

WAG Tales



NEWSLETTER OF THE CHIEF'S WILDERNESS ADVISORY GROUP (WAG)

SPRING 2021

In This Issue

[Justice, Equity, Diversity
and Inclusion](#)

[Ranger to Ranger:
Learning Lessons](#)

[WAG Task Team
Updates](#)

[Aldo Leopold
Wilderness Research
Institute Update](#)

[Arthur Carhart
National Wilderness
Training Center Update](#)

PHOTO FEATURE:
[Kanab Creek
Wilderness](#)

[Wilderness Character
Monitoring Update](#)

[WIMST Update](#)

[TAG Update](#)

[WAG Representatives](#)

Justice, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion

By Peter Mali, National Wilderness Program Manager

Like many of you, events of the past year have forced me to confront systemic racism in the United States, especially in the context of our nation's public lands. The stark truth is that far too many people of color feel that public lands are not safe places to be. I am committed to ongoing efforts to make National Forest System lands—especially those designated as wilderness—more welcoming.

My own experiences with wild places have been happy. The first wilderness I ever visited happens to be a Forest Service unit: As a teenage National Outdoor Leadership School student, I learned how to use an ice axe, light a camp stove, and administer first aid in the North Absaroka Wilderness in Wyoming. I know how lucky I was to have had such a positive introduction to the National Wilderness Preservation System, and I believe that anyone who visits wilderness has a right to expect the same.

As I approach the task of leveraging Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (JEDI) efforts in wilderness, encouragement has come from an unexpected place. A line from one of my favorite poems, "[Ulysses](#)," by Alfred Lord Tennyson, keeps coming to mind: "Come, my friends, 'tis not too late to seek a newer world." I find this meaningful both literally, in that wilderness can offer the excitement of discovering a place for the first time, and figuratively, in that it's an expression of hope and a call to action. Don't accept things as they are: strive to make them better for all.

As you know, JEDI is a top priority not just for the agency but the Administration (see related [Executive Order](#)). Our efforts in the Wilderness and Wild & Scenic Rivers Directorate are ramping up, including working with partners as they identify new organizations that can help achieve this program objective. To meet our JEDI-related commitments, we will need your help. I know you're facing an array of new challenges, especially the pandemic-induced spike in wilderness visitation and the demands that places on your wilderness responsibilities. I appreciate the dedication you and your partners continue to demonstrate in stewarding the wilderness resource while seeking ways to ensure it is welcoming to all.

As I enter my second year as the National Wilderness Program Manager, I hope to meet you and visit some of the 448 wilderness areas we have the privilege of managing. In the meantime, thank you for your passion and professionalism. Let's work together to make our wilderness areas even better. It's not too late to seek a newer world.



Wilderness Advisory Group Task Team Updates

Wilderness Stewardship Performance (WSP) Funding

In FY21, \$1.14 million dollars of funding were distributed to National Forests across the country. Projects that were awarded funding were ranked by WAG members and Regional Program Managers using predetermined criteria of planned accomplishments, project feasibility, and reasonableness of the funding request. This funding will result in important Wilderness Stewardship Performance (WSP) projects being implemented on many Districts, and will also support a myriad partner organizations. The [WSP program](#) enables Wilderness managers to make measurable achievements on the ground and provides a consistent management framework through which we can communicate our challenges and successes in Wilderness management.

The Washington Office staff and WAG members also made improvements to WSP reports and communication materials in FY21. The resulting products should help to provide clarity of the program's intent and accomplishments to both internal and external audiences. One of the products still in development is a showcase of successful WSP projects. **If you have a great project you've accomplished with help from the WSP program and wish to have this project highlighted please contact Gary (Dusty) Vaughn at gary.vaughn@usda.gov.**

Wilderness Connect Fire Management Toolbox Update for Resource Advisors (READs)

With fire seasons becoming longer and trending to more acres burning each year, there is a national push to increase the number of trained Resource Advisors (READs) who can assist fire management teams in protecting resources as they suppress fires. Wilderness READs are Resource Advisors who are specially trained to advise on protection of the Wilderness resource. These specialists play a key role in advising fire managers on minimum impact suppression techniques (MIST) while documenting any prohibited actions under the Wilderness Act of 1964. The WAG members identified a need to provide a central location for examples of outstanding resources to support Wilderness READs.

