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"Fostering interagency excellence in wilderness stewardship"



ISSUE PAPER – RETAINING TRADITIONAL SKILLS

Issue: Attrition of skilled workers, lack of specialized equipment, and misinformation about the economic, effective, and safe use of traditional skills appears to be increasingly compromising our credibility among some constituent groups and integrity of the National Wilderness Preservation System.

Indicators:

Over the last 8 years the Carhart Center has received an increasing number of requests for information about where to



find existing expertise in addressing storm recovery efforts in wilderness and to organize and conduct traditional skills training courses. Missoula Technology and Development Center has experienced a similar increase in requests for assistance. Additionally, we have seen a marked increase in decisions favoring the use of motorized equipment and mechanical transport in wilderness through Line Officer case studies for our National and Regional Wilderness Stewardship courses. Frequently, rationale given for these decisions is: attrition of skilled workers; lack of specialized equipment; and, misinformation about the economic, effective, and safe use of traditional

skills. Additionally, the workforce skilled in traditional tool use is increasingly limited and has resulted in our inability to clear wilderness trails in a timely manner. This has resulted in increasing frustration among our constituents and the perception that we are intentionally reducing trail mileage.

Need: Action must be taken to address the decline in workers skilled in the use of traditional tools to improve our credibility among constituent groups and to ensure integrity of the National Wilderness Preservation System for present and future generations.

Action: The Carhart Center, working with a number of internal and external partners, has identified steps to address this issue. Directors will identify, discuss and evaluate options for completing these steps.

1. Develop a national internal and external skills and project needs database
2. Develop standards and course curriculum including values and benefits of wilderness
3. Develop and distribute instructional materials
4. Identify and coordinate training needs and projects
5. Recruit, train, outfit, and supervise agency employees and volunteers including youth
6. Conduct hands on training using existing wilderness projects as training opportunities