As generations of wilderness rangers come and go, how has the subjective and temporal knowing of a wilderness influenced the maintenance of wilderness character? Mr. Zahnhiser, one of the principle architects of the Wilderness Act, must have had a crystal ball when he wrote about the present and future threats to wilderness; actions that would ultimately degrade wilderness character. He identified, grazing, road building for access to mining claims, transfer of wilderness to state ownership, aircraft, motor vehicles, mechanical conveyances, buildings (huts for backcountry use), visitor use, and administrative actions which attract more visitor use as threats that conservationists must guard against. My neck hairs went on end after reading the list because many of these threats persist in the daily public lands and wilderness debates.

My thoughts wander back to how my present experience of a wilderness is situated within the span of an area’s primeval history, wilderness character (since designation), and current condition. Visitors to wilderness, too, are subject to these contextual changes. Changes that are perhaps exemplified by increasing visitor use in many wilderness areas leading to adjusting expectations and reported satisfying experiences. Thanks to the research conducted by David Cole and Troy Hall (2008), wilderness practitioners can more deeply explore the intersection of our subjective judgements and objective wilderness character.

Mr. Zahnhiser once wrote that, “we are not fighting a rearguard action simply to delay the destruction of wilderness. We are rather carrying forward a program that we expect will endure in perpetuity.” How do we endure and maintain wilderness character? We must rely upon each other, the incredible foundation of resources created by our colleagues, seek and accept help from our capable network of partners, and continually return to the exploration of wilderness character. Now is a time to return to our roots and to action!
Wilderness Advisory Group Task Team Updates

**Wilderness Stewardship Performance Internal Funding Program**
This Task Team worked to review Wilderness Stewardship Performance (WSP) funding proposals for FY18 and FY19 proposals. There were so many great proposals sent in: FY18 had 117 requests and FY19 had an increase with 128 requests. While we cannot fund them all, a grand total of $4,643,270 was awarded and is going out towards improving wilderness stewardship projects across the nation.

**Wilderness Desk Guide**
The Wilderness Stewardship Desk Guide Task Team took on a second season of work and are focusing on two primary objectives. The first includes a full review of last year’s chapter updates for fact checking and consistency of language. Second, the team is drafting brand new chapters on climbing, wilderness study areas, lands adjacent to wilderness, international borders (Department of Homeland Security, U.S. Border Patrol, undocumented immigrants, etc.), and primitive or traditional tools. The desk guide is currently being reviewed by the Washington Office.

The Desk Guide will be posted on the National Wilderness Program SharePoint site.

**Partnerships**
The Partnership Task Team is summarizing the field responses and interviews with partnership and volunteer groups taken over the winter and spring into a briefing paper for the Washington Office to be shared agency-wide. The paper endeavors to highlight current challenges and benefits to working with partnership and volunteer groups from their group’s perspective and agency field unit’s perspective. Past WAG papers and other newspaper and journal articles provide context for the evolution and progression of partnership and volunteer collaboration in the Forest Service. The paper will also highlight partnership resources available to all.

**Wilderness Permit Systems**
The Wilderness Permit Systems Task Team reviewed several existing diverse wilderness permit systems to develop brief descriptions of permit system types with helpful references and links for wilderness managers.

The team reviewed visitor use permit systems from across the nation, spoke with managers using them, and studied three main types: voluntary self-registration, mandatory non-limiting, and mandatory limiting. The research, interviews, and accompanying references and links will be outlined in a summary paper as Phase 1. This paper will serve as a starting point for managers to assist in the development of a wilderness visitor use permit system. Phase 2 will entail adding more detailed instruction with specific planning examples of all three types of permit systems.

The Visitor Use Permit Systems Summary Paper will include:
- Descriptions of the three aforementioned visitor use permit types
- Discussion on the application and implementation of these visitor use permit types
- Descriptions of Recreation.gov, Recreation One Stop, and the new Booze-Alleen-Hamilton reservation system contract business rules requirements
- On-line references
Forest Service Chief Tooke proposed a question for wilderness rangers and wilderness managers in order to understand the issue from the field: “What are you hearing from your wilderness visitors about access to wilderness?”

