



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Forest
Service

Canyon Lakes
Ranger District

2150 Centre Avenue, Building E
Fort Collins, CO 80526-8119
Voice: (970) 295-6710 TDD: (970) 295-6794
Web: www.fs.fed.us/r2/arnf
Fax: (970) 295-6795

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Date: January 31, 2006

RE: Operating Plan

Dear Wilderness Permittee,

Wilderness encompasses nearly 20% of the National Forest System. The Wilderness Act of 1964 states that wilderness is to be managed for the “enjoyment of the American people in such manner as will leave them unimpaired for future use and enjoyment as wilderness.” With improving technologies and ever increasing pressure from a growing population, wilderness program responsibilities and complexities have increased while available wilderness workforce has decreased. Consequently, concerns have risen at many levels of the agency regarding our ability, at the ground level, to assure the protection and perpetuation of wilderness.

The 10-Year Wilderness Stewardship Challenge was developed by the Chief of the Forest Service to provide a quantifiable measurement of the Forest Service’s success in wilderness stewardship. The goal identified by the Wilderness Advisory Group, and endorsed by the Chief, is to bring each and every wilderness under Forest Service management to a minimum stewardship level by the 50th Anniversary of the Wilderness Act in 2014.

Here is how you can help. As outfitter/guides you serve as ambassadors for wilderness. Your clients should leave with an appreciation and knowledge of wilderness that they may use in future guided or self-guided trips to wild areas. We believe that outfitter/guides provide a direct benefit to the wilderness they operate in and can be exemplary models of wilderness values and the spark to help people understand the value of wilderness. The benefits of an American public understanding the value of wilderness, and the outfitter and guides taking a leading role can only help all of us to protect and enjoy our wonderful natural resources.

To move forward with the 10-Year Wilderness Stewardship Challenge each Region has identified specific strategies. As a part of this Challenge, Element #7 directs us to review and evaluate existing outfitter & guide operation plans for each wilderness to ensure there is direction for outfitters to model appropriate wilderness practices and incorporate awareness of wilderness values in their interaction with clients and others.

Kevin Cannon, Recreation Forester, of my staff has put together a brief example called ‘Operating Plan Language’ (enclosed) that you may incorporate into your operating plans that would encompass the necessary points for meeting Element #7 at a “minimum stewardship level”.

As we visit with you in the coming year, whether in the office or in the field, we will be checking with you on whether or not you are incorporating awareness of wilderness values with your clients and others by using the following methods:



- Incorporated language encompassing the necessary points in your operating plan.
- Monitoring through the permit inspection process. The permit administrator can ask the outfitter how they complied with that part of their operating plan (i.e., the number of programs or interpretive sessions given to clients, training courses attended by outfitters/guides) and document narratively what was accomplished.
- Evaluate the literature (brochures, websites, etc.) developed by the outfitter/guide – do they include appropriate messaging (i.e., references to the Wilderness Act, wilderness values, Leave No Trace, etc.).
- Talks to groups under the outfitter/guide, as appropriate.
- Direct observation of camp behavior and camp layout and practices as approved in annual operating plans.
- Conduct field observations of outfitter/guide interactions with clients as opportunities arise.

For further background on the 10-Year Wilderness Stewardship Challenge I am enclosing a copy of the Chief's letter of January 14, 2005 and the full list of the 10-Year Challenge Elements. If you have any questions about this you may contact Kevin Cannon at 970-295-6722.

Sincerely,

ELLEN L. HODGES
District Ranger

Enclosures (3)

Operating Plan Language
January 31, 2006

As professional outfitters with regard to backcountry use, and having a very high profile and status as a result of our profession, we will do our best to set the example for other Forest users regarding Leave No Trace Practices, backcountry ethics, and caring for the land and other users.

As a wilderness outfitter it is my responsibility to preserve and protect the wilderness resource. Listed below are the characteristics I, and those that work for me, will do our best to exemplify as wilderness outfitters:

- 1) Have an understanding of and a personal appreciation of the wilderness resource.
- 2) Place the wilderness resource above the ease and convenience of ourselves and our clients.
- 3) We will not sacrifice the wilderness resource for economic gain.
- 4) We will be keen observers and interpreters of natural processes.
- 5) Pass on to our clients, wilderness history, ethics and values.
- 6) We will continually experiment with "light-on-the-land" techniques.
- 7) We recognize the value of opportunities for solitude in the wilderness experience.
- 8) Our advertising represents the experience as primitive and unconfined recreation; and prepares clients in advance for a "wilderness" experience in contrast with their daily life.
- 9) We take pride in keeping traditional skills alive.
- 10) We will do our best to allow our clients to participate in the experience to the fullest extent possible.