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| **Forest Service Technology & Development Program** | **Date:** 09/20/06 |
| **Recreation Project Proposal** | **Submitted by:** Connie G. Myers |
| **— (FY 2007) —** | **Unit:** Arthur Carhart National Wilderness Training Center |
| **Project Name/Title:** | **Address:** 32 Campus Drive #3168 |
| Traditional Skills Development Team Partnership | **Phone:** 406-243-4654 |
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| **OVERALL PROBLEM / OBJECTIVE STATEMENT** (Describe the problem, how the work is currently being done, and why improvement is needed):  Integrity of the National Wilderness Preservation System and the Forest Services’ proud tradition as world leaders in wilderness stewardship is increasingly compromised by the ever-escalating use of motorized equipment due to the attrition of skilled workers; lack of specialized equipment; and, misinformation about the economic, effective, and safe use of traditional skills.  Recognizing this issue, some units have moved forward in an effort to train employees and volunteers. Some have been very successful while others have floundered. Most units do not have the internal or external capacity for training and simply want to contract out. While this approach may accomplish much needed work, it does nothing to build internal or external capacity for future work. Currently, there is no coordinated effort to identify regional or national traditional skills training and project needs. There is no coordinated effort to identify existing skills within or outside the agency. There is no coordinated effort to match existing needs with existing skills. There is no coordinated effort to identify and pass on lessons learned to ensure success. This lack of coordination has resulted in duplication of effort, inefficient use of existing skills, and failure to capitalize on existing opportunities.  Action must be taken to ensure integrity of the National Wilderness Preservation System for present and future generations, and to reclaim the Forest Service leadership role in wilderness stewardship by renewing our commitment to the use of traditional skills in wilderness, reconnecting Americans with their wilderness heritage, and removing barriers for development of successful citizen wilderness stewardship programs.  Given the national and multi-agency relevancy of this issue, the Carhart Center investigated agency interest in establishment and institutionalization of a Traditional Skills Development Team to address the issues outlined above. Each of the units that submitted a traditional skills proposal to MTDC confirmed the need for such a Team acknowledging that a comprehensive approach to the issue was favored over a project by project approach. The Carhart Center explored national organizations involved in similar work and found that the Student Conservation Association has taken steps to reinvigorate their Wilderness Work Skills Program. Core to this program is training young people in the safe and effective use of traditional skills to rehabilitate and restore trails and campsites. The Carhart Center and the SCA believe that by working together and with others, more can be accomplished to advance traditional skills within and outside the agencies than can be accomplished separately. To this end, a MOU for establishment and institutionalization of a Traditional Skills Development Team Partnership is being explored. | |
| **PROPOSED TECHNOLOGY & DEVELOPMENT WORK** (Describe your concept of the end product, i.e., a new equipment design, a video production, a handbook, etc.):  Provide seed funding for the next 5 years to establish and institutionalize a Traditional Skills Development Team Partnership using agency, non agency, and corporate expertise and funding to build capacity among agency employees and citizen stewards in the safe and effective use of traditional skills and tools including, but not limited to, crosscut saws, axes, rigging, the use of native materials, and horse packing through:   * Development of a national internal and external skills and project needs database * Development of standards and course curriculum including values and benefits of wilderness * Development and distribution of instructional materials including videos * Identification and coordination of training needs and projects * Recruiting, training, outfitting, and supervising agency employees and volunteers including youth * Hands on training using existing wilderness projects as training opportunities | |

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| **POTENTIAL BENEFITS** (Describe how this project will reduce cost, save time, improve safety, increase efficiency, or provide resource management):   * This partnership increases efficiency by reducing costs and saving time. Insurance costs for the use of chainsaws are $7.20/hr compared to $1.70/hr for crosscut saw use. Depending on the length and number of projects, cost savings over 5 years across 9 Regions could be substantial. A Minimum Requirements Analysis must be completed, reviewed, and approved before motorized equipment can be used on wilderness projects. The use of traditional skills requires no such analysis thus saving considerable staff and manager time. * This partnership improves safety. Five-year Forest Service safety and accident data show that the accident rate per hour of chainsaw use is 18-20 times higher than for crosscut saws and the severity of injuries from chainsaws is 120 times more severe. These same data show 7 injuries from the use of power rock drills and no recorded injuries from the use of star drills. By increasing the number of employees proficient in the use of traditional skills, this project will improve safety. * This partnership improves agency effectiveness locally, regionally, and nationally. On the ground field projects will be completed while simultaneously building capacity in the safe use of traditional skills both within and outside the agency. * This partnership provides resource management. By simultaneously accomplishing needed work, and training the workforce and citizen stewards for future projects, this project leads to the successful implementation of law and policy during lean budget times. * This partnership contributes directly to the FS Strategic Plan:   + Objective 4.1 “*Maintain a diverse workforce with the technical understanding and leadership skills needed to meet major agency challenges.”*   + Objective 4.2 *“Improve the use of partnerships and interagency cooperation to leverage resources and skills.”*   + Objective 5.1 *“Promote conservation education to increase environmental literacy.”*   + Objective 5.3 *“Increase collaboration with groups that benefit and educate urban populations.”* * This partnership enhances credibility among our constituents. Many visitors and wilderness supporters welcome wilderness as a refuge from our fast-paced, developed society and embrace the solitude it offers. By respecting wilderness law and policy through the use of non-motorized equipment, the Forest Service honors the values that wilderness visitors are seeking and reestablishes credibility. * This partnership strengthens existing partnerships. The Student Conservation Association, Alliance for Wilderness Education & Stewardship, American Hiking Society, Florida Trail Association, Youth Conservation Corps, and countless other existing partnerships will be enhanced by the coordination and skills that the Traditional Skills Development Team Partnership can bring. * This partnership is a tool to reconnect the public including youth with their wilderness heritage. The recent use of traditional skills to rebuild more than 2,200 km of trail in the national forests in Florida met with overwhelmingly positive response from visitors and volunteers alike. Those involved in this massive project conveyed time and again how important it was to them that traditional skills were used. They took great pride in knowing that their actions did not alter the landscape beyond that intended by the Wilderness Act. They became emotionally attached to wilderness through the incredibly powerful example of our living heritage that traditional skills are. More people signed on to help because of the use of traditional skills than we have ever seen when motorized tools are used.   Wilderness stewardship without citizen involvement is not enough, and citizen involvement without wilderness education and training is unsustainable. This project will help ensure that we capitalize on the assistance afforded by volunteer organizations; that Americans of all walks of life have the opportunity to reconnect with their wilderness heritage; and, that the wilderness we depend on today remains wild for future generations to enjoy tomorrow. We can leave no greater legacy. |