Working with the existing structures of the [fire management toolbox on Wilderness.net](#), the Task Team reviewed information in the Fire Management Toolbox and collected documents from each Region. Information was sorted into key areas of resources that will provide guidance for Wilderness READs, selecting the best examples for each topic. Resources available on the updated Fire Management Toolbox will cover:

- **Fire Suppression Repair Plans:** Example plans to mitigate or eliminate impacts to Wilderness resources.
- **Wilderness Fire Resource Advisor Reports:** Example READ reports that can be living documents or final summaries detailing actions and recommendations.
- **Wilderness Incursions/Prohibitions:** Worksheets and examples for documentation of incursions such as chainsaw use, dozer operations, and helicopters, are common occurrences to protect public and firefighter safety.
- **Information Resources:** Talking points, Incident Action Plan (IAP) pages, and working with PIOs.
- **Pre-fire Preparation:** Pre-fire planning resources for your home unit and information to prepare for the roles and responsibilities of Wilderness READs on incident assignments.
- **Best Practices:** Minimum Impact Suppression Techniques (MIST) specific to Wilderness fires.
- **Training:** Example presentations, agendas and curriculums, and sample handouts.

Resources housed in the updated READ toolbox are currently available on the [National Wilderness Program site](#).

The fully updated Toolbox will be available on Wilderness Connect in summer 2021.

Wilderness Advisory Group Task Team Updates

Wilderness Education

Welcome to Wilderness! 2020 was an incredible year for visitation to public lands with many people seeking to get outdoors and connect or reconnect with wilderness and nature. In many places, increased wilderness visitation is expected to continue in 2021. As more and more visitors turn to social media for trip planning, this is an effective platform to share information about Wilderness, Wilderness Values, Land Ethics, and how to do your part to protect the enduring resource of Wilderness.

WAG's Wilderness Messaging Task Team developed and consolidated visitor information that is readily available to use "as is" or modify/create to suit your needs and share at trailheads, via Forest Service social media sites and websites, and to share with partners to reach wilderness visitors about what is wilderness and how to continue to care for the land while visiting, enjoying, recreating and exploring America's incredible Wilderness areas.

Information will be readily available by visiting the [National Wilderness Program site](#), content includes:

- **Social Media Guidance (Create your own) and available Toolkits**
- **Distributing Existing Wilderness Education Content**
- **Wilderness Connect—Camping Guidance and Toolboxes**
- **"Welcome to Wilderness" Poster series/templates**
- [Leave No Trace Basics Social Media Toolkit—Leave No Trace](#)
- [Toolkit—Recreate Responsibly](#)

We encourage you to engage partners and your public affairs folks to make them aware of available resources and help distribute and spread these important messages to wilderness visitors as people seek their next wilderness adventure. We hope you find this consolidated list of existing resources helpful in reaching a broader audience! If you are aware of additional great resources or would like to share some of the awesome content you've developed regarding wilderness messaging, please reach out to your Regional WAG Representative and we will add them to the collection.



Ranger to Ranger



Learning Lessons

Allison Ayers
Wilderness and Trails Specialist
North Kaibab Ranger District, Kaibab National Forest

“Now, why would you go and do that?”

Looking back on my first season as a Wilderness Ranger with the Sierra National Forest, I was young, passionate, and somewhat clueless, as I soon discovered. I recall feeling confident because I knew how to backpack, LNT camp, and work my tail off. What I also thought I knew was how to communicate wilderness ethics to the forest visitors. “Simple, right”?

Time and time again I chased campers away from the lakeshores and designated trails, spouting off CFRs and getting compliance. Often, this was accompanied by resistance, anger, or perplexed reactions from campers. In my naivety I thought my job was successful when I got them to move camp or they agreed to hang their food (out of fear from stories I told them about the area’s bears). Frequently, I would tell visitors that another ranger was going to be around to check compliance, and that tickets would be issued if they didn’t comply. Of course, there wasn’t another ranger coming but they didn’t know that. Wilderness violations continued to occur trying my patience and interrupting my view of this romantic and coveted Wilderness Ranger job that I loved so much.

