

**Operating Plan for Backcountry/Wilderness Program
2009 Field Season
Androscoggin Ranger District, WMNF**

The following document will provide a general overview and specific guidance relating to the FY 2009 field season for the Backcountry and Wilderness Program on the Androscoggin Ranger District. Backcountry Patrollers perform duties supporting the seasonal administration, operation and maintenance of dispersed recreation facilities, areas and resources including federally designated Wilderness Areas. Patrollers must be versatile in performing a wide and varied range of duties often working independently in remote parts of the Forest.

A. Program Administration

1. Organization

District Ranger- Katie Stuart

Assistant Ranger (Recreation)- Dave Neely

Recreation Operations Manager- Travis Pellerin

Backcountry/Wilderness Program Manager- Justin Preisendorfer

Backcountry/Wilderness Crew Leader- Matt Schomburg

Backcountry/Wilderness Patrollers- Nate Peters

Jessica Charpentier

2. Staffing Schedule

Backcountry Patrollers will work five days a week in May with a fluctuating schedule based on required trainings and the desire to give employees two consecutive days off. During the first two weeks of June Patrollers will have Friday and Saturday off.

For the remainder of the season the crew will work four ten-hour days beginning at 7:00 am and ending at 5:30. Everyone will have Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursdays off. There may be exceptions when training opportunities arise. A maxi-flex schedule is in effect for Patrollers due to the flexibility needed to properly perform position duties.

Patrollers will work all holidays and will be compensated in pay. Credit hours may be earned but it is the responsibility of the Patrollers to keep these in check as to not enter a "use or lose" situation. The Crew Leader and Program Manager must be given adequate notice if changes in the schedule are desired. The operational season for the Patrollers will run from mid May until late September.

3. General Guidelines

a. Safety

Safety is the number one priority in our jobs at all times and will be emphasized throughout the course of the season. The Backcountry/Wilderness Safety Plan addresses many issues and Patrollers must become familiar with its various components.

b. Uniform

The Backcountry Patroller must be recognizable and identifiable to the public as a USFS employee at all times while on duty. An

Androscoggin District t-shirt may be worn while doing work not appropriate for the standard uniform. A t-shirt is not appropriate while in contact with the public over an extended period of time. At all other times the Patroller will wear the official Forest Service uniform with name plate and badge. Uniform components will not be mixed with nonuniform attire. Patrollers will be either in uniform or out of uniform. There will be certain circumstances that require common sense. If wearing the uniform is a safety issue (i.e. your gear is soaked while in the field on a 40 degree day) then it is appropriate to change into other clothes that will allow you to complete your job safely. None of the uniform components will be worn while off duty and all components will be turned in at the end of the season including hats, t-shirts, etc.

c. Appearance

The importance of appearance is not to be underestimated. We have the potential to make a very strong impression on the public whether in the backcountry, at a trailhead or while presenting a program in the frontcountry. Employees will be neat and well groomed. It is understood that getting dirty is part of the job.

d. Communications and Accountability

All Patrollers are required to have a radio with working batteries in their possession at all times while on duty. This radio must be turned on at all times and located in such a way that the Patrollers can always hear any radio traffic. Radio transmissions are expected to be brief, professional and clear. Patrollers will check in at noon and let the front desk know where they are. Patrollers working in the same general area should maintain frequent radio contact with one another, especially when performing law enforcement duties. Patrollers will check in at the end of the day with the office when spending the night in the field. This will be done before the front desk closes at 1630. Contacting a fellow employee may serve as a backup safety measure.

