2020 Vision

Interagency stewardship priorities for America's National Wilderness Preservation System

Wilderness is …

… an indispensable part of the American story. Native Americans depended on the bounty of wilderness for survival and held Earth and its wild places sacred. Western explorers Meriwether Lewis and William Clark were inspired by the untamed beauty of wilderness that became the forge upon which our uniquely American national character was created. After just 200 years, the essential wildness of our country was transformed. As Americans realized that the long-term health and welfare of our nation was at risk, a new vision for conservation emerged.

In 1964, Americans formally acknowledged the immediate and lasting benefits of wild places to the human spirit and the fabric of our nation. In that year, Congress passed the Wilderness Act that permanently protected some of the most natural and undisturbed places in the world. The Wilderness Act established America's National Wilderness Preservation System to *"…secure for the American people of present and future generations the benefits of an enduring resource of wilderness."*

Wilderness is America's legacy. Wilderness is…

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… every American's story

"When I come here by myself, I feel tranquil. When I come here with children, I feel like I'm passing on something that was given to me – a gift – on to somebody else."
– Carlos, educator

"The preservation of wilderness is about preserving ourselves. We take great steps to preserve homes of famous and influential people. We make efforts to preserve historical areas in cities. Why not preserve wilderness areas – the environment that we all have derived from?"
- Eugene, minister

"If there were no wilderness the United States would be just technology, just cars, machines, we'd be nothing natural, we'd be dull, gray, metal. Wilderness brings harmony; it brings serenity, the peace we all look for. You can just listen to the river and you hear yourself, you can hear your own self echo inside."
– Noon, Cambodian refugee

"Outfitting in wilderness has been our family's living for two generations. Over the years we've hosted guests from every state in the union and every conceivable walk of life. Some of them already have the passion, but for those who don't, we're able to bring alive their passion for wild places."
– Jack, outfitter and rancher

The Purpose

2020 Vision presents interagency goals, objectives, and actions to guide collaborative stewardship of America's National Wilderness Preservation System.

In 1995, Directors of the Bureau of Land Management, Fish and Wildlife Service, and National Park Service, and the Chief of the Forest Service signed the *Interagency Wilderness Strategic Plan*. In 2013, the Interagency Wilderness Policy Council[1] (IWPC) requested that the Aldo Leopold Wilderness Research Institute and the Arthur Carhart National Wilderness Training Center facilitate revision of the 1995 *Plan*. *2020 Vision* is that revision and is informed by the *National Wilderness Manager Survey 2014 Analysis Report* and planning strategies from all four agencies.

The Promise

The 1964 Wilderness Act promised citizens of this country they can forever find special places of solitude and refuge from the sights and sounds of civilization, places where ecosystems remain undeveloped and intact and natural processes unfold without direct human intervention.

Our Vision for Keeping the Promise

To keep this promise, we are forging a unified vision and set of shared interagency priorities and actions for stewardship of America's National Wilderness Preservation System that will be directed by the IWPC to effectively use limited resources and inspire new partnerships. *2020 Vision* and the products, services, and programs that derive from it reflect and help fulfill the promise of the 1964 Wilderness Act and foster the commitment, expectations, responsibility, and skills needed to protect America's National Wilderness Preservation System.

Our first priorities for the next five years are to:

1. Complete wilderness character inventories across the NWPS using standardized interagency protocols and institutionalize ongoing monitoring.
2. Foster relevancy of wilderness to contemporary society by inspiring and nurturing life-long connections between people of diverse cultures and wilderness.
3. Strengthen commitment to, and support of, the Interagency Arthur Carhart National Wilderness Training Center and the Interagency Aldo Leopold Wilderness Research Institute to foster excellence in interagency leadership and coordination.
4. Conduct climate vulnerability and adaptation assessments across the National Wilderness Preservation System to improve ecological resiliency across broad landscapes.

To achieve these first priorities and the remaining goals and objectives of the Vision, the IWPC, with input from our partners, will develop an Implementation Plan by April 30, 2015.