Surprisingly, I continued this “romance” for several years on the Sierra as I continued to explore wilderness after wilderness along the Sierra Nevada mountain range. As time went on, I soon recognized that my “techniques” of communicating Wilderness ethics were not fruitful nor effective and the dissatisfaction I felt was, in fact, my own shortcomings as a teacher. I missed many opportunities to share the “why” of wilderness ethics with visitors and failed to share my passion for these wild places. Once I caught on to another method of achieving this vital part of my profession, I became less of a hardnosed, badge totin’, pickle-suit-wearing pinecone cop and transitioned into a more empathetic, storytelling comrade in a pickle suit. My interactions with strangers in the forest soon began to morph into long conversations and moments where real connections were made. My love for the natural world provided the passion to kindle the fire of respect and stewardship in others. My realization of the long-lasting impacts I could have on individuals who I met along the way was a game changer.

My communication skills were built through years of interactions with hundreds of strangers in the Wilderness and what I found to be true is the sooner I could explain the “why” of wilderness ethics, and relate to that individual, the more successful I was at protecting the Wilderness from its greatest threat and defender, people.

I am grateful and honored to continue to work in Wilderness management with the Forest Service. I believe this to be my calling and my contribution to an increasingly disconnected society.

There are several ways to speed up the learning curve so that you can start your season making meaningful connections with forest visitors. Remember, it will always feel uncomfortable confronting strangers in the woods, but being prepared with a dialogue will help ease your anxieties.

The table below lists undesirable visitor behaviors that you may observe in wilderness, as well as the “Why not” behind them, the proper behavior, and how you might help steer visitors towards the latter.

There are also some other great resources to check out on www.wilderness.net, including, “Authority of the Resource”; an article that dives right into this topic, an excellent commentary that all Wilderness professionals or aspiring professionals should read.

(continued on next page)

Ranger to Ranger



Learning Lessons

Allison Ayers
Wilderness and Trails Specialist
North Kaibab Ranger District, Kaibab National Forest

Undesirable Visitor Behaviors in Wilderness

Visitor Behavior	Undesirable Effects	The Desired Behavior	Actions for Added Effectiveness
Campsite too close to water	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Blocks animal travel/drinking corridor -Visual impact to other visitors -Stream bank erosion -Increased potential to pollute water -Access restricted 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Campsite at least 100 feet from water, but encourage 200 feet for LNT 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Show an eroded site -Help visitor find another suitable camping spot -Pace out 100 feet with the visitor for future camping.
Dog off leash	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Hazard to wildlife through direct and fecal contact -Hazard to other dogs on trail -Intimidates other hikers -Causes wildlife to avoid trail, detracting from other users' experience 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Dog on leash -Leave dog home -Dog trained under voice command -Walk dog in other areas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Suggest other areas to take dog -Carry extra leashes -Provide LNT educational cards
Intentionally or inadvertently feeding wildlife	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Dependence on humans -Habituation-Poor diet for wildlife -Disturb natural process -creates 'Problem Animals' that subsequently need to be removed/killed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Good food packing and preparation -Cooking away from sleeping area -Hang food/scented items 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Discuss examples where animals have been fed. -Give examples of potential scenarios if food is stored improperly. -Show campers how to hang/store items
Riding bikes in Wilderness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Peer pressure = Wilderness Act violations -Tire tracks encourage more bikers -20% Forest Service land is Wilderness -4% of all Federal land is Wilderness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Don't ride in Wilderness -Use other trails designed for bikes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Suggest maps in local bike shops -Know of areas to bike ride -Explain purpose built trails -Install no-biking sign at all trailheads. -Post regulations at trailheads
Cutting switchbacks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Erosion, vegetation damage, social trails -Hazard to hikers (slopes too steep) -“Trail rage” from other visitors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Stay on trail single file -Encourage others to stay on trail 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Discuss sustainable trail design and costs to repair -Explain how switchbacks are designed for all trail users -Show and explain erosion and water bar function -Close trail for rehabilitation

(Continued on next page)

Ranger to Ranger



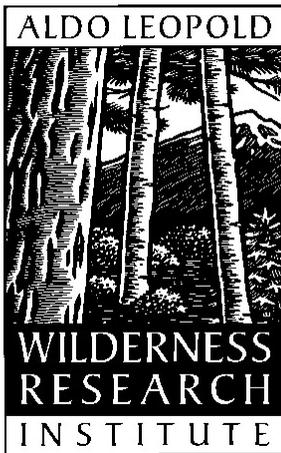
Learning Lessons

Allison Ayers
Wilderness and Trails Specialist
North Kaibab Ranger District, Kaibab National Forest

