Final Report
2020
Wilderness Stewardship Performance (WSP) Funding

Submitted by:
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The 2020 Wilderness Stewardship Performance (WSP) Funding is a joint project between the US Forest Service and the National Wilderness Stewardship Alliance (NWSA). The purpose of the WSP Funding is to focus wilderness stewardship partner accomplishments to meet wilderness performance scoring targets. The funding program was designed to encourage coordination and collaboration between local wilderness stewardship groups and their agency partners to identify and complete projects which would improve WSP scoring for specific wilderness areas.

The 2020 WSP Grant program was announced to the wilderness stewardship community in January 2020. Information was provided on the NWSA website and email blasts to both familiarize wilderness stewardship groups with the WSP process in general and the specifics of the WSP Grant program. The WSP Grant application period began January 15th and ended March 30th. 24 grant applications from different organizations were received and evaluated. A total of 22 proposals were awarded representing 22 different organizations. One project was carried over from 2019 and finished in spring 2020. (Table 1) Awardees were notified and grant work began on May 15th.
## 2020 Wilderness Stewardship Performance Funding

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organizations</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Absaroka-Beartooth Wilderness Foundation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Arizona Wilderness Coalition (dba Arizona Wild)</td>
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<tr>
<td>BCHA - Mother Lode Chapter</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bob Marshall Wilderness Foundation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Colorado Mountain Club</td>
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<tr>
<td>Del Norte Trails Alliance - Redwood Parks Conservancy</td>
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<td>Friends of Mt Evans - Lost Creek</td>
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<td>Friends of the Inyo</td>
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<td>Great Broads - Cascade-Volcano Chapter</td>
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<td>Indian Peaks Wilderness Alliance</td>
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<tr>
<td>New Mexico Wilderness Alliance</td>
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<tr>
<td>Poudre Wilderness Volunteers</td>
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<tr>
<td>Save Our Canyons</td>
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<tr>
<td>Selway Bitterroot - Frank Church Foundation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sitka Conservation Society</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sky Island Alliance</td>
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<tr>
<td>Southern Appalachian Wilderness Stewards</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ventana Wilderness Alliance</td>
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<td>West Slope Conservation Center</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wilderness Institute</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wilderness Workshop</td>
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<td>Wyoming Wilderness Association</td>
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<td>Idaho Trails Association carry-over 2019</td>
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</tbody>
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Table 1
Organizations Receiving 2020 Summer WSP Funding
2020 Wilderness Stewardship Performance Funding

Table 2
Regions Receiving 2020 Summer WSP Funding

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Proposed</th>
<th>Selected</th>
<th>Completed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Region 1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Region 2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Region 3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Region 4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Region 5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3 *</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Region 6</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Region 8</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Region 9</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Region 10</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* One project cancelled due to Covid-19
2020 Wilderness Stewardship Performance Funding

- 24 organizations applied, 24 proposals submitted
- 22 WSP projects were awarded totaling $211,161
- 22 organizations were awarded Funding
- Projects included:
  - Wilderness Education activities
  - Invasive Species survey and Eradication
  - Campsite Monitoring and Rehabilitation
  - Solitude Monitoring
  - Trail Condition Assessments and mapping
  - Recreation Site Inventory
  - Water Monitoring
- Over 430 Volunteers Supported
- Over 7,866 Volunteer Hours of Work
- Over $200,000 value of Volunteer Labor alone; additional $240,000 value of staff and crew labor
- 64 additional staff hired adding 9,666 hours of labor to expand Wilderness Workforce Capacity including wilderness rangers, trail crew, and weed crew members
- Numerous education programs, hundreds of fire rings naturalized, over 160 Solitude monitoring days, over 600 miles of trail monitored/maintained, nearly 2,000 logs cleared, and 160 water drains cleared.
- Raised WSP point scores in 9 elements across 30 different wilderness areas.
2020 Wilderness Stewardship Performance Funding

The 2020 WSP Funding cycle was a challenge as the Covid-19 Pandemic affected most projects. Many groups were forced to change their work plans and scale back volunteer projects in the face of quarantine, social distancing, and group size requirements. All groups were appreciative of the extra capacity these Funding gave to their summer activities.