[1](BLM Assistant Director, National Landscape Conservation System and Community Programs; FWS Director, National Refuge System; NPS Associate Director, Visitor and Resource Protection; NPS Associate Director, Natural Resource Stewardship and Science; FS Director, Wilderness and Wild & Scenic Rivers; FS Associate Deputy Chief, Research and Development; and, USGS Associate Director, Ecosystem Mission Area)

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THEME

Protect Wilderness Resources

The top biophysical issues that managers identified for interagency solutions were inventory and monitoring, climate change, fish and wildlife, wildland fire, and invasive species.

TO PROTECT WILDERNESS RESOURCES, WE WILL:

PRESERVE wilderness character.

1. Complete wilderness character inventories across the NWPS and track changes to wilderness character over time.
    a. Use standardized interagency protocols to achieve a baseline for each NWPS unit.
    b. Implement a system-wide interagency data management system for data entry and storage and for reporting on trends in wilderness character within a wilderness, and across regions, agencies, and the entire NWPS.
2. Identify, conserve, and restore native fish and wildlife species and habitats in wilderness.
    a. Complete a state-of-knowledge synthesis of law and policy and biophysical and social sciences related to the management of fish and wildlife in wilderness.
    b. Strengthen collaborative partnerships for managing fish and wildlife species and habitats in wilderness.
3. Minimize management interventions that modify natural conditions by using the Minimum Requirements Analysis process to make decisions on all proposed management interventions.
4. Manage use of technologies that are likely to degrade wilderness character.

PREPARE for ecological change.

5. Focus on the stewardship of dynamic landscapes through evaluating the role of wilderness in landscape scale conservation and ecosystem resiliency as climate change progresses.
    a. Continue to support climate vulnerability and adaptation assessments across the National Wilderness Preservation System to contribute information for adaption actions across a broader landscape.
    b. Develop guidance for determining if and when action should be taken in wilderness to address climate change and other ecological disturbances.
6. Restore fire to its natural role in the ecosystem.
    a. Ensure fire plans identify where the risks to values inside and adjacent to wilderness are greatest; identify the conditions and circumstances under which natural fires will be

allowed to burn or be suppressed; and where prescribed fire is appropriate for resource benefit.

   b. Incorporate wilderness fire concepts into appropriate All-Hazard, firefighter, resource advisor and National Incident Management System training.

7. Implement integrated exotic plant and animal management, including prevention, education, detection, quick elimination of spot infestations, and control of major occurrences.
   a. Ensure objectives to manage non-native invasive plant and animal species in wilderness are included in every wilderness stewardship plan or invasive species management plan.

INFORM wilderness stewardship decisions using the most current and credible science.

8. Identify and conduct the wilderness science needed for present and future management decisions.
   a. Through collaboration of managers and scientists, develop and prioritize a national science agenda for wilderness.
   b. Seek and develop partnerships through entities such as Landscape-scale Conservation Cooperatives (LCCs) to accomplish wilderness science agenda priorities.
   c. Develop effective communication networks to facilitate the transfer of knowledge and feedback from practitioners.

"Wilderness exists in order to give the planet an opportunity to have spaces where nature can express itself without man's interference, so wilderness areas aren't locked up in a sense that they are of no use, because they are always of use if to nobody else but the planet itself."

- Press Stevens, former outfitter

THEME

Connect People to their Wilderness Heritage

The top social issues that managers identified for interagency solutions were relevance, education, visitor management, and access.

TO CONNECT CITIZENS TO THEIR WILDERNESS HERITAGE, WE WILL:

EXPAND public awareness, understanding, and support of Wilderness.