Undesirable Visitor Behaviors in Wilderness (*continued*)

Visitor Behavior	Undesirable Effects	The Desired Behavior	Actions for Added Effectiveness
Bathing or washing dishes in stream/lake	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Phosphates in water impact aquatic wildlife, population decline -Eutrophication (excessive richness in plant life (algae) removes oxygen from water) -Unintended feeding of aquatic wildlife. -Decline in water quality (sunscreen, bug spray, detergents) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -One night = No wash -Wash far from water sources -No soap -Strainer with sump 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Provide example how a Ranger washes or does not wash -Explain the term 'biodegradable' -Explain effects to water quality for drinking, aquatic life, and animals that use the water source.
Large group size of 12 or more.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Social impact = lack of solitude -Possible noise increase -Compounded physical impacts to landscape and wildlife 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Split group up -Plan ahead -Know group size limits -Recreate in non-wilderness areas that permit large groups. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Show them some physical impacts -Encourage them to split into smaller groups -Discuss latrine options and amount of human waste generated -remind them others may be seeking solitude.
Improper disposal of human waste	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Animals may dig up -Toilet paper may become visible -Pollution of water sources -Social impacts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Properly bury human waste using cathole method -Pack out feces and toilet paper with a WAG bag -Make sure to keep waste at least 200 feet away from lakes/streams 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Show physical depth – hand is about 7 inches -Discuss and show a used site -Talk about drinking water contamination -Give an example having to bury human waste or stepping in it, dog rolled in it, and/or show a WAG bag -Pace out 200 feet with the visitor

[Leave No Trace Center for Outdoor Ethics](#) is an educational resource to assist you in making public contacts using a land ethic, and are not regulations (or Code of Federal Regulations (CFR)). For regulations pertaining to wilderness, meet with your Forest Law Enforcement Officer to learn more about regulations and to learn what is required to be a Forest Protection Officer.



Aldo Leopold Wilderness Research Institute leopold.wilderness.net

The Aldo Leopold Wilderness Research Institute (ALWRI), part of Rocky Mountain Research Station, is an interagency federal research facility located on the campus of the University of Montana. The Institute’s vision is a world where science, wilderness, and relationships between all people and wild lands thrive, and we work to provide high quality, credible science that responds to priority needs of wilderness managers, planners, and wilderness organizations—while advancing scientific scholarship. Leopold Institute scientists have a long history of supporting managers stewarding the U.S. National Wilderness Preservation System, as well as collaborating with academic, NGO, community, and other partners within the U.S. and internationally.

In March of 2021, ALWRI welcomed Dr. Teresa Hollingsworth as an Acting Deputy Director for a twelve-month detail. And in April of 2021, ALWRI bid farewell to Carol Miller, who retired after 20 years of federal service as a Fire Ecologist.

ALWRI is engaged in several ongoing research projects, which are focused on a variety of topics, including visitor use management, wilderness use monitoring, shared stewardship, ecosystem response to fire, contribution of wilderness to wildlife, and the economic impacts of wilderness on gateway communities. Projects that may be of particular interest to our readers include:

Lessons from wilderness fire – The National Fire Plan has supported a comprehensive review of modern wilderness fire science and lessons learned since fire management began to adopt the practice of allowing naturally ignited fires to burn (~1970). The synthesis draws on agency fire history records, geospatial fire atlases, published literature, historical and contemporary photos, and interviews with key information managers. It will be published in FY21 as a Forest Service General Technical Report, “A History of Wilderness Fire Management in the Northern Rockies”.

Ecosystem response to fire in wilderness – In partnership with the University of Montana Wilderness Institute, this study evaluates the ecosystem response to fire across a broad bioclimatic and fire history gradient in the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness. The field data will be evaluated with appropriate statistics and will enable us to determine how fire history and bioclimatic characteristics influence post-fire ecosystem trajectories, including the potential for enduring conversions to non-forest.

Quantifying the contribution of wilderness to wildlife population genetics – Landscape genetics can be used to determine landscape effects on genetic diversity and health of wildlife populations. A collaborative study is assessing landscape effects on a suite of wildlife species, project future genetic diversity and allelic variation, and determine the importance of wilderness areas for acting as genetic sources for populations of species.