The WAG received a total of 27 individual responses to the question. Some units fielded several concerns from the public. The results are compiled into the chart below:

A summary of responses are below and on the next page:

R1 – Maintaining trail access post-fire

R1 – Roads leading to trailheads are in rough shape and getting worse every year; quality of trail systems are declining with reduced budgets

R1 – Frustration to the deferred maintained trail system (some advocating for use of chainsaws while others strongly oppose); frustration with fires that cause loss of trail access

R2 – Trails not maintained making access difficult; crowding at trailhead parking areas; access to better trip planning tools on Forest Service website

R2 – Unit recently improved access which occurred through a land exchange and trail easements

R2 – Mountain bicycle access in comparison to unlimited stock access and associated impact comparison

R2 – Parking access at trailheads are limited; access for visitors with physical disabilities

R2 – Increase the amount of non-motorized land designations

The non-scientific question and responses produced a result that many other units may find relevant to its respective unit. By far, trail maintenance and the need to perform such activities appears to be the most significant concern from the public. In a distant second was the availability of trailhead parking mostly due to overcrowding. According to the responses, there may be a correlation between these two responses. Third, accessing the trailheads can be difficult for the public due to road maintenance and repair need. Overall, the public appears to be concerned about access to wilderness areas: the lack of trail maintenance activities, the lack of road maintenance efforts, and of overcrowding at trailheads and along trails could potentially be impacting their ability to access and have a wilderness experience.
R2 – Trailhead parking too small; lots always full especially weekends; others use alternate trailheads but these usually require a high-clearance vehicle; appreciation to permit system limiting overnight access; availability to valuable information to find out about “what is wilderness”, overall access, trailhead locations, and regulations.

R2 – Concerned with increased discussion allowing mountain bicycles into wilderness; any access issues that arise are due to road, trail, and trailhead maintenance.

R2 – Positive comments regarding the access for equestrian use and the ease of access of trailheads to equestrian trailers

R2 - Constituents have expressed concern about the continuing pressure for non-traditional wilderness uses (mountain bicycles) and how this pressure may erode the integrity, nature, and values of the wilderness; a concern expressed by the wilderness managers are the challenges of maintaining a robust trail maintenance schedule while facing increasing beetle kill, forest fires, and blow-down occurring deeper into the field season

R2 – Trail maintenance and reroute needs for access to wilderness and in wilderness; most grant funds are used for log-outs only on most of the trails, and not doing the needed tread work, steps, walls, bridges, turnpikes, or reroutes to improve or maintain to standard

R2 – Trails need maintenance and improvements; more parking needed at trailheads

R4 – Lack of mechanized access to the wilderness

R4 – Loss of access to pre-wilderness designation airstrips in wilderness

R4 – Mountain bicycle access into wilderness perceived as only ground impacts and not the social impact of increased mechanization in society

R4 – Access into the forest and wilderness for all visitors, outfitters, guides, hunters, and the like is that access into the forest and wilderness specifically is not working. This refers to logs in the trails, rocks on the trails and whatever else requires basic work. simple cut and run and or shovel and run stuff; public sees and is aware of annual reduction of funds to maintain the trail system.

R5 – Lack of road maintenance to access trailheads; lack of sufficient quantity of trailhead parking; lack of trail maintenance work efforts further restricting access

R5 – Trail maintenance is non-existent but in most cases inconsistent with neighboring National Park Service wilderness; visitors complain trails are not cleared and suggest using chainsaws like the National Park Service; The public complains the Forest Service fails to do their part to keep the trails clear so they do the only reasonable thing which is clear the trails themselves with chainsaws

R5 – Trail maintenance: A recurring question I get often is “why do you no longer clear...insert trail name”, and a comment I have been hearing often is that the Forest Service is closing the trails through purposeful neglect in order to get around scoping. Many people believe this is some type of conspiracy to keep people out of wilderness areas.

