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**Subject:** 2017 National Forest Service Wilderness Awards Recipients

**To:** Regional Foresters, Station Directors, Area Director, IITF Director, Deputy Chiefs, and WO Directors

I am pleased to announce the recipients of the 2017 National Wilderness Awards. These awards honor individuals and groups for excellence in wilderness education, traditional skills leadership, decision making, and overall wilderness stewardship. The awards will be sent to the respective regional offices for presentation at an appropriate opportunity.

### **Aldo Leopold Award for Overall Wilderness Stewardship Program**

**Andrew Larson**, Lead Wilderness Ranger, Aspen-Sopris Ranger District, White River National Forest

Andrew Larson has been a dedicated and passionate leader and mentor in the Wilderness program for 8 years on the White River National Forest. Andrew's professional leadership, research and planning skills, and tireless monitoring efforts have been key in shaping future management direction and long-term stewardship for one of Colorado's "high use" wilderness areas, the Maroon Bells-Snowmass Wilderness Area. Over the last 5 years, visitor use has increased in some high use corridors by as much as 285 percent. Andrew played a large role in collecting, recording, and analyzing wilderness monitoring data that he used to conduct and complete a much needed capacity study. This capacity study and monitoring data was instrumental in developing the Overnight Visitor Use Management Plan, 2017. Andrew's professionalism and hard work were the cornerstone in making this high profile plan successful and supported by local communities, visitors, and interested parties.

### **Bob Marshall Award for Individual Champion of Wilderness Stewardship**

**Jimmy Gaudry**, Wilderness, Wild & Scenic Rivers, and Guides Program Manager, Northern Region

Jimmy Gaudry has provided leadership not only to the two regions for which he has served as the Regional Program Manager, but to the wilderness stewardship community across the nation. Jimmy has helped give rise to organizations that serve on a local, regional and even national level – recognizing the role that partners can play in protecting wilderness character. During his time in the Southern Region, Jimmy helped provide the support it took to see an emerging stewardship effort, the Southern Appalachian Wilderness Stewards, become a self-sustaining and vibrant partner that works across 45 wilderness areas. He recognized the ways that the partner,



working shoulder to shoulder with agency staff, could not replace but compliment the hard work of the agency. While also in the Southern Region, he was one of the founders of the Wilderness Skills Institute, a training partnership that has become a leading model in training agency and partner staff, as well as volunteers. Since 2012, Jimmy has served as a Forest Service Liaison to the National Wilderness Stewardship Alliance, taking time to provide real world examples of successful partnerships for the National Wilderness Preservation System. Jimmy has served on committees and planning teams that have helped guide this national effort to build capacity for wilderness stewardship across the full system. Jimmy's work has led to over 500 wilderness stewards having access to high quality training, over 100 new professional wilderness stewards created through partnerships, and a more connected national community of wilderness professionals. Jimmy is truly a national leader in the wilderness community – and he does it in such a selfless way.

### **Bob Marshall Award for Group Champion of Wilderness Stewardship**

#### **Historic Preservation Plan for the Frank Church – River of No Return Wilderness**

**Tim Canaday**, Forest Archeologist, Salmon-Challis National Forest

**Elizabeth Townley**, District Ranger, Middle Fork Ranger District, Salmon-Challis National Forest

It has taken 36 years to address the intent of the Central Idaho Wilderness Act of 1980 and finalize a cultural resources protection plan. The completion of this plan was due to the combined efforts of Tim Canaday, the Salmon-Challis National Forest Archeologist, and Elizabeth Townley, the Middle Fork District Ranger on the Salmon-Challis National Forest. The plan provides management direction for the preservation of cultural resources in the Frank Church – River of No Return Wilderness Area while maintaining wilderness character. The plan is a unique management document that addresses cultural resource management strategies across 2 regions, 4 national forests, and 6 ranger districts.

