

National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior

Wilderness Stewardship Division  
Visitor and Resource Protection Directorate



# **2015 Wilderness Report**

## WASO Wilderness Stewardship Program



The mission of the National Park Service (NPS) Wilderness Stewardship Program is to identify and advance park lands to become part of the National Wilderness Preservation System and to steward those lands at the highest level of wilderness protection. The program trains NPS staff and educates the public about wilderness character, values, and ethics. Further, the program works closely with its sister agencies and external partners to enhance capacity and engage stakeholders in becoming global stewards of our remaining wild landscapes.

*Save wild places. Inspire generations. Foster stewardship. Offer hope.*



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## MESSAGE FROM CHIEF OF WILDERNESS STEWARDSHIP

In 2015, the NPS Wilderness Stewardship Program rode the momentum of the 50th anniversary of the Wilderness Act and the Director's approval of the *Wilderness 2020 Vision: Interagency stewardship priorities for America's Wilderness Preservation System*.

The Interagency Wilderness Steering Committee began work on an implementation plan for the *2020 Vision* and hopes to receive interagency Wilderness Policy Council (WPC) approval of the plan in September 2016. The Visitor and Resource Protection Directorate, which oversees the Wilderness Stewardship Division (WSD), welcomed Rick Obernesser as the new Associate Director. Rick brings a sound understanding and appreciation of wilderness, including past service as Superintendent of America's largest wilderness area at Wrangell-St. Elias NP&Pr.

WSD achievements in 2015 included updating the NPS wilderness website; supporting park wilderness character narratives, baseline assessments and wilderness stewardship plans; and supporting the initiatives of the Aldo Leopold Wilderness Research Institute and the Arthur Carhart National Wilderness Training Center. WPC approval of *Keeping It Wild 2* also represents an important accomplishment in 2015. Tim Devine and Adrienne Lindholm deserve special recognition for representing the NPS on the interagency team that developed this strategy.

It's an honor to recognize the recipients of the 2015 Wes Henry Awards: individual award winner Erin Drake and team award winner Organ Pipe Cactus NM. It is special to see Wes Henry's spirit for wilderness stewardship live on through these awards.

The highest priorities for the WSD in 2016 will be to support completion of the *2020 Vision* Implementation Plan and begin applying that plan in the field. The WSD is also committed to providing guidance and support toward the completion of wilderness character narratives and baseline assessments for NPS wilderness areas.

The WSD is committed to serving as a helpful resource for field personnel and strives to integrate wilderness stewardship into all applicable interdisciplinary programs. I extend my appreciation to all NPS wilderness stewards for their dedicated work in 2015.

Sincerely,  
Roger Semler





## VISITOR & RESOURCE PROTECTION DIRECTORATE WELCOMES NEW ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR



Rick Obernesser is the new Associate Director for Visitor and Resource Protection in the Washington Office. As Associate Director, Obernesser serves as the agency's senior official responsible for 30 servicewide programs, 850 employees, and a budget exceeding \$200 million.

His portfolio includes law enforcement, fire and aviation management, risk management, occupational safety, and wilderness stewardship among other skills. "Rick is passionate about the National Park Service mission and does not shy away from tough questions or issues," said NPS Director Jon Jarvis. "His straightforward but low-key leadership style will work well within the National Park Service's leadership team."

A seasoned NPS employee, Obernesser has worked in eight national parks during his 30 plus years of service. His experience in parks across the country with diverse and complex resources has culminated in a

wide range of experiences that will enhance his leadership in Visitor and Resource Protection. Throughout his career, Obernesser has demonstrated strong leadership skills and a keen ability to listen to people's concerns and perspectives, working directly with stakeholders to address issues and solve problems collaboratively. He began his NPS career as a field ranger and has served at several NPS units, including ten years as Chief Ranger at Yellowstone NP and most recently as Superintendent at Wrangell-St. Elias NP&Pr, home to the country's largest designated wilderness area.

"I am excited, honored, and humbled to have a chance to work with the accomplished and professional staff in the Visitor and Resource Protection Directorate and continue the great work being done there," said Obernesser.

*The WASO Visitor and Resource Protection Directorate is home to the Wilderness Stewardship Division as well as several other divisions ranging from fire and aviation to regulations and special park uses.*



## 2020 Vision:

# INTERAGENCY STEWARDSHIP PRIORITIES FOR AMERICA'S NATIONAL WILDERNESS PRESERVATION SYSTEM

### 2020 Vision Signing Ceremony

In October at the National Wilderness Conference, agency leaders gathered to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the Wilderness Act by signing the *2020 Vision: Interagency stewardship priorities for America's National Wilderness Preservation System*. The Vision intends to guide interagency collaboration and partnerships to ensure the continued preservation of nearly 110 million acres of designated wilderness nationwide and emphasizes three themes:

1. Protect wilderness resources
2. Connect people to their wilderness heritage
3. Foster excellence in wilderness leadership and coordination

"The character of wilderness is unique because of its combination of biophysical, experiential, and symbolic ideals that distinguish it from other protected places," said NPS Director Jon Jarvis. "Wilderness can be a life-changing experience, and it's part of our mission to preserve wilderness for future generations. Our challenge is to offer this experience to an ever-diversifying public while remaining true to our stewardship mission."

By working together, the NPS, Bureau of Land Management (BLM), US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), US Forest Service (USFS), US Geological Survey (USGS), and non-government partners have built a model of effectiveness

and efficiency that will continue as they meet the goals of wilderness stewardship in the 21st century.

### 2020 Vision Implementation Plan Initiated

In July, six NPS staff were selected to work with staff from the BLM, USFWS, and USFS to develop an implementation plan for the *2020 Vision*. Over the next year, three teams will address the key themes from the Vision: Protect, Connect, and Lead. Theme teams are charged with drafting actions for the elements related to their respective theme, with the goal of identifying actions that - when implemented - best address needs at the field, regional, and national levels. The Interagency Wilderness Steering Committee will then assemble these actions into an overall *2020 Vision* Implementation Plan. NPS staff on the theme teams are (see Appendix B for a complete roster of theme teams):

#### PROTECT:

- Lochen Wood, WASO Night Skies and Natural Sounds Program
- Kyle Johnson, Glacier NP

