2.36 How does the Service inform and educate the public about wilderness?

A. Refuge managers should develop an information and education program designed to increase awareness and appreciation of the full spectrum of wilderness values, without stimulating unacceptable demand for use. The program should focus on providing information that enhances the experience, describes the limitations of wilderness to accommodate use, and encourages visitors to practice LNT techniques (see section 2.37). Our goal is to cultivate a personal ethic based on a willingness to exercise self-restraint in the interest of the wilderness itself, other users, and future generations. The most effectivetools for protecting wilderness can be the development and use of thoughtful information materials andinterpretive programs.

B. We should limit interpretation of wilderness to locations outside a wilderness area, except as necessary to address visitor health and safety, to administer wildlife-dependent recreation, or to protect wilderness character. However, we may conduct educational programs, such as LNT training or interpretative walks, inside a wilderness area when deemed suitable to help foster a better understanding and appreciation of wilderness. Such programs should remain sensitive to the wilderness resource, wilderness character, and the experience of other users. Where appropriate, we should also produce materials for the nonvisiting public who may want to learn about wilderness and who find value in just knowing that it is there.

C. As we develop information and educational materials, we should use the “Primary Interpretive Themes for Wilderness Education” as a guide (see Exhibit 1 and 605 FW 6-7).

2.37 What is the Leave No Trace (LNT) program? The LNT program promotes and inspires responsible outdoor recreation through education, research, and partnerships. LNT, Inc., a nonprofit organization, manages the program. All four Federal wilderness management agencies have adopted the LNT program as the standard for minimum impact practices. We apply LNT principles and practices to all stewardship and public use activities within wilderness to help protect wilderness character. As an educational program, the LNT program offers managers a tool for dealing with issues and impacts.

Primary Interpretive Themes for Wilderness Education, 610 FW 2 Exhibit 1
Interpretation provides opportunities for people to forge intellectual and emotional connections to the meanings inherent in wilderness resources. Interpretive themes communicate specific messages based on the significance of the wilderness resource and experience to the American people. They are the stories through which we convey the values of wilderness to the public. These themes connect wilderness to larger ideas as well as universal meanings and values. They are the building blocks on which we base interpretive products and services for wilderness. The interpretive themes for wilderness areas follow:

PRIMARY INTERPRETIVE THEMES FOR WILDERNESS EDUCATION
Theme A
The concept of wilderness, codified in law, originated in the United States with the conviction that some wildland resources are most valuable (e.g., social, scientific, economic, educational, recreational, and cultural value) to Americans left in their natural state.

Theme B
As a foundation for healthy and diverse ecosystems, officially designated wilderness and other remaining wildlands provide critical habitat for rare and endangered species and play a significant role in the overall health of natural systems worldwide (e.g.,watersheds, air quality).
Theme C
By law, we manage wilderness differently than other Federal lands in order to retain its primeval character and preserve wilderness as a special place for humans to experience their relationship to the natural world.

Theme D
Wilderness offers opportunities for personal renewal, inspiration, artistic expression, pride of ownership of our shared heritage, and the prospect of hope for the future. Wilderness has inspired and continues to inspire a distinctive genre of literature and art, enriching millions of lives in the United States and around the world.

Theme E
Wilderness provides opportunities for physical and mental challenge, risk and reward, renewal, self-reliance, and solitude or opportunities for primitive and unconfined recreation and serves as a haven from the pressures of modern society.

Theme F
The survival of wilderness depends on individual and societal commitment to the idea of wilderness and on appropriate visitor use, behavior, and values.

Theme G
Wilderness provides a unique setting for teaching ecosystem stewardship as well as science, math, literature, art, and other subjects (e.g., civics, outdoor skills, music, and others) using an interdisciplinary approach.

Theme H
Wilderness contains primitive areas relatively undisturbed by human activities where scientific research may reveal information about natural processes and living systems that may have wide-ranging applications and may serve as global indicators of ecological change.

Theme I
Cultural and archeological sites found in wilderness can provide a more complete picture of human history and culture. (This includes indigenous peoples; conquests; colonialism and resistance, freedom, independence, and ingenuity; a sense of connectedness; stewardship; and human survival.)

Theme J
The Wilderness Act created a National Wilderness Preservation System that preserves some of the most unique ecological, geological, scientific, scenic, and historical values in the National Wildlife Refuge System, the National Park System, National Forest System, and in public lands administered by the Bureau of Land Management that the public and Congress have determined to require special protection.

Theme K
Wilderness visitors must accept certain inherent risks associated with weather, terrain, water, fish, wildlife, plants, and/or their habitats, and other natural elements. We cannot guarantee visitor safety, but we can enhance it with proper trip planning, appropriate skills, and responsible behavior.

Additional links to FWS Policy:
http://www.fws.gov/policy/605fw7.html