R5 – Trailhead parking is overcrowded and cannot accommodate the demand; the roads leading into Wilderness trailheads are in poor shape, most often 2-wheel drive vehicles cannot access; long term repairs and maintenance are needed

R5 – Trail conditions are deteriorating, reducing access to all including fire personnel; millions of dollars in assets in the trail infrastructure database - basically no maintenance and no personnel dedicated to preserving those assets

R5 – The number of people accessing the wilderness has grown tremendously and there is a desire by some to reduce the number of people who can access the wilderness; the increase has resulted in greater resource damage that land agencies cannot keep up with due to the lack of funding and personnel necessary

R5 - Trails are not cleared, not maintained, eroding from lack of trail structures, or poor trail layout; some trails haven’t been cleared in years - it’s very hard to go over, around, and through downed debris, brush, and it’s hard to follow the trail; many have complained about abandoned trails no longer maintained with assumption the Forest Service decided the trail wasn’t being used; they couldn’t keep up with the maintenance; the trail was not designed, or designed poorly, or there was another trail accessing the same destination; overcrowding on popular and feeder trails

R5 – Overcrowding on popular trails; concerns to the possibility of allowing mountain bicycles in the wilderness and the associated safety and trail maintenance concerns; concerns with the lack of trail maintenance; visitors state that they would gladly pay for their wilderness permits if they could be assured this money was directly applied to the trails or wilderness stewardship efforts for the local agency

R9 – Not enough trailheads leading into forest and wilderness; lack of access to trailheads due to private property
We in the wilderness and trails community are on the brink of losing our soul and either we have not articulated this fact well enough to our leadership or they are making an informed decision to turn their backs on over 100 years of heritage and letting the National Treasure that is our National Forest Trail System fade away.

When I started working in this business over twenty years ago, we maintained a large volunteer program but it was valued much differently. Volunteers were valued for many intangible benefits: uniting the public with their land, getting kids in the woods, introducing people to traditional skills, and nurturing support for wilderness and public land. My experience teaches me that volunteers are most successful and valuable when you can marry a specific skillset with a specific need. Matching qualified volunteers with the right job is paramount.

Our ranger district’s biggest success on this front is our partnership with the Student Conservation Association and Montana Conservation Corps programs. The reason for this success is that the interns from these groups are embedded in our program for an entire season. They either work directly on one of our force account crews or they operate under the supervision of a force account liaison. They receive our training, become fully immersed in our program and are a vital part of our seasonal workforce.

Excuse my candor, but we’ve needed some frankness inserted into this discussion for a long time. It can’t be emphasized enough that volunteers are not paid employees and there are real limitations on how much production you can expect to get out of them. Shortcomings in most volunteers’ experience and abilities often result in a low ceiling of quality. Is this the level on which we should expect to operate when charged with accomplishing taxpayers’ work? Using volunteers absent of skilled supervision does not work. And deploying volunteers to accomplish any work that is critical, time sensitive, difficult to access, subject to harsh weather and challenging living conditions, or that requires any intermediate degree of technical skill does not work. The vast majority of wilderness trail work encompasses all of these elements.

Many wilderness areas are facing real political pressure to use chainsaws and other breaches of the Wilderness Act due to un-usability of the trail systems. In the vast western landscape we should also remember that when we lose trails they are likely gone forever. Our public land trail systems are a national treasure and we should carefully consider their future. Our trail systems are on life support, many on the brink of extinction, and rather than investing in our experienced and highly skilled employees to address this crisis many suggest throwing untrained and inexperienced members of the general public to accomplish work for which they are entirely not equipped or qualified to handle.

This is what we stand to lose: not only our trail system but the skills necessary to build on the future. We stand to lose the long, rich heritage of traditional skills. These skills are already deteriorating at an alarming rate and they cannot be preserved by volunteers and partners.

The reader may perceive the tone of this essay as negative or condescending. I would reply by noting it is equally condescending to tell those of us who have spent the entirety of our adult lives honing a precise skillset that the work we do is a suitable task for volunteers. The daily grind of working in the backcountry is a full time job for professionals. Accomplishing the critical tasks in wilderness and trail management necessitates that I employ the talents of someone who possesses a refined technical skillset, has weeks or months of time available, and is highly physically fit. Over 22 years I have worked with hundreds of volunteers with many great attributes, but I can honestly say I have not worked with a single one that met all three of the aforementioned criteria. The job is extremely physical, time consuming and technical.