### **Wilderness Partnership Champion Award**

#### **American River Conservancy**

The legacy of the transcontinental railroad and California gold rush have left the Tahoe National Forest with some of the most fragmented landownership of any national forest. Recognizing the demand for wilderness opportunities, in 2004 the American River Conservancy (ARC) began exploring the prospect to increase the size of the 25,000 acre Granite Chief Wilderness Area through a large land acquisition and donation under Section 6 of the Wilderness Act of 1964 (P.L. 88–577). After a decade of negotiating with the private landowner, they embarked on a \$10,000,000 fundraising effort to acquire the property. The ARC acquired approximately 10,000 acres of private land. Working with ARC and partners, the Tahoe determined that, following some restoration work, 3,323 of acres could be appropriate for inclusion in the Granite Chief Wilderness Area. ARC acquired an additional \$2,000,000 to conduct restoration activities and in 2016, removed a small cabin; recontoured and obliterated evidence of over 20 miles of abandoned logging roads and skid trails; removed 53 culverts; converted 5 miles of roads to trails; moved trails out of meadows; removed stumps, invasive weeds, and debris; and performed

meadow restoration work on these lands. The ARC and partners developed widespread grassroots support. Over 2,300 individuals and foundations contributed \$9,500,000 towards this effort.

### **Excellence in Wilderness Stewardship Research Award**

**John Rothlisberger**, National Program Leader for Fish & Aquatic Ecology Research, Washington Office

**Tamara Heartsill Scalley**, Research Ecologist, International Institute of Tropical Forestry

**Russ Thurow**, Research Fish Biologist, Rocky Mountain Research Station

This award recognizes a team of ecologists and biologists, led by John Rothlisberger, for their combined extensive contribution to protection of aquatic resources in wilderness and other wild areas of the U.S. These scientists in the agency's research branch combine many years of professional education and training along with extensive field research in areas around the country to illustrate the value of protected free-willed waterways both inside and outside of wilderness. Wilderness is the core for protection of many aquatic species and their habitat, as evidenced by their work. This award is a long overdue recognition of these scientists for the contribution of their fisheries and aquatics research to wilderness protection, and the value of wilderness protection to their fisheries and aquatics research.

### **Connie Myers Award for Leadership in Wilderness Education**

**Brian Poturalski**, District Recreation and Wilderness Staff Officer, Flagstaff Ranger District, Coconino National Forest

An educational partnership between the Flagstaff Ranger District, Coconino National Forest, and Northern Arizona University was established in the spring semester of 2000 to assist the Forest Service with managing wilderness areas, and to provide the students with practical land management experience. Since then, over 300 students have participated and the partnership has blossomed into a valued collaboration that now includes other agencies such as Arizona Game and Fish Department, National Park Service, and Coconino County Search and Rescue. The focus of projects over the last several years has been for the students to assist with meeting Wilderness Stewardship Performance elements. While many agency personnel have participated in projects since the inception of this educational partnership, Brian Poturalski been consistently engaged in working with students each year over the past 15 years and has been a champion in recruiting other agency participants from several national forests in northern Arizona. Brian has been a critical player in the success of the partnership and education efforts. This award honors his long-term and tireless efforts to ensure that the Forest Service was deeply engaged in the success of this educational partnership.

### **Line Officer Wilderness Leadership Award**

**Daisy Kinsey**, District Ranger, Sierra Vista Ranger District, Coronado National Forest

Daisy (Celeste) Kinsey is the line officer with lead administrative responsibility for the protection and stewardship of Miller Peak Wilderness Area, which contains several spring boxes

and water pipelines that were developed in the 1880s, and are essential to the City of Tombstone's water system. In 2016 Daisy successfully negotiated the terms of a special use permit for the city's water system that will result in improved outcomes related to wilderness character well into the future. The issuance of this permit in late 2016 was a turning point in a history fraught with litigation and conflict over the City's desire to use prohibited uses in maintaining its water system within Miller Peak Wilderness.

Please join me in congratulating this year's Wilderness Award recipients!

*/s/ Glenn P. Casamassa (for)*

LESLIE A. C. WELDON

Deputy Chief, National Forest System