



TOGETHER WILD PROJECT BRIEFING

Wilderness Leadership Council Meeting

October 20-22, 2009

WHAT: Together Wild is an *entirely voluntary* pilot effort designed to provide up to 10 designated wilderness parks with the assistance and support necessary to efficiently develop a viable wilderness stewardship plan. The project, scheduled to begin in calendar year 2010, is designed as a WASO coordinated initiative to bring together regional offices, internal and external scientists, wilderness specialists, and others with expertise in wilderness planning to directly support participating units through the duration of the wilderness stewardship planning process. Together Wild incorporates existing laws, policies, guidelines, and integrates existing planning frameworks to assist in the development of wilderness stewardship plans for selected parks that chose to participate in this collaborative planning effort. *Keeping It Wild: An Interagency Strategy to Monitor Trends in Wilderness Character Across the National Wilderness Preservation System* (Peter Landres, et al.) will serve as the foundational document of the effort.

WHY: The NPS administers approximately 44 million acres of designated wilderness in 60 wilderness areas nationwide. However, the majority of these wilderness areas are managed without a wilderness stewardship, or equivalent, plan. *Management Policies 2006* directs parks with wilderness to develop and maintain a wilderness management plan or equivalent planning document to guide the preservation, management, and use of wilderness resources (6.3.4.2). Wilderness planning has been identified within NPS policies as an essential element of wilderness stewardship and preservation.

PROJECT GOAL: Move ~10 NPS Wilderness managing units through the wilderness stewardship planning process resulting the development of an effective and defensible wilderness stewardship plan for each participating unit.

HOW: *Existing Resources & Publications:* There are many existing resources that have been developed in the past by NPS and other wilderness stewards and experts that will be utilized in Together Wild. Director's Order-41, the Wilderness Stewardship Plan Handbook (2004), and *Keeping It Wild: An Interagency Strategy to Monitor Trends in Wilderness Character Across the National Wilderness Preservation System*, by Peter Landres and others (2008) will provide the foundation for the wilderness planning effort. *Keeping It Wild* provides a comprehensive strategy to describe and assess trends in wilderness character. This document has been extensively reviewed by wilderness managers in the four wilderness management agencies.

WASO Resources: Wade Vagias, Natural Resources Specialist in the Wilderness Stewardship Division, WASO, will coordinate and facilitate the program. WASO will provide additional resources, training, coordination, collaboration, and peer review with national and regional wilderness staff, the NPS Wilderness Leadership Committee, other veteran NPS wilderness managers, NEPA specialists, network I&M coordinators, members of the academic community, and other parks involved in this pilot program. WASO will coordinate a series of TEL-NET trainings, meetings, and work sessions that will allow participants to develop their plans



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through a deliberative and shared process. A SharePoint site will be developed for updates, peer review, and to track projects. The NPS Planning, Environment, and Public Comment system (PEPC) will be utilized for environmental compliance, including internal reviews and public participation.

The WASO Planning Division, Patrick Gregerson, Chief, has contracted with Peter Landres, co-author of *Keeping It Wild* and ecologist at the Aldo Leopold Wilderness Research Institute to assist parks in the development of their wilderness character assessment, and will also train park staff and assist parks in the review of indicators and standards for assessing trends. Landres has recommended approaches for monitoring the four qualities of wilderness character. These approaches will be reviewed through this process, and parks will determine which would be pertinent to their wilderness areas, while also considering cost and available staff time for implementation.

Student Conservation Association Wilderness Fellows: WASO has funded up to three Student Conservation Association (SCA) Wilderness Fellows for 2010/2011 who will be assigned to work with parks and regions to complete wilderness stewardship plan-related tasks. Depending on the participating parks' needs, SCA will be made available to assist with data mining for existing information on wilderness, assisting parks in the development of wilderness character assessments, developing portions of the plan, administrative tasks, assistance with public scoping and outreach, etc. These positions would be based in the parks/regions and shared among parks that agree to participate in this project. Regions and parks will be provided with the opportunity to fund extensions of these positions if necessary.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

Garry Oye
Chief, Wilderness Stewardship Division
Garry_Oye@nps.gov
(202) 513-7090

Wade Vagias
Together Wild Project Coordinator
Wilderness Stewardship Division
Wade_Vagias@nps.gov
(202) 513-7124