A binder is located at the front desk of the ranger station as a record of where all employees are for the day, time expected for return and time at which employee went off duty. Another binder is located at the Patrol desk in the seasonal room for employees to record daily information including areas/trails visited, contacts made, work completed, etc. Patrollers are expected to use both of these systems religiously.

e. Equipment

The district has a supply of equipment including packs, tents, maps, headlamps, first aid kits, guidebooks and uniform components. Items will be checked out as needed and returned by the end of the season. Care and accountability of all government property is required. Employees may use their own gear as desired. Some personal gear will be required for the job including boots and insulating layers. It is the responsibility of each Patroller to carry the necessary equipment to safely complete the day's tasks.

f. Meetings

A crew meeting will be held on a weekly basis to schedule work activities for the following week, discuss problems, etc. This meeting will occur on Fridays. This meeting will happen at 0700 and will often be conducted on the fly as the crew travels to a worksite for a group project. Make sure you schedule time for office work at the end of each day so that you are prepared for the following day whether it be in the field or in a meeting. This will give you time to research questions, submit time/travel, and do incident reports etc. When Matt cannot attend, a Backcountry Patroller may be asked to sit in and provide program updates for the Monday morning district meeting.

Informal daily meetings will be held each day before going into the field. A short safety component will be included and documented each week as part of the meeting.

g. Reporting/Documenting

The Backcountry Patrol serves as the eyes and ears in the field on the District. Patrollers must keep a field notebook and take accurate recordings of issues, occurrences, work projects, etc. These notes will help dictate the work that the program performs in the future and better enable the District to manage our resources. Master logs of signs, kiosks, and facilities will be maintained and updated regularly. These logs will be located on the Patrol desk in the seasonal room. The Patrollers will also serve as reporters of backcountry conditions for the VIS staff. They will complete the VIS "Recreation Reports" on a daily basis so that our frontliners always have current info to provide to Forest visitors. Any issues concerning trail conditions, blazing, blowdowns, etc can be relayed to the Trail Crew by copying the VIS form and attaching it to a designated clipboard in the seasonal room.

h. Management Guidelines and Regulations

Patrollers must become very familiar with Forest Regulations and the rationale behind these management actions. A copy of WMNF Rules/Regs brochure must be carried with other FPO materials at all times while patrolling. A map featuring the FPA's is also suggested. The program's emphasis is less on enforcement and more on education. Primary topics include Leave No Trace practices, HikeSafe, Forest Protection Areas, designated Wilderness, etc. Enforcement is a tool that Patrollers should use whenever appropriate.

i. Customer Service

Forest visitors, coworkers and cooperators are all our customers. The Backcountry Patroller should strive to make every interaction with each person a positive one. Respect and are support are critical to all relationships and will be the foundation for a successful season.

j. Emergencies

Employees must familiarize themselves with the District Search and Rescue Plan as well as the District Fire Plan.

B. General Operating Procedures

The Great Gulf Wilderness, Wild River Wilderness, Caribou-Speckled Mountain Wilderness, Cutler River Drainage and the alpine zone of the Presidentials are the highest priority areas for this season's outreach efforts due to their high visitation and/or sensitive nature. All weekends will see Patrollers making daily visits to these areas. Other priority areas include backcountry facilities, Carter-Moriah Range, Mahoosuc Appalachian Trail corridor, and the Kilkenny Range.

Program guidance is directed by the Forest Service vision of "Caring for the Land and Serving People." One of the most important functions of the program is to have maximum exposure/educational contact with the public in heavily used areas and to enforce Forest regulations. Compliance and educational opportunities are preferable to enforcement, though a common sense approach is necessary. Patrollers are not in the backcountry to write violation notices but they will not shy away from doing so as there are times when it is completely appropriate. Good judgment and common sense are the patroller's two biggest resources and both are critical in applying the appropriate measures to any particular situation. The duties of the Backcountry Patroller are highly variable and no two situations will ever be exactly alike.

It is important that the Backcountry Patrollers take the time to provide a positive interaction with everyone that they meet on the trail. This may be a simple and short exchange of salutations (How are you doing?, Enjoying yourself?, etc.) or a lengthy discussion depending on the visitor's needs or interests. What is most important is that the visitor knows that the Patroller is a Forest Service employee and that s/he is interested in the visitor's experience. They may want to know about the flower on the side of the trail but it may seem obvious that they no little about LNT. The best Patroller will find a crafty way to incorporate some LNT guidance into his/her interpretation without spending twenty minutes on either. Forest visitors will often ask about trail conditions, mileages, weather, etc. Patrollers should do their best to stay informed so that they can answer these questions while remembering that it's better to say that you don't know than to try and pass off a fabricated answer. They may not know what a trillium is but they're not stupid! There will be times and places where it will be impractical or even undesirable to interact with every person, such as on the Tuckerman Ravine Trail on a busy Saturday or en route to a work site for a project. Even at these times, a hello or simple greeting goes a long way. If someone wants to talk your ear off then politely explain that duty calls and they will usually understand. Some folks you come across may not want to interact with you at all and that's fine. Many people come to our mountains seeking quiet and solitude and we need to know when to grant them some peace.