Economic impacts of wilderness on gateway communities - This project provides an understanding of how wilderness, and the associated migration of people to the area for outdoor amenities, leads to social and economic development in gateway communities. This research, focused on amenity development (e.g., changes per capita income, changes in regional tax revenues), is a continuation of a research collaboration focused on amenity migration (e.g., what types of amenities such as protected areas and climate drive the movement of people).

Finally, as we look forward to new scientific endeavors, we are excited to report that ALWRI is working to revise its charter, which will dictate the direction of the Institute for the next five to ten years. The charter revision process is being led by our Acting Deputy Director, and a broad array of partners will be engaged to seek input on science needs. NWPS bureau input will be facilitated through members of the Interagency Wilderness Steering Committee.



Arthur Carhart National Wilderness Training Center

carhart.wilderness.net

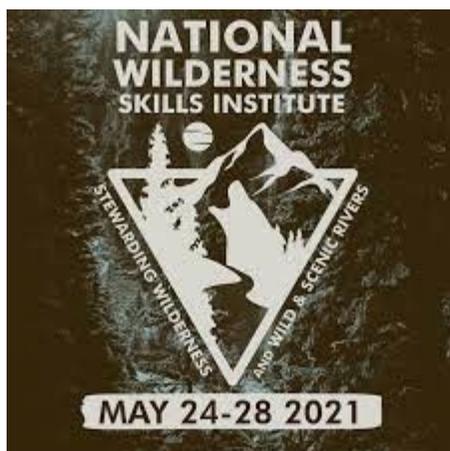
The mission is to equip and inspire agency leaders and partners to ensure that America's National Wilderness Preservation System endures for future generations. We do this through training, information, and education.

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.

The Arthur Carhart National Wilderness Training Center update for May 2021. As we all deal with the ongoing pandemic, Carhart is providing important virtual training. We hope to provide in person training starting in August, including:

- Wilderness Stewardship for Managers June 14-18 (virtual)
- Regional Wilderness Stewardship Training (Rutland, VT August 23-27)
- Regional Wilderness Stewardship Training (Ft. Collins, CO September 20-24)



National Wilderness Skills Institute

The Society for Wilderness Stewardship is hosting this year's National Wilderness Skills Institute from May 24-28.

Please check out the website at <http://www.wildernesstewardship.org/NWSI>.

This will be an outstanding training opportunity for anyone working with or interested in Wilderness and Wild & Scenic Rivers.

Carhart is planning a full load of courses for FY22 so stay tuned!

We are also in the process of filling a Wilderness Education position. Once filled, Carhart will be fully staffed and better able to serve all of you! If you have any questions, don't hesitate to contact Arthur Carhart National Wilderness Training Center USFS Representative J. Dan Abbe: James.Abbe@udsa.gov, p: 406-243-4630, c: 603-348-0212

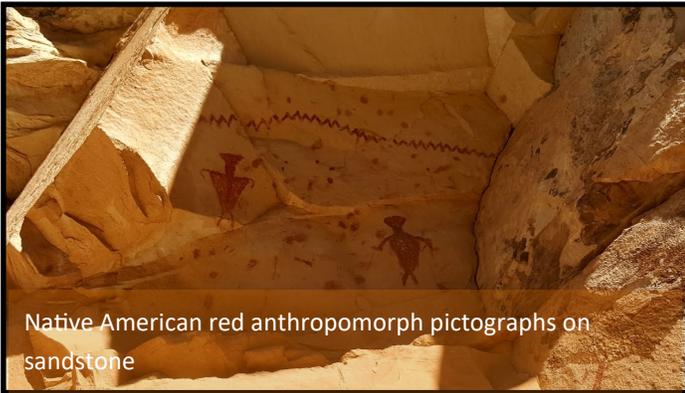
PHOTO FEATURE: Kanab Creek Wilderness, Kaibab National Forest & BLM Arizona Strip