#### CONNECT:

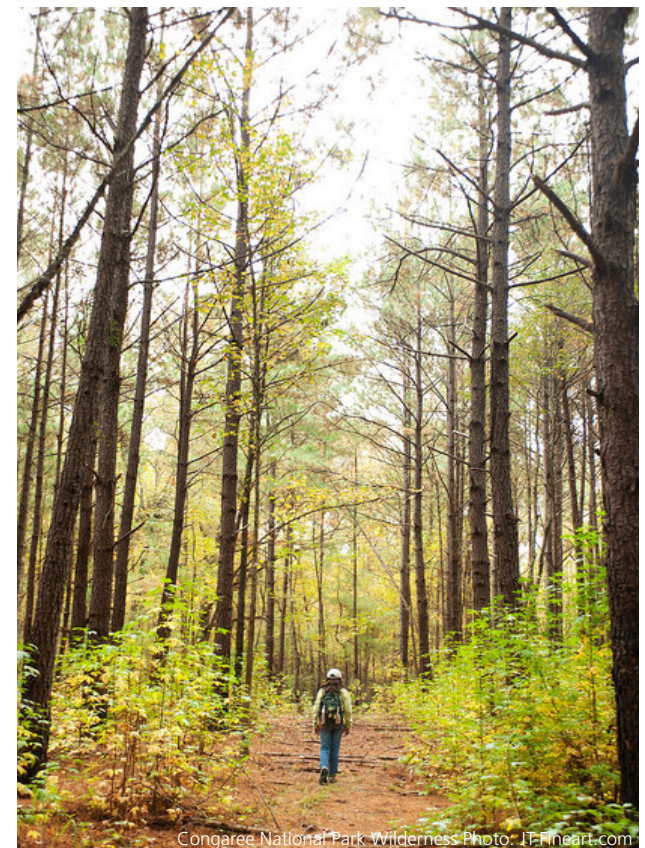
- Kristin Pace, Alaska Parks
- Sandy Snell-Dobert, Black Canyon of the Gunnison NP & Curecanti NRA

#### LEAD:

- Karen Mudar, WASO Cultural Resources Division
- Roger Semler, WASO Wilderness Stewardship Division

#### INTERAGENCY THEME TEAM COORDINATOR

- Erin Drake, WASO Wilderness Stewardship Division



Congaree National Park Wilderness Photo: JTFineart.com



## 2015 NPS WILDERNESS CHAMPIONS

### Director's Wes Henry National Wilderness Stewardship Award Recipients

The Director's Wes Henry National Wilderness Stewardship Awards are the NPS' annual recognition of outstanding contributions to wilderness stewardship by an individual and a group/team, including those involving interpretation and education; management of natural, cultural, and social resources; planning; protection; and maintenance operations. Award recipients are nominated by fellow NPS staff and selected by an interdisciplinary panel. The following award recipients will be recognized during an awards ceremony in Summer 2016.



*Individual Award: Erin Drake*

Erin Drake, Communications and Outreach Specialist for the Washington Office's Wilderness Stewardship Division, has made highly significant contributions to NPS wilderness stewardship since joining the division in

2012. She is a collaborative, creative, and skilled interdisciplinary practitioner, helping to preserve wilderness character and values throughout the NPS. Erin has lead efforts to connect staff at the park, regional, and national levels through the creation of various strategic communication products. In efforts to integrate wilderness with other NPS disciplines, Erin was a steering committee member for both the NPS National Social Science Strategy and NPS National

Climate Change Interpretation Strategy. And in the fall, she successfully completed a 90-day acting assignment as the Alaska Regional Wilderness Coordinator where she collaborated with park/regional staff across the state and its 33+ million acres of designated NPS wilderness.

Erin has also worked extensively at the interagency level, serving as the interagency coordinator of the Wilderness 2020 Vision implementation planning teams. Erin has played a key role in fostering improved understanding and appreciation of NPS wilderness and our responsibilities to preserve wilderness character. She is a dedicated champion of wilderness values and stewardship and highly worthy of joining the ranks of previous Wes Henry Award recipients.

#### *Group/Team Award: Organ Pipe Cactus NM*

Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument (ORPI) has performed an outstanding job in promoting wilderness accountability, consistency, and continuity. As a result of recent work on ecological restoration, over 200 acres of designated wilderness has received restoration treatment. This collaboration was shared between ORPI, US Customs Border Protection (CBP), US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), and the Bureau of Land Management (BLM). Historically, cross-border activities and CBP-sponsored infrastructure projects impacted federal lands, including wilderness, in this area.

Under an Interagency Agreement, ORPI was charged as lead agency to implement

Two NPS Regions have formed interdisciplinary committees to address wilderness character preservation and stewardship in the Intermountain (IMR) and Alaska (AKR) Regions. While formed prior to 2015, these committees made significant progress this year:

*IMR Wilderness Executive Committee:* Comprehensively reviewed wilderness-related data and tracking needs in all of its wilderness areas, updated the national wilderness stewardship database, and provided Wilderness Fellow funding and support to Grand Teton and Big Bend National Parks.

*AKR Backcountry and Wilderness Advisory Group:* Drafted a region-specific action plan to address goals in the 2020 Vision and developed a framework for evaluating commercial filming requests in wilderness, among other items.



## 2015 NPS WILDERNESS CHAMPIONS (CONTINUED)

conservation measures for the endangered Sonoran pronghorn and lesser long-nosed bat. As such, ORPI was to identify, map, and close undesignated vehicle routes (UVRs) and restore 84 acres of habitat important to the two species mentioned. The interagency team, including Superintendent Brent Range, Chief of Resources Rijk Morawe, Patrol Agent in Charge Scott Good, their staff, and others from Cabeza Prieta National Wildlife Refuge and BLM worked together to identify UVRs and other areas that could receive restoration treatments. They mapped and prioritized large geographical zones based on the importance to the Sonoran pronghorn.

ORPI directed restoration efforts implemented by a Saguaro Trail Crew and a restoration contractor on NPS, USFWS, and BLM lands. This effort was completed using the minimum tool required to preserve wilderness character. Restoration involved erasing vehicle tracks, improving grade to reestablish surface hydrology, and planting native species using the park-grown nursery to achieve near-natural conditions. The team will continue with restoration monitoring of the areas to ensure more near-natural conditions are achieved. Within a few months of finalizing the main restoration effort, Sonoran pronghorn were spotted in the restoration area and the border infrastructure has decreased cross-border violations and law enforcement interdiction. This translates to a smaller footprint in wilderness and better preservation of wilderness character.