Specific lessons learned included:

- The Covid Pandemic threw everyone for a loop. Many early projects were cancelled or deferred. The community came together however and developed standard protocols that could be applied with volunteers later in the summer. NWSA provided early advice developed through a working group of organizations.

- Coordination with the Forest Service is took some hits this year. There was an unfortunate difference in response to the pandemic around the country which led to differing advice, different volunteer strategies and some confusion in implementing projects. Some Districts refused to let volunteers work, while others were business as usual with some precautions. The amount of risk a unit was willing to take often dictated the volunteer response.

- Partner groups leverage a little into a lot. Many projects used volunteers, along with paid staff or interns, to expose more people to wilderness stewardship work activities. Around 500 volunteers/staff were reported as supported by the funding.

- The Funding continues to be a good buy for the agency. Cash matches of $128,553 were reported and inkind matches of $317,572 were recorded. Add in the value of volunteer labor and you exceed 3:1 ratio’s very rapidly.
Lessons Learned (continued)

2020 Wilderness Stewardship Performance Funding

• Some projects do not gain points by themselves but are essential in order for other employees to achieve success. Some projects maintain existing point levels.

• Wilderness intern positions are life changing experiences for most young people. Being in the wilderness for a season often sets a young graduate or college student on a new life path in natural resource management.

• Projects often morph during a season, and that’s okay. Sometimes circumstances change, weather does not cooperate, people get sick, staff support disappears, necessitating a change in project particulars. Wilderness volunteers are adaptable and can change to meet the challenge. In 2020 a number of projects experienced delays and alternate job choices because of the Covid Pandemic, adverse weather, fire, floods, and workload shifts. This is typical of work in wilderness.

• Even with extending the period to the calendar year maintaining flexibility in scheduling to accommodate changes may be worth considering. It may be time to consider making these projects funds two year money so that groups have additional flexibility to adjust activities for the vagaries of wilderness weather, fires, floods and other time table altering events., as well as to allow for winter work and seasons to be recognized.

• We did not have as many project proposals this year as in previous years. We think that many groups who had been successful in the past decided to instead focus on a National Forest Trails System Stewardship Project or took off a year to work on other activities.
Ande was one of the best interns I’ve ever worked with.”

How’s the trail up there? R. Actually quite nice, if you don’t like trails...you won’t be finding any up there anytime soon.

“How’s the trail up there? R. Actually quite nice, if you don’t like trails...you won’t be finding any up there anytime soon.

“This trip was life-changing” - expedition participant

“I had traveled just a mere hour from my home and had enjoyed another rewarding day in the field, learning, connecting, and appreciating the natural beauty of our Sky Islands.”

“I enjoyed working with volunteers who are hikers, horseback riders, and mountain bikers. We all want to improve the trails we use and to protect the environment.”
2020 Wilderness Stewardship Performance Funding

The National Wilderness Stewardship Alliance is happy that we were able to get such good results on this our eighth WSP Funding program. The Covid Pandemic created an immense challenge for the entire wilderness community and the Forest Service. It was a time of great stress and uncertainty, but through it all there was good communication, a willingness to still get work done, and groups found a way to complete projects. This grant program clearly shows that volunteer wilderness stewards can be very successful in completing WSP scoring work items and contributing to WSP scoring. We hope that this can become a continuing annual program for both summer and winter activities. There is a great demand for it amongst the wilderness stewardship community and it allowed many groups to work side by side with the Forest Service to complete needed wilderness work.

NWSA continues to be a proud partner with the Forest Service to support the wilderness stewardship community. We thank you for the continued funding. We look forward to our ongoing partnership as we head into 2021.

Randy Welsh, Executive Director, NWSA
Final Report

Absaroka-Beartooth Wilderness Foundation

Education Session on Historic Mines
Final Report

Arizona Wilderness Coalition
Final Report  BCHA—Motherlode Chapter

Due to Covid this project was postponed to 2021

To be submitted in 2021 Report
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Bob Marshall Wilderness Foundation
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