Arizona Wilderness Act 1984 — 70,460 acres

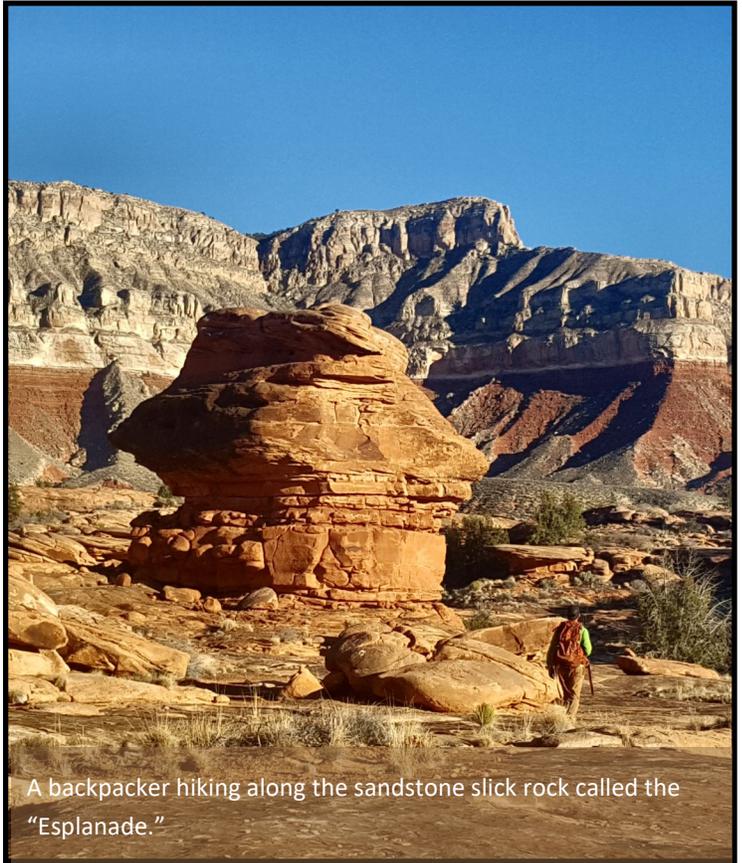
Kanab Creek is a major perennial tributary of the Colorado River, flowing from its source some 50 miles north in southern Utah. It cuts deep gorges and canyons into the walls of the Kanab and Kaibab Plateaus.



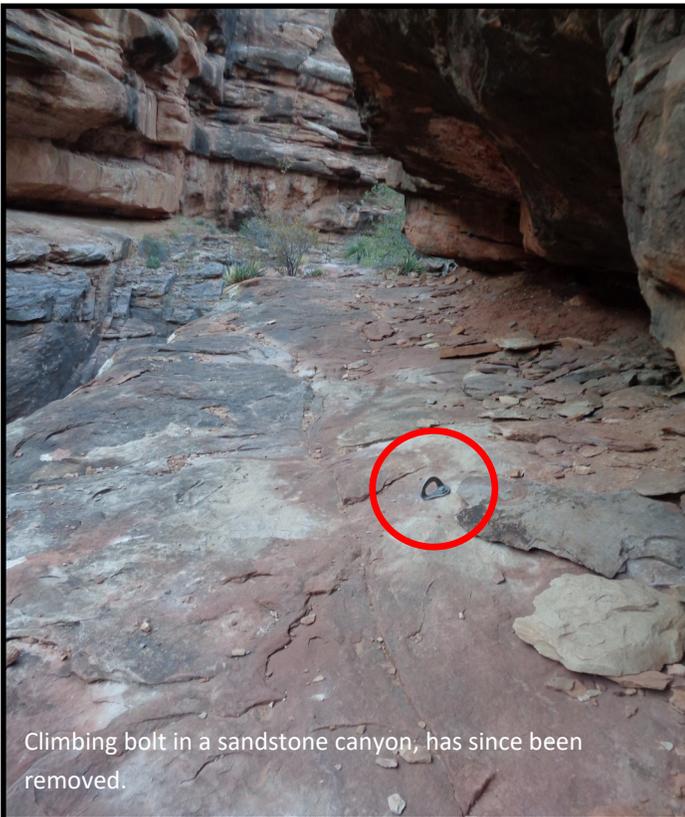
Resource assistant collecting data on wilderness campsites



Native American red anthropomorph pictographs on sandstone



A backpacker hiking along the sandstone slick rock called the "Esplanade."



Climbing bolt in a sandstone canyon, has since been removed.