# Wilderness Stewardship

## Interagency *Keeping It Wild 2* Now Available

Beginning in 2001, the BLM, USFWS, NPS, and USFS collaborated with the Aldo Leopold Wilderness Research Institute to develop a national strategy to monitor trends in wilderness character. In 2008, with publication of *Keeping It Wild: An Interagency Strategy for Monitoring Wilderness Character Across the National Wilderness Preservation System* (NWPS), the agencies began strategy implementation. In 2014, the NPS published an agency-specific [user guide](#) for integrating wilderness character into park planning, management, and monitoring.

This user guide referenced much of the monitoring protocol from *Keeping It Wild* while adding the “Other Features of Value” quality to wilderness character integration. Following this, the interagency wilderness character community of practice agreed that “Other Features of Value” among other additions were important for wilderness character monitoring. An interagency team worked to update the original interagency wilderness character monitoring protocol and *Keeping It Wild 2* was published in 2015 - see page 77 of the strategy for key changes between the 2008 and 2015 versions.

This guidance document is part of NPS Reference Manual 41: Wilderness Stewardship and was recently nominated for a National Association of Government Communicators’ Blue Pencil and Gold Screen Award.

## Digital Wilderness Basics Toolkit Available for Use in Parks

The NPS Wilderness Stewardship Division partnered with the Denver Service Center’s Planning Division to develop the [Wilderness Basics Toolkit](#) - a digital collection of guidance, templates, exercises, and examples to aid parks in completing their Wilderness Basics. The Wilderness Basics is comprised of three components, as identified in the 2014 [NPS Wilderness Character User Guide](#):

- *Wilderness Background* - a brief legislative history of the park’s enabling legislation cross walked with the wilderness designation
- *Wilderness Character Narrative* - a report describing what is unique and essential about the wilderness area, rooted in the context of wilderness character
- *Future Planning Needs* - an inventory of needs to integrate wilderness character into parkwide planning, including a Wilderness Stewardship Plan

## Wilderness Basics Workshops Completed in Two Parks

With the Wilderness Basics Toolkit in hand, the NPS Wilderness Stewardship Division collaborated with the NPS Denver Service Center’s Wilderness Planning Group to facilitate

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The NPS Wilderness Stewardship Program is responsible for the stewardship of over 44 million acres of NPS wilderness lands.

Stewardship of the wilderness resource includes lands that are designated, recommended, proposed, eligible, and potential. In total, over 80 percent of all NPS lands are managed as wilderness.

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two Wilderness Basics Workshops in Yosemite NP and Sleeping Bear Dunes NL.

The interdisciplinary team first traveled to Yosemite NP in February, where they participated in a day-long wilderness orientation hike prior to facilitating a two-day workshop where more than 50 park staff and partners attended. By the end of the workshop, the park had a draft Wilderness Basics document ready for park review and refinement.

Later, in July, the team traveled to Sleeping Bear Dunes NL, meeting key park and regional staff who led a hike across South Manitou Island and some of the iconic dunes on the mainland. This field trip also preceded a two-day workshop involving staff from many park programs who received a draft document shortly following the workshop.

### NPS Wilderness Database Continues to be Populated

The [NPS National Wilderness Stewardship Database](#), created in 2014, continued to be populated and validated by parks and regions in 2015. This database serves as the go-to location for all pertinent wilderness data, including acreages, stewardship tracking, and contacts. The database is available for reference by all NPS staff when needing to provide accurate and up-to-date information about wilderness areas in the national park system.





# Wilderness Science

The [Aldo Leopold Wilderness Research Institute](#) welcomes collaboration with managers from all levels of the National Wilderness Preservation System (NWPS) to complete research projects, syntheses, expert panels, inventory and monitoring programs, and management tools. The following information showcases research projects for specific topic areas explored by ALWRI scientists and partners in 2015:

## Proposed Ecological Intervention and Restoration Framework

In response to changing disturbance regimes and human-caused threats, proposals for ecological interventions in wilderness have become increasingly common. Restoration proposals require wilderness managers to evaluate the immediate and cumulative effects of potential actions while also meeting the legal mandate to preserve wilderness character. Climate change and other landscape stressors will continue to affect the “natural” quality of wilderness character.

Intervention, adaptation, and mitigation measures taken to improve the naturalness of wilderness may result in tradeoffs that impair other qualities of wilderness character and irreversibly impact the wilderness resource. Balancing the prioritization of wilderness character qualities requires the inclusion of wilderness perspectives in decision-making. In 2014, with the help of an interagency working group, ALWRI developed a draft Framework

to Evaluate Proposed Ecological Intervention and Restoration in Wilderness. In 2015, the framework - which supports proposal development and project planning, supplements the minimum requirements analysis, and to contributes to NEPA processes - was pilot tested in 20 interagency wilderness units.

Pilot testing included on-site work with an interdisciplinary team to analyze the complexity of each proposal using the framework and discussion around potential solutions that would best preserve wilderness character. NPS pilot sites included Wupatki NM (Tamarisk removal), Crater Lake NP (Whitebark Pine restoration), and Glacier NP (non-native species management). Additional interagency pilot testing and the drafting of the Evaluation Framework and supporting materials will be finalized in 2016.

## Wilderness Character Mapping

ALWRI developed a set of standardized methods to map threats to wilderness character for designated and other categories of wilderness. These maps provide a measurement baseline from which future monitoring can show spatial trends and changes in wilderness character over time, and allow the four agencies managing wilderness to analyze the potential impacts of different management actions on wilderness character. Wilderness character maps can also improve wilderness planning and have supplemented the development of new Wilderness Stewardship Plans for various wilderness areas in the NWPS. In the NPS,

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Using the best available science to inform sound decision-making, the NPS Wilderness Stewardship Program strives to preserve wilderness character and ensure the protection of the wilderness resource for current and future generations.

The Aldo Leopold Wilderness Research Institute (ALWRI) conducts diverse scientific projects related to biophysical, social, and cultural sciences. ALWRI is a key interagency partner, supported by a Master Interagency Agreement shared between ALWRI and the federal agencies that co-manage the National Wilderness Preservation System, including the NPS.

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ALWRI staff have collaborated with Death Valley NP to produce a wilderness character map that was incorporated into their Wilderness Stewardship Plan. Currently, maps of threats to wilderness character are being produced for Saguaro NP to support their forthcoming Wilderness Stewardship Plan and to support the analysis of the proposed Ambler Road routes for Gates of the Arctic NP&Pr. These projects were supported by funding from both the NPS units and the NPS WASO Park Planning & Special Studies Division.