FY 2009 Program of Work

A. Program Administration

1. Staffing

2 seasonal staff will make up the core of this year's Backcountry/Wilderness Crew. As the Backcountry/Wilderness Crew Leader, Matt Schomburg will be serving as the primary contact for the crew. If Matt is not around or if there are issues that a crewmember

doesn't feel comfortable talking to Matt about, they should seek out the Program Manager, Justin Preisendorfer.

2. Scheduling

a. Weekly Schedule

May- Sat and Sun off

Early June- Fri and Sat off

After June 14- Switch to (4) ten-hour days with Tues, Weds, Thurs off.
(Weds and Thurs will be the scheduled days off for timesheet purposes.)

b. Season Schedule Overview

May- Training

June- Training, facility openings, patrolling and project work

July- Monitoring, patrolling and project work

August- Monitoring, patrolling and project work

September- Patrolling, completion of any outstanding light project work
and final wrap-up for sites and program

c. Training Schedule

DDC4- May 19

Axe Training- May 20

WFA- May 27-28

CPR- May 29

ATV Refresher- June 2

Fire Refresher- June 3

WCT- June 4

Chainsaw Training- June 8-10

ATV New Training- June 11

All Employee Meeting- June 15

Chainsaw Refresher- June 18

FPO Refresher- June 26

Bloodborne/HAZMAT/HAZCOM- To be determined

Wilderness Ranger Day- To be determined

Other relevant trainings- As offered

B. Program Projects

1. Patrolling of backcountry and Wilderness areas to provide visitors with information and ensure compliance of Forest regulations

2. Routine facility monitoring and maintenance

All facilities will be checked monthly and routine maintenance performed

3. Management of the District sign and kiosk program

a. Routine checks of backcountry signs incorporated into patrol duties

b. Replacement or maintenance of signs and kiosk materials as needed

c. Updating of sign catalog

d. Signing of all FPA's with new style signs

4. Assist Androscoggin Trail Crew on Mondays

5. Trail use monitoring

6. Annual Wilderness monitoring (Visitor numbers and campsites)

- 7. Level I-type maintenance (brushing and blowdown removal) in Great Gulf Wilderness**
- 8. Air quality monitoring at Camp Dodge**
- 9. Oversee the SCA and AMC Wild River Wilderness work crews (~3 weeks total)**
- 10. Implementation of Wild River Shelters project**
 - a. Create native soil tent pads
 - b. Establish intrasite trail systems
 - c. Remove tent pads and outhouses
 - d. Remove Blue Brook and Spruce Shelters
 - e. Rehabilitate impacted areas
 - f. Prep and install Blue Brook Shelter at Wild River Campground
- 11. Paint Cabot Cabin**
- 12. Unknown Pond**
 - a. Improvement of existing designated campsites
 - b. Revegetation of illegal and poorly located campsites
- 13. Rattle River**
 - a. Improvement of existing designated campsites
 - b. Revegetation of illegal and poorly located campsites
- 14. Patrol and clean-up of popular swimming holes**
- 15. Inventory, painting and basic maintenance of Cutler River first aid caches**
- 16. Deliver public education programs** (“Evening with a Ranger” at Pinkham Notch, “A Day in the Life of a Ranger”, Hut/Camp programs, etc)
- 17. Revegetation and rehabilitation of poorly located, dispersed backcountry campsites**
- 18. Project planning for Valley Way Campsite project** (drafting, scoping, IDT visit, etc)
- 19. Zeta Pass Site analysis/project planning**
- 20. Supervise volunteer groups on backcountry projects as opportunities present**
- 21. Assist with other District and Forest projects or duties as needed**