The foundation is crumbling. The consequences of the vacuum created will be a crippling blow to the agency’s aspirations to provide public access to public lands and to fulfill the intent of the Wilderness Act. When I first started working for the Forest Service I was taught how to ride a horse and pack a mule by a man that had done it his entire life. I was taught how to swing an axe and perform trail maintenance by people that had done it their entire careers. I was taught how to sharpen a crosscut by the man who wrote the book. I feel very fortunate and grateful for this mentorship. But in the current climate I am not optimistic that the next generation will be afforded this opportunity.
The work to deliver what we now know as the National Wilderness Preservation System (NWPS) took the combined effort of professionals from public land agencies, politically savvy DC-based bureaucrats, and incredible grass-roots advocacy organizations. Now that the system has been created (and is being created), and we have collectively celebrated over 50 years of The Wilderness Act, it is time to grow the connection to stewardship from the same public-private dynamic that helped designate so many special places. By working together, we can drive relevancy, and relevancy equals capacity for the guardianship the system deserves.

In the debates that helped shape the Act as well as subsequent policies and legislative efforts, having an engaged public paid important dividends. Having stewardship partners engaging a wide swath of local communities can and will pay important dividends for preserving wilderness character through the 21st century.

To be clear, engaging with partners is not an alternative to a well-funded community of agency wilderness professionals. Partnerships are not important when budgets are lean, or when other workforce challenges exist. Partnerships are important because partnering makes us all stronger and through partnership we can reach a wider swath of the public. Partners are not a replacement, and yet partners can be irreplaceable.

Woven into the tapestry of wilderness protection and stewardship is a fiber binding our efforts to something that is bigger than the current federal funding climate, something more important than completing today’s work on Wilderness Stewardship Performance measures. The fiber that binds us reaches back into history to connect wilderness leaders from all organizational walks of life to the essential and diverse workforce of today and to the ever more essential and diverse workforce of tomorrow. This strong fiber is weakened if we allow organizational tribalism to divide us; it is strengthened when we uplift the important role we all play through partnership.

Partners can bring unique voices and scalability. Partners can source new capacity streams (revenue and otherwise). Through partnership Forest Service employees can leverage their talents and place a deeper understanding of wilderness values in the minds of a new generation. In many ways, effective partnerships drive more attention to the wilderness resource.

It is also important to recognize that partners are wilderness professionals too. They often care just as deeply about keeping it wild and can be incredibly empathetic to the challenges that agency staff face to preserve the intent and values outlined in The Wilderness Act. If you assume all your partner cares about is opening trails, that is most likely the limited value that you will get out of the partnership. If, however, an effort is made to constantly and consistently reframe the partnership, the outcomes from the partnership can grow.

The Forest Service and the non-governmental organization wilderness community share very important DNA – names like Marshall and Leopold. The NWPS has also benefitted greatly from names that never wore an agency uniform – leaders like Harvey Broome, David Brower and Howard Zahniser. By recognizing how important it was for an “all-hands-on-deck” effort to pass The Wilderness Act, we can value how that same combined effort might be required to preserve wilderness character.
As all backcountry rangers do, I often have discussions about the 7 Leave No Trace principles with hikers of every experience level. It’s easy to engage good folks in good conversation about the hows and whys. Sometimes it’s their first exposure to this idea of wilderness stewardship. Sometimes they claim to practice it as I see them burning trash in a way too large fire pit. Sometimes they apologize profusely because they just didn’t realize how important it was to camp away from water sources. Sometimes they teach me something that I hadn’t considered before. I have certainly learned an awful lot about responsible backcountry ethics in the process. Like all of us, I know that at one time or another I have violated every last one of the principles, to some degree. We are all given the same poor education regarding this sort of Earth-based thinking. We are all taught to view our relationship to the land through what I would call a Western-thinking lens: separation and dominance. It is this very worldview that we must re-think, I believe.

In a newsletter by and for the wilderness stewards of our public lands, there is little need to preach about the 7 principles. We all know them; we all love them, and we all understand why they are so critical in this mad modern world. The overuse and abuse of these great wilderness temples is a growing crisis in public land management. What doesn’t seem to be discussed often, however, is why even wilderness seems to be suffering the same fate as every other parcel of land. After fifty years of “official” wilderness protection, oftentimes things seem worse. Why can’t we successfully defend even the last remnant of this spectacular American landscape? Within our culture why has the land, air, water, and all life been so misused and abused for generation upon generation? What is the root of this dilemma? And, most importantly, how can we begin to respond to this eternal threat with a solution that will not simply be another “stay of execution” for wilderness, in the words of the great David Brower?