### Wilderness Fire

To evaluate the effect of previous burned areas on the size of subsequent fires, researchers, (including scientists at ALWRI) analyzed fire perimeter data with an objectively and consistently applied rule-set defining whether or not burned areas acted as a barrier to subsequent fire progression as time-since-fire increased. Results indicate that past fires limited the size of subsequent fires. However, the ability of past fires to limit the size of subsequent fires diminished quickly in the dry conifer forests of the Gila and Aldo Leopold Wilderness Areas (US Forest Service) compared to cool, moist conifer forests, including those in Glacier NP and the greater Crown of the Continent Ecosystem. Fires no longer limited the size of subsequent fires after 15 years in the Crown of the Continent Ecosystem.

Furthermore, the ability of past fires to limit the size of subsequent fires weakened under extreme fire weather conditions. The length of time that a past fire limited the size of a subsequent fire was shorter under extreme fire weather conditions than under moderate

fire weather conditions in all four study areas. In the Crown of the Continent Ecosystem, for example, previous burns acted as a fuel break for 24 years under moderate weather conditions but only 10 years under extreme weather conditions.

### Amphibians

Research conducted by US Geological Survey scientists at ALWRI has concentrated primarily on amphibian declines and other issues related to aquatic ecosystems. Along with several collaborators, this research focused in areas ranging from designated wilderness in national parks and the Canadian subarctic, to highly fragmented systems such as energy development in the Northern Plains and arid lands that are dependent upon continued management for persistence of native species (e.g., USA-Mexico border).

Long-term research at four national parks in the Rockies shows widespread declines in amphibians continue, including certain species of salamanders, frogs, and toads. One amphibian species has been extirpated from Rocky Mountain NP and the entire Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem.





# Training & Development

The [Arthur Carhart National Wilderness Training Center](#) provides a variety of interagency wilderness trainings, including face-to-face classroom instruction, online courses, certificate programs, and webinars for federal agencies - including the NPS - and partners.

## Park-Specific Wilderness Workshops

Five park-specific wilderness workshops were conducted in 2015 at Bandelier NM, Everglades NP, Big Cypress NPr, Gulf Islands NS, and Katmai NP&Pr. Attendees appreciated the place-based focus of the training and the opportunity for an interdisciplinary training that considers the perspectives of many different park programs. There were a total of 184 NPS participants.

## Interagency Wilderness Stewardship Trainings/Workshops

There were five Carhart classroom interagency training/workshop opportunities conducted in 2015: one Interpretation and Education Workshop (Alaska), three Regional Wilderness Stewardship Trainings (Arizona, California, Colorado), and one National Wilderness Leadership Training (Montana). There were a total of 46 NPS participants.

## Online Training Courses & Certificates

In 2015, Carhart developed and launched four new online courses including "Crosscut Sawyer" and three in the "Managing Special Provisions" series including: Grazing, Aircraft

and Motorboats, and Commercial Services. A total of 33 online wilderness courses are now available. NPS staff completed 617 courses in 2015. The development of several additional online courses was initiated in 2015. Ten NPS staff participated in a variety of Wilderness Management Distance Education Program (WMDEP) courses offered by the University of Montana in partnership with Carhart. WMDEP offers the only Undergraduate and Graduate Certificates in Wilderness Management in the country.

## Webinars

As part of Carhart's ongoing webinar series, in partnership with the Aldo Leopold Wilderness Research Institute, 28 NPS staff participated in the webinar "Evaluating Proposals for Scientific Activity in Wilderness". Other webinars offered in 2015 included the nexus between wilderness and the US Border Patrol, and "The Diversity of the National Wilderness Preservation System." Recordings of the webinar series are posted on [wilderness.net](#).

## Wilderness Stewardship Certificate Program

The [Wilderness Stewardship Certificate Program](#) (WSCP) launched in 2015 as a collaborative project between Carhart, the Eppley Institute for Parks and Public Lands at Indiana University, and the Society for Wilderness Stewardship. The WSCP is a professional development program that builds

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Wilderness stewardship and management is highly dynamic and always evolving. In order to ensure that wilderness practitioners and interdisciplinary partners are managing most effectively, the NPS Wilderness Stewardship Program promotes opportunities for wilderness training.

The Arthur Carhart National Wilderness Training Center (Carhart) offers training, information, and education expertise for the National Wilderness Preservation System. Carhart is a key interagency partner, supported by a Master Interagency Agreement shared between Carhart and the federal agencies that co-manage the NWPS, including the NPS. Each agency also has a dedicated representative at Carhart - Tim Devine is the NPS representative.

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credentials and increases capacity in individuals, agencies, and organizations working with the National Wilderness Preservation System. Certificates combine self-paced online learning with professional mentorship, and field based assignments. 13 NPS staff enrolled in the Fundamentals of Wilderness Stewardship Certificate in 2015.

### US Border Patrol Training

Several wilderness training opportunities were offered in 2015 reaching hundreds of US Border Patrol agents and Department of Homeland Security (DHS) staff in fulfillment of the 2006 Memorandum of Understanding between DHS, Department of Interior, and Department of Agriculture. Those opportunities included interagency national and regional wilderness stewardship courses, Public Land Liaison Agent Advanced Training, and joint wilderness training with Organ Pipe Cactus NM and the US Border Patrol Ajo Station.

Training Opportunities	NPS Staff Trained in 2015
Interagency Wilderness Stewardship Training/Workshops	46
Park-Specific Wilderness Workshops	184
Wilderness Management Distance Education Courses	10
Webinars	28
Online Training Course	617
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>885</b>





# Communication & Collaboration

## Design for New NPS.gov Site for Wilderness Underway

The NPS Wilderness Program has been without a reliable public website for quite some time. In advance of the NPS Centennial in 2016, the NPS Web Services Division announced that all public sites would be transitioning to a new content management system (CMS) to better meet mobile viewing demands and display optimization. The new CMS emphasizes visual imagery and storytelling. This initiative provided an excellent prompt for the Wilderness Stewardship Division (WSD) to re-engage with their (lacking) public website. In 2015, the WSD developed a NPS.gov content strategy and began building the new site.

Once completed, the site ([nps.gov/wilderness](http://nps.gov/wilderness)) will provide general information on the subject of NPS wilderness and serve as a conduit to other program and park sites that share a wilderness connection. The WSD is also developing a public site for the organizational and operational side of wilderness, featuring information about the WSD and key partners ([nps.gov/wsd](http://nps.gov/wsd)). Both sites will be available in early 2016.