9. Utilize consistent and culturally relevant messages about Wilderness values and benefits.
    a. Identify and share the ecological, economic, and social values and benefits of wilderness.
    b. Develop and implement a national interagency Wilderness communication strategy that integrates with ongoing agencies communications and matches messages and media with diverse audiences.
10. Foster wilderness visitor understanding and responsible behaviors that improve wilderness stewardship.
    a. Develop tools and materials for managers to enlist public support for wilderness stewardship and for compliance with resource protection measures.
    b. Emphasize *Leave No Trace* principles through signs, programs, and practices.
    c. Utilize the Interagency Visitor Use Work Group and others to develop and implement standards and monitoring protocols to minimize visitor use impacts to wilderness character.

INSPIRE and nurture life-long connections between people of diverse cultures and wilderness.

11. Build respectful, long-term partnerships among wilderness managers, educators, Tribal leaders, cultural resource managers, and citizens from diverse traditions, to develop and implement programs and products that enhance connections to wilderness.
    a. Expand partnerships with conservation corps and other educational and youth programs and organizations to provide outdoor experiences from backyard to wilderness.
    b. Develop a plan to increase our capacity to replicate, distribute, and integrate K-12 wilderness curriculum in classrooms across the country through existing and new environmental education, mentoring, and train-the-teacher programs.

NURTURE a new generation of future stewards and scientists.

12. Foster a welcoming culture of inclusion for diverse cultures around wilderness work.
    a. Collaborate with existing recruitment programs to create volunteer, internship, and employment opportunities in wilderness.
    b. Expand citizen science and volunteer-based monitoring programs for both social and biophysical conditions. Create career appeal for youth by developing and improving wilderness career options and opportunities.

RESTORE trails connecting wilderness and people

13. Secure commitment from a diverse coalition of partners for the restoration of wilderness trails while preserving wilderness character.

> *"The richest values of wilderness lie not in the days of Daniel Boone, nor even in the present, but rather in the future."*
>
> - Aldo Leopold

Foster Excellence in Wilderness Leadership and Coordination

The top administrative issues that managers identified for interagency solutions were leadership, budget and staff, planning and management, and interagency coordination.

TO FOSTER EXCELLENCE IN WILDERNESS LEADERSHIP AND COORDINATION, WE WILL:

CULTIVATE strong interagency leadership throughout the National Wilderness Preservation System.

14. Ensure wilderness science and training facilitates interagency coordination and consistency across the NWPS.
    a. Strengthen commitment to and support of the Interagency Arthur Carhart National Wilderness Training Center and the Interagency Aldo Leopold Wilderness Research Institute.
15. Deliver consistent and high quality on-the-ground wilderness decisions, stewardship skills, and wilderness awareness.
    a. Develop interagency responses to System-wide issues.
    b. Identify opportunities for developing consistent, interagency wilderness regulations.
    c. Establish a system similar to the interagency wildland fire Red Card system to identify, develop, and track qualifications and competencies among employees and volunteers for various aspects of wilderness stewardship and traditional tool use.

REINVIGORATE commitment to wilderness stewardship.

16. Improve wilderness program stewardship accomplishments and recognize excellence in wilderness management.
    a. Develop performance measures to document success in meeting wilderness management objectives.
    b. Establish national recognition for managers who demonstrate success in preserving wilderness character.
    c. Identify, develop, and showcase innovators in wilderness stewardship.

BUILD workforce capacity and wilderness program resources.

