:

- Feedback was gathered from RPMs in FY2018 and the task team conducted interviews with every Forest Program Manager and partner involved in the 2018 Pilot.
- Information has been compiled and the team has identified some actions to address issues and ways to share ideas and innovations. The feedback will go into the Evaluation Strategy and Communication Plan, it will also be shared back out to the field.
- FAQs, Quickstart guide and other reference materials in Pinyon have been updated for 2019.
- Templates for Line Officer Engagement have been developed on units and shared.
- Communication Plan will address feedback issues received, ways to engage leadership as well as ways to enable units to share efficiencies, solutions and support each other for WCM.

Wilderness Connect

A new look Wilderness Connect is heading our way this spring. This task team is helping test the new site for functionality as well as reviewing all discussion threads dating back to 2009 and determining what to do with the information from those great discussions. Many discussion threads will be incorporated into exiting tool boxes on Wilderness Connect.

Complexity Class Rating

The Complexity Class Rating task team is working 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, address workload at the field level, and include newly designated and expanded wilderness areas. Maintain WSP Guidebook

This task team is conducting the annual review of the WSP Guidebook to determine if any clarifications or changes are needed. The team anticipates adding additional FAQs for several elements.

Database Testing

All WIMST members will help with testing updates and improvements to the NRM Wilderness Character Monitoring application as well as software migration testing for three applications in NRM, Wilderness, Wilderness Character Monitoring, and Wild and Scenic Rivers.

WSP Webinars

The WSP Webinars task team will provide informational webinars on the WSP elements. Webinars for all 20 elements will be planned over the next few years. Webinars will be recorded and posted to the [WSP SharePoint site](#), [Wilderness Connect](#), and the NRM Support site for Wilderness. Several elements have been completed including: Agency Management Actions, Cultural Resources, Education, Opportunities for Primitive and Unconfined Recreation, Motorized Equipment/Mechanical Transport Use Authorizations, Non-Compliant Infrastructure, Opportunities for Solitude, Trails, and Wilderness Character Baseline.

WSP Updates and Maintenance

This task team is conducting the annual review of the WSP Guidebook as well as updating the file structure information to include Pinyon, looking for and posting more examples in the WSP SharePoint site, and completing a decision making/evaluation process for scoring.

Wilderness Mobile

WIMST is always pushing the edge of technology to improve work for field staff. Over a decade ago, a task team looked at mobile application for wilderness data collection. At that time, WIMST was ahead of what technology could provide and the task team had to halt efforts. This task team is now reviewing the work from the past to determine if conditions have changed and if not, provide information on existing technology which may be helpful for field staff.

SUPERGROUP!

There is strength and wisdom in numbers. This task team is looking into the connectivity of the wilderness and trails programs, including the Trails Stewardship Act, the 2020 Vision, the elements associated with the upcoming Trails Challenge, the WSP Trails element, the National Field Team missions (Trails Advisory Group, Wilderness Advisory Group, and Wilderness Information Management Steering Team) and proposing some combined projects/efforts.

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, as well as representatives from the Washington Office, the Arthur Carhart National Wilderness Training Center, and the Aldo Leopold Wilderness Research Institute.



In Fall 2018, the WAG held its annual program of work meeting in Amelia Island, Florida (north of Jacksonville).

WAG and WIMST also visited [Cumberland Island](#) Wilderness (NPS) and the [Okefenokee](#) Wilderness (USFWS) to learn and understand management challenge's for maintaining wilderness character in unique and distinctive ecosystems and at the same time provide for outstanding recreational opportunities. A very enlightening discussion and tour.

Left to right: *Jeremy Evans (R4), Annette Smith (Prior R3), Ros Wu (R2), Tom Fouts (R8), Dusty Vaughn (WO), Jonathan Erickson (R6), Sandy Skrien (WO), Ann Schwaller (R9), Josh Lattin (R1), Miguel Macias (R5), Sue Spear (WO), Chrissy Post (R10), Sean Parks (Prior Aldo Leopold WRI)*

Not Pictured: *Ken Straley (Prior Arthur Carhart NWTC), Alan Watson (Aldo Leopold WRI), Ali Ayers (R3)*

Region 1: [Josh Lattin](#) (Vice Chair)
Lincoln R.D., Helena N.F.

Region 2: [Ros Wu](#)
Pagosa R.D., San Juan N.F.

Region 3: [Ali Ayers](#)
North Kaibab R.D., Kaibab N.F.

Region 4: [Jeremy Evans](#)
Ruby Mountains/Jarbridge/Mountain City
R.D., Humboldt-Toiyabe N.F.

Region 5: [Miguel Macias](#)
Summit R.D., Stanislaus N.F.

Region 6: [Jonathan Erickson](#) (Chair)
McKenzie River R.D., Willamette N.F.

Region 8: [Tom Fouts](#)
Daniel Boone N.F.

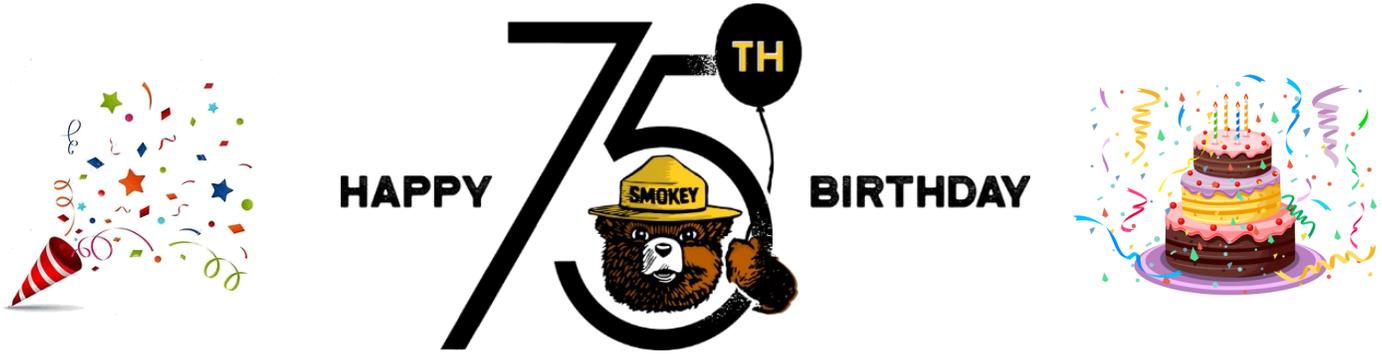
Region 9: [Ann Schwaller](#)
Superior N.F.

Region 10: [Chrissy Post](#)
Admiralty Island National Monument,
Tongass N.F.

Washington Office: [Sandy Skrien](#) and [Dusty Vaughn](#)
WWSR Staff

Arthur Carhart National Wilderness Training Center:
VACANT

Aldo Leopold Wilderness Research Institute:
[Alan Watson](#)



SmokeyBear75th.org

ONE STOP SHOP

Need Info and Help on WSP Implementation and/or Wilderness Management?

Find It Here, Click On A Link Below!

[2019 WSP Guidebook](#)

[WSP Tools & Templates](#)

[Wilderness Connect](#)

[National Wilderness Program Site](#)

[Society for Wilderness Stewardship](#)

[National Wilderness Stewardship Alliance](#)

Have a comment or opinion to the content?

Send an email to your regional WAG rep located on page 14. Submit your own content to include in **WAG Tales**. WAG is always accepting suggestions for new projects and content for upcoming spring issue. Simply contact your regional WAG representative and be heard.