Spring fed concrete trough for cattle grazing constructed in 1914

Photos by Allison Ayers, WAG R3 Rep

Top left - Sarah Rodriguez (RA)

Wilderness Character Monitoring Update

Wilderness Character Monitoring (WCM) started in the Forest Service in 2018. We are currently in the fourth year of the WCM schedule. The 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.
 - 8 point level: Complete wilderness character baseline, enter data into interagency Wilderness Character Monitoring Database (WCMD).
 - 10 point level: Assess trends in wilderness character (at least 5 years after baseline).
-

Wilderness Character Monitoring Technical Guide

The Wilderness Character Monitoring Technical Guide was drafted in 2018 and has been utilized for creating WCM Baseline Assessments. In 2019 a thorough review was conducted of the draft and some revisions were made. The WCM Tech Guide was given a GTR number and published in the fall of 2020. It is available in digital form on [treesearch](#) and in the WCM Pinyon box.

Wilderness Character Monitoring Central Team Updates

The WCM Central Team welcomed Drew Lindsey, Data Services Specialist, in October 2020. Drew has a GIS background and is training on wilderness character processes and protocols and assisting the team in document reviews and providing graphic tools for communication. Mike Smith from SWS and Kate de Varona from SAWs are each half time on the team this year as “WCM leaders” and we are so fortunate to retain their expertise and partnership.

The WCM Central Team will be setting up “WCM Training” teams meetings later this spring when units have partners on board to assist them. Office Hours calls are twice a month for questions and discussion and have been well attended and productive this year. The core team is always available for questions and assistance through the WCM mailing list: pd_l_wo_nfs_WCM_team@ms.fs.fed.us.

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



Wilderness Information Management Steering Team



Photo from 2019 fall meeting.

Front – Kate de Verona (SAWS), Casey Quarterman (SAWS), Eric Sandeno (WO), Stacy Duke (R9), Colter Pence (R1), Pat McGervey (R3)

Middle - Karisa Garner (R10), Charis Parker (R5), Sue Spear (WO - retired), Dr. Troy Hall (OR State University), Justin Ewer (R6), Andrea Maichak (R2), Tim Eling (R8)

Back – Julie King (WO), Kevin Cannon (R2 – retired), Zach Maughan (R4), **Not pictured** - Portia Jelinek (NRM)

The Wilderness Information Management Steering Team (WIMST) has been working hard throughout the winter to complete all FY21 projects by the end of April. Two projects are highlighted below, but a full list of FY21 projects and their status can be found on the [Wilderness Information Management Steering Team SharePoint site](#).

Chainsaw/Crosscut Saw Data Collection

In 2019, the Washington Office tasked the National Technology and Development Program (NTDP) to develop a tool that could accurately estimate trail clearing time on National Forest System trails. Over the last two years, a group of specialists have been identifying and validating variables associated with trail work that will result in a model that can quickly and accurately forecast trail clearing times. To make the model as accurate as possible, a nationwide field data collection effort is in process and we need your help to collect trail clearing data. Data using crosscut saws in wilderness, chainsaws outside of wilderness, trails cleared by Forest Service staff, and trails cleared by partners and volunteers are all needed to ensure a high-quality model is developed.

Please reach out to TJ Broom (theodore.broom@usda.gov) NTDP or Eric Sandeno (eric.sandeno@usda.gov) with the WO Wilderness staff, to get more information or to participate in providing data. A complete Questions and Answers document can be found on the Wilderness Information Management Steering Team SharePoint site.

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

The Forest Service as an agency and many of us as individuals have spent the last year taking a harder look at ourselves to better understand, respect, and appreciate the increasingly diverse public we serve. At the same time, due to travel restrictions and social distancing requirements, the coronavirus pandemic caused people to descend upon public lands in record numbers—many for the first time.

How are these two things connected, and what is WIMST doing about it? First, WIMST is taking a harder look at wilderness programmatic material to ensure diversity, equity, and inclusion is properly incorporated and unintended inappropriate references are replaced. For example, you will see some changes to the Wilderness Stewardship Performance Education element component descriptions to align with President Biden's Executive Order Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities Through the Federal Government. Second, to address our new users, and in many cases our new diverse users, WIMST is working with the staff from Wilderness Connect to provide information on the website landing page. We want to help our new users find resources so they can Recreate Responsibly, connect with affinity groups (a group of people sharing a common interest or goal who gather with the intention of finding connection, support, and inspiration), or outdoor influencers who can share messaging that resonates better than we can.