“Man is a visitor who does not remain.” I never much liked that phrase from the 1964 Wilderness Act, and I have spent far too much time around Native people in the Southwest and elsewhere to let it slip by without critique. Many cultures were never destructive visitors who did not remain and recognize no distinction between wilderness and non-wilderness. We all are wilderness. We all belong to and with the Earth and her cycles of life. Yet this Western thinking has separated us so profoundly from Mother Earth that sentiments like this often go unchecked even with many rangers and land managers. Within Leave No Trace we talk about what we do to the Land, but do we ever discuss what our connection is with the Land? How can we educate in a truly effective manner if we are not consciously and thoughtfully engaging the public in that very discussion? Given the difficulties that public land protectors will certainly face in the coming years, I think it’s time to challenge our own thinking; our own ways in which we educate.

I fear that even Leave No Trace can suffer from the unconscious mental trap that comes from Western thinking. My hope is that the new generation of stewards not rely so thoroughly on new technologies but go back to something very old (put away your GPS! Read the Land!) For a few years now I have engaged anyone who will listen in the following Leave No Trace discussion: we’re missing something fundamental within the 7 Principles. They, too, were born of that limited thinking and so have an inherent flaw. I sometimes call this the 8th LNT principle, but in reality there is only one. If we all felt this principle on a very profound level, I believe there might be significantly less need for rangers to yap to visitors about respecting wildlife and taking care of water sources, for example.

**Principle 8: Be reverent towards Mother Earth. Rethink your relationship with the land, air, water, and all life.**

How many of us stop to give thanks to the glorious waters in the mighty Sierra Nevada where I range? How many of us know the indigenous place names to these sacred areas? How many of us acknowledge whose land this really is? How many of us fundamentally challenge this culture’s way of thinking? Within this discussion and this redefinition of our connection to the Earth perhaps a true solution can begin.
The responsibility for fish, wildlife, and land management shared between state and federal partners is a complex and sometimes sensitive topic. Nowhere is this truer than in congressionally designated wilderness, where goals of managing fish and wildlife can be at odds with preserving or enhancing wilderness character. Unfortunately this has led some to mistakenly believe that wilderness areas are essentially off limits to any actions involving fish and wildlife management and research, when in fact the indigenous species of a wilderness are a fundamental component of the natural quality that sometimes warrant active conservation work.

To explore this topic more fully, and with the goal of improving communication and understanding among key partners, the Gila National Forest, Forest Service Southwestern Region, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and New Mexico Department of Game and Fish partnered to develop a first of its kind strategy for conserving indigenous fish and wildlife of the Gila and Aldo Leopold Wilderness Areas. The project aimed to develop a document for local application while also providing an example to guide similar efforts elsewhere in the nation, and was driven, in part, by the newly developed, optional Fish and Wildlife Element of Wilderness Stewardship Performance.

In September 2016, an interdisciplinary team conducted a one-day workshop at the Gila National Forest Supervisor’s Office to select a list of priority species that would be the foci of the strategy, ultimately settling on six; Gila trout, narrow-headed gartersnake, Chiricahua leopard frog, Mexican spotted owl, and a pair of springsnail species. For each species the team evaluated and documented current status in each wilderness, near term (next five years) goals for survey, monitoring, and management, relevant supporting resources, key considerations for addressing wilderness stewardship responsibilities in concert with species conservation, and a plan for monitoring effectiveness of any actions taken. The team also documented the process used to facilitate their workshop and some lessons learned in a separate document to pass on to those doing similar work in the future.

The simple act of complimenting a Forest Service interdisciplinary team with partners from other agencies to focus collective attention on overlapping species conservation and wilderness stewardship goals was a productive and highly valuable step in improving communication and understanding. Participants came away with a better appreciation for where and how their goals overlapped, and of what responsibilities and values drive their counterparts – both within and outside the Forest Service. The team’s contributions are now captured in a living document that can be referenced to guide ongoing work on the two wilderness areas, with the first version signed by Gila National Forest Supervisor Adam Mendonca on November 3, 2016. The completed project benefited from 24 individuals who served as members of the Gila National Forest’s interdisciplinary team, as co-authors, or as reviewers.