## Semi-Annual Wilderness Newsletter Developed

The Wilderness Stewardship Division developed and distributed their national newsletter - the

*National Wilderness Update* - shifting from a quarterly to semi-annual basis. The newsletter series was created in response to field requests for a brief, periodic publication that gives readers up-to-date information about NPS wilderness at the national, regional, and park levels.

Core components of each newsletter include: a national policy/guidance feature, regional highlights, newly developed resources and online tools, and upcoming training announcements. 250+ NPS staff and partners receive the newsletter - the current newsletter is available on [NPS.gov/wilderness](http://NPS.gov/wilderness).

## Wilderness Stewardship Division Program Brief Now Available

To better provide a quick reference for Wilderness Stewardship Division (WSD) services and resources available to NPS staff and partners, WSD created a two-page program brief. This brief has been shared at NPS trainings, national conferences, and meetings with key NPS (and other) leadership and will be updated as new key projects emerge and emphasis areas shift. The brief will be posted to the new NPS.gov organizational site for the WSD ([nps.gov/wsd](http://nps.gov/wsd)) in early 2016.

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The NPS Wilderness Stewardship Program is comprised of the Wilderness Stewardship Division, Regional Wilderness Coordinators, Park Wilderness Managers, the Wilderness Leadership Council, and other park/program partners.

The inherently interdisciplinary nature of wilderness stewardship requires ongoing collaboration and dialogue with these different stakeholders. Additionally, outreach to diverse public audiences ensures that wilderness remains relevant in the 21st Century.

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### NPS Wilderness Staff Present at George Wright Society Conference

In March, an interdisciplinary team of park, region, and national staff attended the George Wright Society Conference in Oakland, CA. Here, the team presented **"5 Qualities and Beyond: Integrating Wilderness Character in the National Park Service"** - an introductory exploration of wilderness character preservation. The panelists addressed recently developed concepts, tools, and examples for integrating wilderness character into park planning, management, and monitoring.

Case studies from Pictured Rocks NL and Olympic NP highlighted applications of national policy and guidance while acknowledging challenges and lessons learned to better streamline the process for other parks looking to integrate wilderness character.

The presentation team included:

- Christina Miller - Olympic NP
- Chris Holbeck - Midwest Region
- Brenda Todd - Denver Service Center
- Tim Devine - Wilderness Stewardship Division
- Erin Drake - Wilderness Stewardship Division





## REGIONAL HIGHLIGHTS

Six of the seven NPS regions have designated wilderness and other lands managed as wilderness. Each region's identified Regional Wilderness Coordinator assists parks with wilderness stewardship issues and landscape-scale coordination.



**Wrangell-St. Elias NP&Pr begins work on Backcountry and Wilderness Stewardship Plan:** The park's planning process is expected to take 30 months and spans topics including visitor use and impacts; motorized use as allowed under the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act of 1980; cabin and airstrip management and maintenance; commercial uses and services, including completion of an Extent Necessary Determination; and an analysis of cumulative effects from visitor, administrative, commercial, and scientific uses.

**Gates of the Arctic NP&Pr Initiates Development of Wilderness Character Spatial Model:**

The park has undertaken the production of a wilderness character spatial model. This map will depict the quality of wilderness character in both the wilderness and the entirety of the park and preserve. The map will not only show any degradations to wilderness character within the park and preserve, but also will show positive aspects of wilderness character, and will help inform upcoming planning processes.

**Three Parks Make Progress on Wilderness Stewardship Plans:** The Record of Decision for Sequoia-Kings Canyon NP's Wilderness Stewardship Plan and EIS was signed in May, concluding an intensive four-year process of plan development, meeting the mandate of Public Law 112-128 to complete the plan by June 5, 2015. Also in May, Lake Mead NRA jointly prepared a Wilderness Management Plan with the BLM to address common management issues, identify stewardship goals and objectives, proposed decision-making guidelines for administrative actions and visitor use, and guidelines for managing eight wilderness areas including three that are jointly managed: Eldorado, Ireteba Peaks, and Spirit Mountain wilderness areas. The Olympic NP wilderness planning team is currently working on revising the draft alternatives to address public comments and will determine or develop a preferred alternative. The team will continue to go forward with developing the draft plan. If necessary, the preferred alternative and any other parts of the draft plan may be modified depending on the outcome of the lawsuit with Wilderness Watch.



**Wilderness Fellow Completes Building Blocks at Grand Teton and Big Bend NPs:** The Intermountain Regional Office, with staff support from the region's Wilderness Executive Committee, hired one Wilderness Fellow to complete the Wilderness Building Blocks, including a Wilderness Character Narrative and baseline Wilderness Character Assessment, in two parks in 2015 - Grand Teton and Big Bend. Laiken Jordahl, the Wilderness Fellow, successfully completed thoughtful and detailed Wilderness Building Block reports for both parks, helping the parks to better address wilderness character preservation in the future.

**Curecanti NRA Hosts Interagency Wilderness Ranger Academy:** Curecanti hosted a Wilderness Ranger Academy in June, where 65 participants from the NPS, BLM, and USFS and partner organizations learned about topics including drone use, low-impact stewardship practices, international protected areas, and presentations from guest speakers. The academy also included a backcountry cook-off, with the winning dish being the "Cashew Curry-Canti" prepared by two rangers from the Arapahoe-Roosevelt National Forest.

## REGIONAL HIGHLIGHTS (CONTINUED)



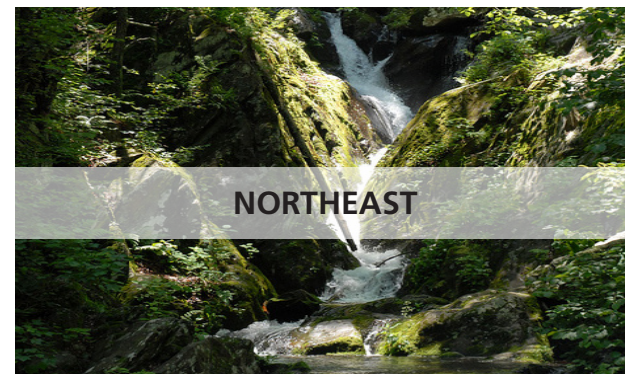
### MIDWEST

**Several Wilderness Planning Efforts Underway at Isle Royale NP:** Three wilderness-related EIS planning documents made substantive progress in 2015 at Isle Royale NP - a Wilderness Stewardship Plan, Cultural Resource Management Plan, and a Wolf-Moose-Vegetation Management Plan. The plans are being developed by interdisciplinary teams including park, region, and WASO staff.