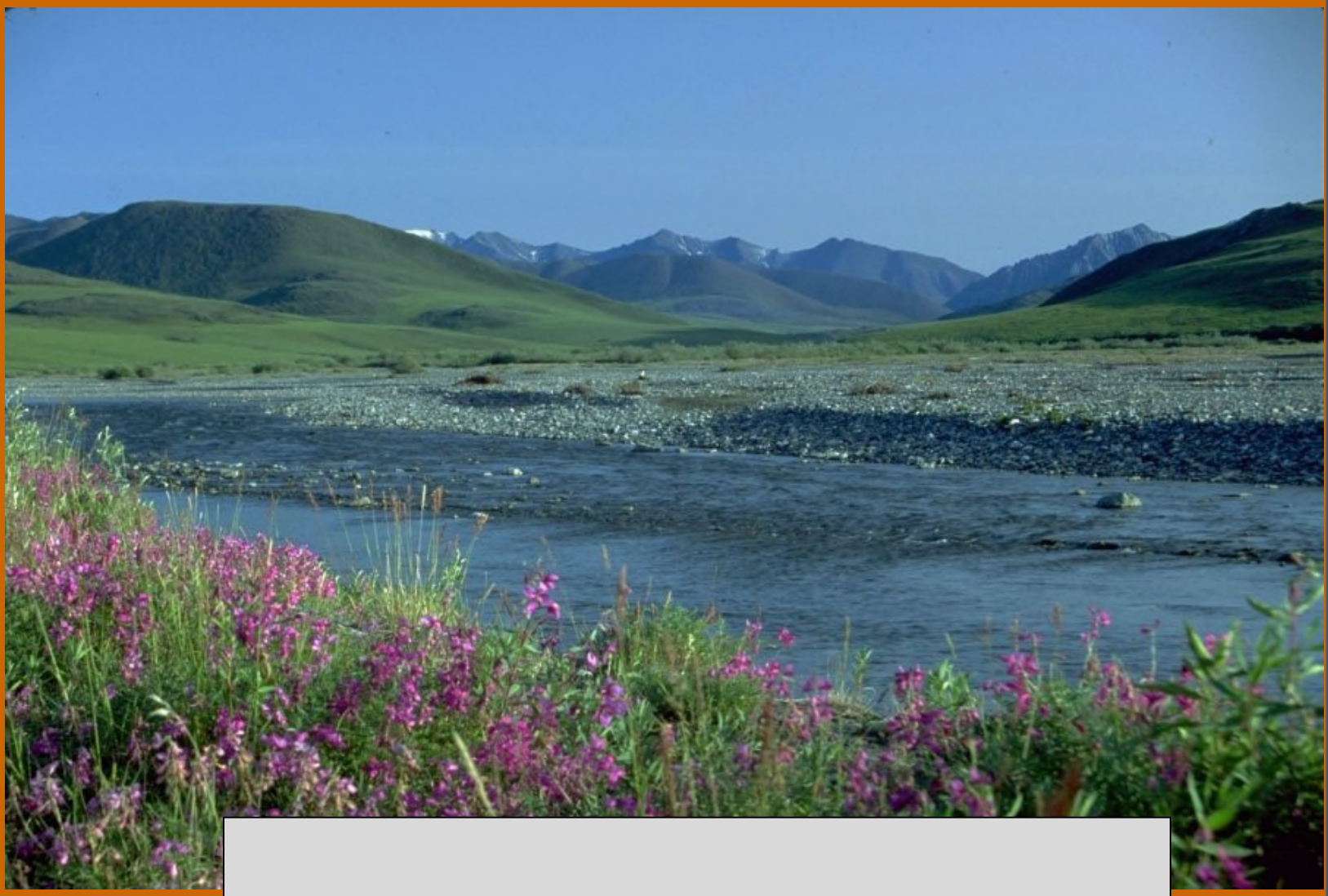
17. Identify strategies for developing organizational capacity for wilderness stewardship, outreach, research, and enforcement duties.

a. Develop workforce capacity plans that identify the right mix and numbers of workers with the right skills and knowledge to preserve wilderness character.
b. Create an interagency business plan that identifies the shared multi-disciplinary nature of wilderness.

18. Improve capacity for recruiting and training volunteers.
19. Strengthen and expand partnerships engaged in wilderness stewardship and complete the goals of this Vision document for the NWPS.

"So it seems to me that this reflects a new and a strong national consensus to look ahead, and, more than that, to plan ahead; better still, to move ahead. We know that America cannot be made strong by leadership which reacts only to the needs or the irritations or the frustrations of the moment. True leadership must provide for the next decade and not merely the next day."

- President Lyndon Johnson upon signing the 1964 Wilderness Act



"I hope the United States of America is not so rich that she can afford to let these wildernesses pass by, or so poor she cannot afford to keep them."

- *Margaret Murie*