Trails Advisory Group (TAG) Update

The Trail Advisory Group (TAG) is a collection of field-going trail professionals representing each region of the Forest Service. The goal is to be a communication channel from the field to Forest Service leadership while providing a field perspective on national level trail initiatives. TAG representatives elevate concerns from the field and provide a contact point for employees to voice those concerns. TAG participates in National Trail Board calls and works with the National Trail Board and Washington Office trail program on small teams and planning efforts.

Region 1 [Jess May](#)
 Region 2 [Ben Schumacher](#)
 Region 3 [Kerry Wood](#)

Region 4 [Bryan Carter](#)
 Region 5 [Tracy Knapp](#)
 Region 6 [Joe Welke](#)

Region 8 [Matt Able](#)
 Region 9 [Cristin Bailey](#)
 Region 10 [Dave Zastrow](#)

Saw Policy Updates

TAG has been communicating with the Washington Office on updates to the saw policy. Some of the key changes are the term, “Certifiers” is no longer being used. “Evaluators” will be the new designation. A ‘C’ sawyer evaluator can certify ‘C’ bucking or felling, and one can now be a ‘C’ buckler without having to certify as a ‘C’ faller. To certify as a ‘C’ faller, two evaluators must be present, but to certify as a ‘C’ buckler, only one evaluator must be present. A ‘C’ buckler can certify individuals at the ‘B’ level or lower. [For more information click here.](#)

TAG Projects The Trails Advisory Group is currently working on six main projects.

- **Addressing Barriers to getting trail work accomplished.** TAG identified almost twenty barriers that negatively impact productivity. Examples of barriers are a lack of capacity to develop, manage and coordinate volunteers and partners; administrative processes that are unclear; NEPA process inconsistencies/CE categories; and Recreation Technician Series Qualifications.
- Concentrating on **Data management and INFRA**, specifically how to make this a manageable and useful tool for employees on the ground.
- Working on developing a toolbox, guidebook, and a set of best methods to grow the involvement and support of Line Officers to implement the **10-Year Trails Challenge**.
- The **Great American Outdoors Act (GAOA)** as millions of dollars have been made available to support deferred maintenance on public lands. TAG is developing “how to” documents to streamline the process and help managers assemble successful proposals for trail projects.
- Coordinating with the Pacific Crest Trail Association (PCTA) to establish **Core Competencies for trail workers and managers**. While the PCTA is leading the effort, TAG is providing input and support to establish a set of training classes and to standardize those classes across a national landscape.
- TAG identified a gap in communication, not only among internal Forest Service staff, but also among volunteers. TAG has built a **Trail Community Map** through ArcGIS Online (AGOL) that displays Forest Service Personnel and partners spatially and lists their skills and certifications. The map will be used as a communication tool for employees and external partners to find people who have specific skills for projects or training.

For more information, contact the Trails Advisory Group Chair, Matt Able, 859-745-3184, matthew.able@usda.gov.

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.



Region 1: [Josh Lattin](#) (Chair)

Pintler R.D., Beaverhead-Deerlodge N.F.

Region 2: [Sara Erickson](#)

Hell Canyon R.D., Black Hills N.F.

Region 3: [Allison Ayers](#)

North Kaibab R.D., Kaibab N.F.

Region 4: [Del Orme](#) (Vice Chair)

Cedar City R.D., Dixie N.F.

Region 5: [Chris Engelhardt](#)

White Mountain R.D., Inyo N.F.

Region 6: [Jason Fisher](#)

Bend/Fort Rock R.D., Deschutes N.F.

Region 8: [Lisa Jennings](#)

Grandfather R.D., Pisgah N.F.

Region 9: [Kelly Pearson](#)

Hidden Springs/Mississippi Bluffs RD., Shawnee N.F.

Region 10: [Edie Leghorn](#)

Sitka R.D., Tongass N.F.

Washington Office: [Peter Mali](#), [Dusty Vaughn](#), [Tangy Wiseman](#), Wilderness and Wild & Scenic Rivers Staff

Arthur Carhart National Wilderness Training Center:
[J Dan Abbe](#), Forest Service Representative

Aldo Leopold Wilderness Research Institute:
[Christopher Armatas](#), Research Social Scientist