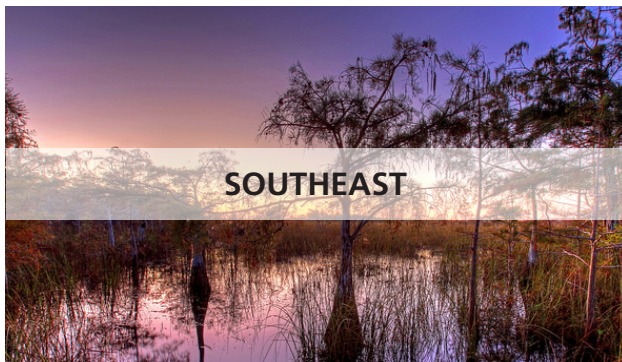
**Wilderness Character Integration Continues at Pictured Rocks and Sleeping Bear Dunes NLs:** Pictured Rocks NL hosted a Wilderness Character Assessment Workshop in October, facilitated by staff from the region, Denver Service Center, and the Wilderness Stewardship Division. The workshop prepared local staff to identify measures for wilderness character and conduct a baseline assessment for the Beaver Basin Wilderness. This assessment will be monitored in subsequent years to measure changes in wilderness character. Sleeping Bear Dunes NL hosted a Wilderness Basics Workshop in July in advance of completing their Foundation statement, wilderness character baseline assessment, and Wilderness Stewardship Plan in 2016.

**Shenandoah NP Hires New Wilderness Coordinator:** The park hired Chris Ziegler as the new Wilderness/Backcountry/Trails Branch Chief. Chris previous experience includes work with trails, cultural resource management, GIS, and interpretation. His most recent assignment was as the Chief of Resource Management at Little Bighorn NB. The branch will focus on revitalizing and staffing a Wilderness Backcountry Ranger Program, ADA accessibility, and developing a new parkwide compliance process that places greater emphasis on wilderness character issues.

**Fire Island NS Draft GMP/EIS Includes Wilderness Stewardship Plan:** Now available for public review, the draft General Management Plan (GMP)/EIS addresses the specific needs of two units of the park. The primary emphasis of the GMP is on the barrier island and includes a no-action alternative and two action alternatives. The Draft GMP/EIS also incorporates plans for the Otis Pike High Dunes Fire Island Wilderness and includes a draft Wilderness Stewardship Plan that is common in both of the two action alternatives.



### NORTHEAST



### SOUTHEAST

**Everglades NP Proposes New Wilderness:** In 2015, NPS Director Jon Jarvis approved a wilderness study for the East Everglades Expansion Area. The park completed the study later in the year, which includes about 42,200 acres proposed for designation as wilderness, and an additional 43,100 acres are proposed for potential wilderness. These areas are contiguous with the existing 1,296,500-acre Marjory Stoneman Douglas Wilderness.

**Big Cypress NPr Completes Updated Wilderness Eligibility Assessment:** After the passage of 35 years, a new wilderness eligibility assessment was completed for the original part of the preserve. Of the 557,065 acres assessed, 188,323 acres were found to meet the wilderness eligibility criteria. A wilderness study of the original preserve is now under way.

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#### REGIONAL WILDERNESS COORDINATORS

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- Alaska Region: Adrienne Lindholm
- Pacific West Region: Alan Schmierer
- Intermountain Region: Melissa Trenchik
- Midwest Region: Chris Holbeck
- Northeast Region: Mike Bilecki
- Southeast Region: Mark Kinzer



# WILDERNESS LEADERSHIP COUNCIL

The NPS Wilderness Leadership Council serves an advisory council to the Director on all matters pertaining to wilderness. The council strives to enhance the agency's ability to address critical wilderness stewardship issues. Comprised of park, regional, and national staff, this interdisciplinary council represents perspectives from a variety of positions and management levels. Each council member serves a three-year term, with staggered rotation occurring each year. The council identifies a workplan for the fiscal year (FY), including concentrated effort around various work group topics. The following summaries highlight three of the ten work groups for FY 2015:

## CULTURAL RESOURCES & WILDERNESS

This workgroup focused on the development of four priorities in 2015:

- Narrative guidance on cultural resources (CRs) as part of the "5th quality" of wilderness character
- Decision guidance for wilderness-appropriate application of the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Treatment of Historic Properties for historic structures and installations in wilderness, and criteria for re-use of historic building
- Solicitor-reviewed white paper summarizing guidance
- Connectivity between the WASO-led effort to update RM-28A technical reference material related to CRs and wilderness

Narrative guidance on CRs as part of wilderness character, and decision guidance on treatment of historic buildings and structures, is undergoing final review prior to being transmitted to three Associate Directors. In final form, this guidance will be included as part of RM-41.

## CLIMATE CHANGE ADAPTATION

This workgroup continued efforts to provide guidance to ensure that wilderness is considered in ecological restoration or climate change adaptation projects. Work was focused on participating in the development of the Aldo Leopold Wilderness Research Institute's "Proposed Ecological Intervention and Restoration Framework" to ensure wilderness character concerns are prominent in decisions made about restoration work within wilderness; and providing wilderness-focused input to the "gnarly issues" papers being developed by several servicewide teams regarding climate change adaptation projects in wilderness. Both items are ongoing, expected to be completed in 2016.

## ALL-HAZARD RESPONSE

This workgroup intends to develop guidance targeted at NPS Resource Advisors (READs) trained in response and recovery and search and rescue activities during emergencies. In 2015 the draft national READ Guide was revised to broaden its focus beyond fire to include all-hazards, and thus the primary task of this workgroup was met through that interagency effort.