Both the example strategy document and how-to document are available for download on the Wilderness Stewardship Performance SharePoint site under Support Resources > Protocols, Tools, Templates > Fish + Wildlife.
Wilderness Character Monitoring is here and the Forest Service has begun implementation in 2018!

The Wilderness Character Monitoring Technical Guide (Technical Guide) lays out the conceptual foundation for wilderness character monitoring in the Forest Service and provides detailed, step-by-step protocols. The Technical Guide will be published online in late spring or early summer 2018, but the final draft is in the Wilderness Character Monitoring Pinyon folder for managers to use now.

Two other critical pieces associated with Wilderness Character Monitoring have been completed: a new application within the Natural Resource Manager (NRM) database and Forest Service updates to the interagency Wilderness Character Monitoring Database (WCMD). The new NRM-Wilderness Character Monitoring application is ready to use (request access and get training).

29 wilderness areas have been selected to serve as pilot areas in FY18. The WIMST will help review the results of the pilot this fall. Regional Wilderness Program Managers are developing a five-year WCM rotation for wildernesses in their regions. Tim Eling and Adam Barnett both did outstanding jobs in detail positions as the first and second Wilderness Character Monitoring Program Manager and Mary Ellen Emerick is now in the detail until August 26th. We hope to fill this position permanently soon. The supporting Central Data Analyst position has recently been filled and will report in July. Staffing updates for the WCM Team will be available soon.

What do you need to do to prepare for Wilderness Character Monitoring, even if you are not part of the FY18 pilot? You can begin working on the two, four, and six-point levels for the (mandatory) Wilderness Character Baseline element in the Wilderness Stewardship Performance measure:

- **2 point level:** Compile legislative and administrative documentation.
- **4 point level:** Complete wilderness character narrative.
- **6 point level:** Identify all measures to be monitored and evaluate data.
- **8 point level:** Complete wilderness character baseline report, provide baseline values for entry into interagency Wilderness Character Monitoring Database (WCMD).
- **10 point level:** Assess trends in wilderness character (at least 5 years after baseline).

There is a natural overlap between Wilderness Stewardship Performance and Wilderness Character Monitoring: Wilderness Stewardship Performance elements track the stewardship actions taken by the agency, and Wilderness Character Monitoring assesses the outcomes of these actions.

For more information, templates, reference documents, and training opportunities for Wilderness Character Monitoring, visit the Wilderness Character Monitoring Pinyon folder or the Wilderness Character Toolbox on Wilderness Connect (wilderness.net).
Wilderness Character Baseline
This Task Team is developing products and guides to assist forests as they embark on Wilderness Character Monitoring (WCM) and the Wilderness Character Baseline element in Wilderness Stewardship Performance (WSP). The team is working on these items:
- Guidance on how to select WCM measures: Up to 28 measures may be selected, this paper will help provide tips and direction on which measures to select and why.
- WCM Baseline Assessment Report: To achieve the 8 point level in WSP, a baseline assessment report is required, yet there is no definition. A template will be developed and provided.
- Develop FAQ’s related to Wilderness Character Baseline.
- Develop a glossary of key terms related to Wilderness Character Baseline.
- Guidance on workflow for completing Wilderness Character Baseline.
- Develop communication strategies related to Wilderness Character Baseline. Examples may include briefing papers, PowerPoint, summaries, and webinars.

Complexity Class Rating
The Complexity Class Rating Task Team is working on updating and modifying the Wilderness Complexity Class Rating spreadsheet. The complexity rating spreadsheet has been in place since the early 2000’s, but has not been updated since 2010. The updates are intended to reflect changes in program emphasis (WSP), improved availability of data, address workload at the field level, and include newly designated wilderness areas.

Maintain WSP Guidebook
This Task Team is conducting the annual review of the WSP Guidebook to determine if any clarifications or changes are needed. The team anticipates adding additional FAQs for several elements.

Database Testing
A couple new databases will soon be operational to help the Forest Service move forward with Wilderness Character Monitoring. All WIMST members are serving as database testers for the NRM Wilderness Character Monitoring application and the Interagency Wilderness Character Monitoring Database.

Wilderness On The Web
This Task Team is working with the Office of Communication to improve the information posted on the Washington Office website and available to the public. Changes have already been made, but new content, photos, and links will continue to be added (https://www.fs.fed.us/managing-land/wilderness).