## 2015 COUNCIL

### Superintendent

Dan Brown, Gulf Islands NS  
Kayci Cook-Collins, Flagstaff Area NMs  
Sarah Craighead, Olympic NP  
Greg Dudgeon, Western Arctic NPs&Prs  
Bruce Noble, Black Canyon of the Gunnison NP

### Visitor & Resource Protection

Ray O'Neil, Saguaro NP

### Cultural Resources

Laura Kirn, Channel Islands NP

### Natural Resources

Jack Oelfke, North Cascades NP

### Interpretation & Education

Kevin Sweeney, Lassen Volcanic NP

### Facilities Management

Jeff Doryland, Olympic NP

### Park Wilderness Manager

Monica Patel, Gulf Islands NP

### Alaska Region/Park Representative

Adrienne Lindholm, Regional Office

### Regional Wilderness Coordinator

Chris Holbeck, Midwest Region (Chair)

### Wilderness Stewardship Division

Roger Semler, Chief  
Tim Devine, Branch Chief - Training & Development

### Arthur Carhart National Wilderness Training Center

Connie Myers, Director

### Aldo Leopold Wilderness Research Institute

Susan Fox, Director

### Fire & Aviation

Jay Lusher, Grand Canyon NP

### Natural Sounds & Night Skies Division

Karen Trevino, Chief

### Park Planning & Special Studies

Patrick Gregerson, Chief

### Associate Directors For:

Visitor & Resource Protection; Natural Resource  
Stewardship & Science; Cultural Resources; and  
Park Planning, Facilities, & Lands

## INTERAGENCY ADVISORY WILDERNESS GROUPS

The interagency Wilderness Steering Committee and Wilderness Policy Council provide coordinated, national level guidance for the NPS, Bureau of Land Management, US Fish and Wildlife Service, and US Forest Service, with support from the US Geological Survey.

The Wilderness Steering Committee, comprised of wilderness program leads, meets monthly to discuss high priority issues and initiatives across the National Wilderness Preservation System (NWPS).

The Wilderness Policy Council, comprised of Associate/Assistant Directors, meets periodically to identify common policy and guidance to be implemented across the NWPS.

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**Many thanks to committee and council members of current and past years\*. Your commitment and investment in wilderness is much appreciated.**

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### WILDERNESS STEERING COMMITTEE\*

#### National Park Service

Roger Semler (Chair)  
John Dennis

#### US Fish and Wildlife Service

Nancy Roeper

#### Bureau of Land Management

Peter Mali (Vice-Chair)

#### US Forest Service

Alex Schlueter

#### US Geological Survey

Rudy Schuster

#### Arthur Carhart National Wilderness Training Center

Connie Myers

#### Aldo Leopold Wilderness Research Institute

Susan Fox

### WILDERNESS POLICY COUNCIL

#### National Park Service

Louis Rowe  
Brian Carlstrom

#### US Fish and Wildlife Service

Cynthia Martinez

#### Bureau of Land Management

Kristin Bail

#### US Forest Service

Sue Spear (Chair)  
Karl Lucero

#### US Geological Survey

John Organ

*\*This includes members who served part of 2015 on the Wilderness Steering Committee: Elwood York (USFS), Mark Conley (BLM), and Kristin Bail (BLM)*



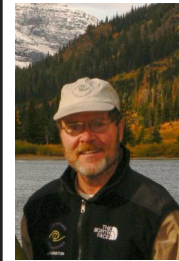
# APPENDIX A: ORGANIZATIONAL CHART

## Wilderness Stewardship Division, Visitor + Resource Protection Directorate

Many thanks to Ryan Scavo and Rob Danno for their dedication to preserving NPS wilderness and significant contributions to the Wilderness Stewardship Division. Ryan now works full-time for the NPS WASO Park Facilities and Management Division and Rob retired in late 2015. We wish both Ryan and Rob lots of luck and success in their new adventures!

### Division Chief

#### ROGER SEMLER (December 2014-Present)



Roger oversees the division out of the Washington DC office and serves as the principal advisor to the Director on wilderness-related issues. Most recently, Roger was the Assistant Administrator for Montana State Parks. He has a lengthy history in NPS visitor + resource protection including the Chief of Operations at Gates of the Arctic NP&Pr, Wilderness Manager at Glacier NP, and assignments at Mount Rainier NP, Hawaii Volcanoes NP, and Katmai NP&Pr.

### Communications + Outreach Specialist

#### ERIN DRAKE (2012-Present)



Erin works out of the NPS office in Denver, CO. She is responsible for coordinating internal

communications throughout the NPS Wilderness Program - collaboratively partnering with and informing parks, regions, and WASO programs about wilderness policy, stewardship, and management. Erin also develops web content and serves as the 2020 Vision Interagency Coordinator. She has a Masters in Human Dimensions of Natural Resources from Colorado State University.

### Data Manager

#### RYAN SCAVO (2010-2015)



Ryan works from home in Del Norte, CO. She works for both the Wilderness Stewardship Division and

the Park Facility Management Division's Sustainable Operations + Climate Change Branch. Ryan developed the Wilderness Stewardship Database and is responsible for assembling quarterly data validation calls, tracking data changes, and making the data accessible. She is pursuing a Masters in Environmental Interpretation from Stephen F. Austin University.

### Branch Chief - Wilderness Science

#### BETH HAHN (2013-Present)



Beth works out of the interagency Aldo Leopold Wilderness Research Institute in Missoula,

MT. In this role, she focuses on ecological issues related to wilderness stewardship at multiple spatial scales, with an emphasis on ecological restoration, wildlife, climate change, and disturbance ecology. Previously, Beth worked as Regional Wildlife Ecologist for the Northern Region of the US Forest Service. She has a PhD in Ecology from the University of Michigan.

### Branch Chief - Training + Development

#### TIM DEVINE (2005-Present)



Tim works out of the interagency Arthur Carhart National Wilderness Training Center in

Missoula, MT. In addition to training and development, Tim is also the NPS representative at Carhart. He instructs various face-to-face and online wilderness stewardship training courses. He also helps with NPS policy development and wilderness stewardship planning review. Previously, Tim worked in several NPS units, including Everglades NP, Mount Rainier NP, and Rocky Mountain NP.

### Branch Chief - Wilderness Planning

#### ROB DANNO (2013-2015)



Rob works from Missoula, MT. He works on servicewide Leave No Trace coordination, backcountry

permit issues and coordination for dialogue about wilderness climbing management. Previously, Rob worked as a ranger in many NPS units including C&O Canal NHP, Whiskey Town NRA, Virgin Islands NP, and Yellowstone NP. He has a Masters in Environmental Education from Humboldt State University.