Wilderness Connect Content
Wilderness.net has recently become “Wilderness Connect”. In the fall, expect a redesign of the webpage to better serve agency staff and the public. This Task Team is reviewing Forest Service related content on Wilderness Connect for relevancy and quality. Outdated information will be archived and replaced with more current resources.

WSP Webinars
The WSP Webinars task team will provide one informational webinar per month on the WSP elements. Webinars for all 20 elements will be planned. Webinars will be recorded and posted to the WSP SharePoint site and Wilderness Connect for additional viewing. Elements covered so far include Opportunities for Solitude, Trails, Wilderness Character Baseline, and Primitive and Unconfined Recreation. The Education Element webinar is scheduled for Thursday June 28 at 11:00am Alaska, 12:00 PT, 1:00 MT, 2:00 CT, 3:00 ET and we are fortunate to have Nancy Taylor, Region 9 Wilderness/Wild and Scenic River Program Manager, as our presenter. Click here to add this webinar to your calendar. (phone: 1-888-844-9904, 5638449#)
In Fall 2017, the WAG held its annual program meeting in Juneau, Alaska at the Mendenhall Glacier Visitor Center.

_left to right:_ standing - Ros Wu (R2), Jonathan Erickson (R6), Jennifer MacDonald (Prior R10), Josh Lattin (R1), Ann Schwaller (R9), Dan Morris (Prior R4), Peter Landres (retired Aldo Leopold WRI), Chrissy Post (R10), Sandy Skrien (WO), Miguel Macias (R5), Ken Straley (Arthur Carhart NWTC), Dusty Vaughn (WO); kneeling - Annette Smits (R3)

_Not Pictured:_ Jeremy Evans (R4), Tom Fouts (R8), Sue Spear (WO), Sean Parks (Aldo Leopold WRI)

Region 1: Josh Lattin  
Lincoln RD, Helena NF

Region 2: Ros Wu  
Pagosa RD, San Juan Nf

Region 3: Annette Smits  
Glenwood RD, Gila NF

Region 4: Jeremy Evans  
Ruby Mountains/Jarbridge/Mountain City RD, Humboldt-Toiyabe NF

Region 5: Miguel Macias  
Summit RD, Stanislaus NF

Region 6: Jonathan Erickson  (Chair)  
Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area

Region 7: Always seems to be a no-show

Region 8: Tom Fouts  
Daniel Boone NF

Region 9: Ann Schwaller  (Vice Chair)  
Superior NF

Region 10: Chrissy Post  
Admiralty Island National Monument, Tongass NF

_Washington Office:_ Sandy Skrien and Dusty Vaughn  
Wilderness and Wild & Scenic Rivers Staff

Arthur Carhart National Wilderness Training Center: Ken Straley

Aldo Leopold Wilderness Research Institute: Sean Parks
In Closing, from WAG Chair Jonathan Erickson...

I encourage each of you to deepen your understanding of wilderness character. If you are new to a wilderness area, dig into its history. Open the local land and resource management plans to discover the management framework within which you are operating. Become familiar with Wilderness Character Monitoring, Keeping It Wild 2, and the 2020 Vision. Find and talk with former rangers, pull open those file cabinets and read daily entries from your predecessors. Reach out to local historians and tribal members to further develop an awareness of prehistoric and historic uses and conditions. Meld your present experiences with the historic context of the wilderness in which you work. Finally, put a pen to paper for the express purpose of maintaining daily entries. Record your observations, accomplishments, concerns, and prescriptions. Cultivate your curiosity and employ your creativity in support of wilderness character.

I am deeply honored to serve in stewardship of wilderness and on the WAG. We are here to support you in the spirit of wilderness stewardship. To share in this incredible community of women and men drawn to the effort is an experience unlike any other. Looking back on these past few years, many icons of the wilderness stewardship community have retired from the agency and supporting institutions. David Cole, Connie Myers, Ed Krumpe, Tom Carlson, and Peter Landres are some of the names that come to my mind. For me, they are part of my roots, the people I turned to better understand wilderness character and to endure through challenge. Each of them imparted a legacy of accomplishment, research, mentorship, storytelling, and written documentation. Who among us, I wonder, will take up their mantle? Will it be you?

![Photo of the Three Sisters Wilderness](wilderness.net)