## APPENDIX B: 2020 VISION INTERAGENCY IMPLEMENTATION THEME TEAMS

### PROTECT

- Erica Dickerman, Permit Administrator, Hahns Peak-Bears Ear Ranger District - USFS
- David Lefevre, National Conservation Lands Program Lead, Montana & Dakotas - BLM
- Kyle Johnson, Wilderness Manager and Supervisory Park Ranger - Glacier NP
- Locken Wood, Environmental Protection Specialist, Night Skies & Natural Sounds Division - NPS
- Michael Brady, Project Leader, Hopper Mountain National Wildlife Refuge - USFWS
- Steve Delehanty, Refuge Manager, Alaska Maritime National Wildlife Refuge - USFWS
- Steve Boutcher, Wilderness and Wild and Scenic Rivers Information Manager - USFS
- Tim Fisher, Natural Resource Specialist, Wilderness and Wild & Scenic Rivers, California - BLM

### CONNECT

- Kristin Pace, Wilderness Planner, Alaska - NPS
- Eric Sandeno, Wilderness, Wild & Scenic Rivers, National Historic & Scenic Trails, Accessibility Program Manager, Eastern Region - USFS
- Sandy Snell-Dobert, Division Chief, Interpretation, Education, & Technology - Black Canyon of the Gunnison NP
- Aaron Collins, Park Ranger, Sheldon-Hart Mountain National Wildlife Refuge Complex - USFWS
- Jimmy Gaudry Wilderness, Wild & Scenic Rivers Program Manager, Northern Region - USFS
- Nancy Patterson, Outdoor Recreation Planner - BLM

### LEAD

- Karen Mudar, Archeologist, Cultural Resources Division - NPS
- Brian Glaspell, Project Leader, Arctic National Wildlife Refuge - USFWS
- Roger Semler, Wilderness Stewardship Division Chief - NPS
- Steve Agius, Assistant Refuge Manager, Northern Maine National Wildlife Refuge Complex - USFWS
- Eric Flood, District Wilderness, Trails, Recreation, Lands and Minerals Staff Officer, USFS
- Nancy Taylor, District Recreation & Wilderness Program Manager - USFS
- Collin Ewing, Manager, McInnis Canyons National Conservation Area and Dominguez-Escalante National Conservation Area, Bureau of Land Management
- Tom Wilcox, Wilderness Specialist, Bureau of Land Management

### THEME TEAMS' INTERAGENCY COORDINATOR

- Erin Drake, Communications & Outreach Specialist, Wilderness Stewardship Division - NPS



# APPENDIX C: DESIGNATED\* WILDERNESS SUMMARY TABLE

REGION	PARK	WILDERNESS AREA	ACRES
Alaska	Denali NP&Pr	Denali Wilderness	2,124,783
	Gates of the Arctic NP&Pr	Gates of the Arctic Wilderness	7,167,192
	Glacier Bay NP&Pr	Glacier Bay Wilderness	2,664,876
	Katmai NP&Pr	Katmai Wilderness	3,384,358
	Kobuk Valley NP	Kobuk Valley Wilderness	174,545
	Lake Clark NP&Pr	Lake Clark Wilderness	2,619,550
	Noatak NPr	Noatak Wilderness	5,765,427
	Wrangel-St. Elias NP&Pr	Wrangell-St. Elias Wilderness	9,078,675
Pacific West	Craters of the Moon NM	Craters of the Moon Wilderness	43,243
	Death Valley NP	Death Valley Wilderness	3,102,456
	Devils Postpile NM	Ansel Adams Wilderness	747
	Haleakala NP	Haleakala Wilderness	24,719
	Hawai'i Volcanoes NP	Hawai'i Volcanoes Wilderness	130,790
	Joshua Tree NP	Joshua Tree Wilderness	594,502
	Lake Mead NRA	Black Canyon Wilderness	17,220
		Bridge Canyon Wilderness	7,761
		Eldorado Wilderness	26,250
		Ireteba Peaks Wilderness	29,299
		Jimbilinan Wilderness	18,879
		Muddy Mountains Wilderness	3,521
		Nellis Wash Wilderness	16,423
		Pinto Valley Wilderness	39,173
		Spirit Mountain Wilderness	32,913
	Lassen Volcanic NP	Lassen Volcanic Wilderness	78,982
	Lava Beds NM	Lava Beds Wilderness	28,460
	Mojave NPr	Mojave Wilderness	695,200
	Mount Rainier NP	Mount Rainier Wilderness	228,480
	North Cascades NP	Stephen Mather Wilderness	638,173
	Olympic NP	Olympic Wilderness	876,447
	Pinnacles NP	Hain Wilderness	15,985
	Point Reyes NS	Philip Burton Wilderness	27,315
	Sequoia + Kings Canyon NPs	John Krebs Wilderness	39,740
		Sequoia-Kings Canyon Wilderness	768,222
	Yosemite NP	Yosemite Wilderness	704,624

REGION	PARK	WILDERNESS AREA	ACRES
Inter - mountain	Bandelier NM	Bandelier Wilderness	23,267
	Black Canyon of the Gunnison NP	Black Canyon of the Gunnison Wilderness	15,599
	Carlsbad Caverns NP	Carlsbad Caverns Wilderness	33,125
	Chiricahua NM	Chiricahua Wilderness	10,290
	Great Sand Dunes NP&Pr	Great Sand Dunes Wilderness	32,643
		Sangre de Cristo Wilderness	40,595
	Guadalupe Mountains NP	Guadalupe Mountains Wilderness	46,850
	Mesa Verde NP	Mesa Verde Wilderness	8,500
	Organ Pipe Cactus NM	Organ Pipe Cactus Wilderness	312,600
	Petrified Forest NP	Petrified Forest National Wilderness Area	50,260
Midwest	Rocky Mountain NP	Indian Peaks Wilderness	2,959
		Rocky Mountain National Park Wilderness	249,126
	Saguaro NP	Saguaro Wilderness	70,905
	Zion NP	Zion Wilderness	124,406
Northeast	Apostle Islands NL	Gaylor Nelson Wilderness	33,500
	Badlands NP	Badlands Wilderness	64,144
	Buffalo NRI	Buffalo National River Wilderness	34,933
	Isle Royale NP	Isle Royale Wilderness	132,018
	Pictured Rocks NL	Beaver Basin Wilderness	11,740
	Sleeping Bear Dunes NL	Sleeping Bear Dunes Wilderness	32,556
	Theodore Roosevelt NP	Theodore Roosevelt Wilderness	29,920
Southeast	Fire Island NS	Otis Pike Fire Island High Dune Wilderness	1,380
	Shenandoah NP	Shenandoah Wilderness	79,579
Southeast	Congaree NP	Congaree National Park Wilderness	21,700
	Cumberland Island NS	Cumberland Island Wilderness	9,906
	Everglades NP	Marjory Stonemead Douglas Wilderness	1,296,500
	Gulf Islands NS	Gulf Islands Wilderness	4,630

\*The Wilderness Stewardship Division is developing a database that will include information regarding other categories of wilderness (eligible, proposed, recommended, potential). Acreages associated with these categories will be printed in the FY 2016 Wilderness Report.