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**Subject:** 2018 National Wilderness Awards Announcement

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

I am pleased to announce the recipients of the 2018 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 announced at the National Wilderness Workshop and presented in person at an appropriate opportunity.

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

**Karisa Garner**, Wilderness Ranger, Petersburg Ranger District, Tongass National Forest

Karisa has successfully grown the wilderness program on her District through education, field monitoring, and bringing together staff, partners and citizens around a common stewardship purpose. Karisa has established a week-long field education program with local middle school students who work together to monitor stream morphology. The program works hand in hand with researchers, hydrologists, fishery biologists and botanists to perform stream studies. Karisa's diligence to sound decision-making based on the best science and management tools as well as perseverance with staff, citizens, and partners to encourage and coordinate a "one stewardship purpose" are the foundation of her program's success.

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

**Michael Beach**, Recreation/Trails/Wilderness Specialist, Eagle-Holy Cross Ranger District, White River National Forest

Mike's dedication to stewardship, perpetuating high-quality wilderness, and going the extra mile is exemplified through the Wilderness Stewardship Performance projects he led. In 2017, Mike planned and executed the inventorying of 776 campsites via his crew of six rangers and two interns who covered over 450 miles on foot throughout the course of the summer. Mike's commitment to fostering stewardship in both present and future generations of wilderness visitors is exemplified in the new Eagle County Adopt a Trail Program. Lastly, Mike ensures his passion is carried forward to the next generation of wilderness managers by sharing his primitive skill repertoire of cross cut saw, pulley systems, and bridge construction through training and example. His commitment to primitive skills is known throughout the country and his expertise is sought out by others.



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

#### **Partners of the Joyce Kilmer-Slickrock Wilderness, Inc.**

Through extensive volunteerism and financial donations, the Partners of the Joyce Kilmer-Slickrock Wilderness, Inc. have helped to protect, conserve and enhance the natural resources, historic heritage, and wilderness stewardship of the Joyce Kilmer-Slickrock Wilderness. This partner has been instrumental in assisting the Cheoah Ranger District to achieve and sustain Wilderness Stewardship Performance goals. Since the beginning of 2017, the group has donated more than 2,500 volunteer hours and have provided funding and volunteer labor for a variety of projects that directly benefit the wilderness. The group led a comprehensive volunteer effort to inventory, purchase, and replace approximately 30 deteriorated wilderness signs located at critical trail junctions deep within the wilderness. They routinely led informational hikes for school and youth groups and conducted a Junior Forestry School for 11-17 year old students interested in a career in natural resource management. They maintained an active Facebook and website presence to provide information for hikers, and to answer web-based questions related to the wilderness and surrounding areas. Their efforts helped to create a renewed sense of optimism that the public, young and old alike, will appreciate and help preserve and enhance the wilderness resource in the future.

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

#### **Wilderness Skills Institute**

The Wilderness Skills Institute (WSI) was envisioned and created by Bill Hodge, Jimmy Gaudry, Andrew Downs, and Morgan Sommerville. The WSI is a nationally renowned training partnership between the Appalachian Trail Conservancy, the Forest Service, and Southern Appalachian Wilderness Stewards. WSI. Started in 2011, the Institute currently features two weeks of training hosted each year in the spring at the Cradle of Forestry facility outside of Brevard, North Carolina on the Pisgah Ranger District of the Pisgah National Forest. Since 2011, approximately 1,000 Southern Region volunteers, partners, and Agency employees has trained at WSI. WSI stands as a model for citizen and community engagement from which all program areas of the Forest Service can learn.

#### **Wilderness Discovery Certificate Program**

The Wilderness Discovery Certificate Program (WDC) is a partnership training program developed in collaboration with the Arthur Carhart National Wilderness Training Center, Job Corps Civilian Conservation Center National Office, Region 1, Bitterroot National Forest, and the Trapper Creek Job Civilian Conservation Center (JCCC). The WDC curriculum is a highly interactive series of activities and learning opportunities about and within wilderness areas. Students range in age from 16-24, represent diverse segments of the population, and, generally speaking, are unaware of the concept of public lands, let alone wilderness. The most successful Center programs have been: Mingo (Missouri), Schenck (North Carolina), and Trapper Creek (Montana). Each of these Centers partnered with National Forests and/or Southern Appalachian

Wilderness Stewards or Arkansas Illinois Missouri Stewards to train students and engage them in life changing education and work opportunities in our special wilderness areas.

**Traditional Skills and Minimum Tool Leadership Award:**

**Pintler Ranger District**, Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest

The 2017 fire season was historic in Montana and the Meyers Fire burned for 2 months on the Pintler Ranger District. The Pintler District fire staff, led by Gary Lambert, coordinated with the Pintler Recreation, Trails, and Wilderness staff, led by William Shoutis, and together felled 450 dangerous snags and cleared 1,250 downed trees with crosscuts and axe, removed 23 burned structures from stream crossings, and rebuilt four puncheons which were 6 feet wide and 40-50 feet long with materials and supplies packed in by mules (over 100 6-foot boards were packed in by stock). The work allowed Burned Area Emergency Response teams and the remaining suppression personnel to access the fire area safely. The operation received wide media attention and was very positively received in the local community of Philipsburg.

**Excellence in Wilderness Stewardship Research Award**

**Tom Lang**, former graduate student at The University of Montana, now employed by the Selway Bitterroot – Frank Church Foundation

**Dr. Bill Borrie**, Professor, University of Montana

Working with Dr. Borrie and his thesis advisory committee, Tom investigated the concept of wilderness solitude in a creative, unique way it had not been investigated in the past. Tom’s research revealed four components of wilderness solitude from the data collected: societal release, introspection, physical separation and de-tethering for digital connectivity. The results from this project are likely to influence future research by expanding the scope of explorations to understand how well we are doing in facilitating visitor achievement of solitude.

**Excellence in Wilderness Research Applications Award**

**Beth Hahn**, Deputy Director, Aldo Leopold Wilderness Research Institute

Beth and her colleagues developed an evaluation framework as a supplement to the minimum requirements analysis for proposals that involve ecological intervention in wilderness, including projects related to the preservation of cultural resources. This supplement is needed because ecological intervention proposals commonly entail complex legal, scientific, and ethical questions that may be beyond the realm of a typical minimum requirements analysis. By raising these questions early in the process, this supplement is intended to help Agency staff identify issues that need to be resolved before moving forward with the minimum requirements analysis.

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

**Leslie Weldon**, Deputy Chief, National Forest System

In her role as Deputy Chief, National Forest System, Leslie supported the wilderness program through a commitment of two high level wilderness programs – Wilderness Stewardship Performance and Wilderness Character Monitoring. Leslie led the Forest Service transition from the Chief's 10-year Wilderness Stewardship Challenge into the more complex, and yet flexible for the field, Wilderness Stewardship Performance program. Her continued support for this program has secured significant funds which go directly to the field based on internal stewardship proposals and external funding agreements. These agreements have been awarded to dozens of wilderness stewardship partnership groups that provide extra capacity and valuable work. Additionally, Leslie served on the North American Intergovernmental Committee on Cooperation for Wilderness and Protected Areas, representing the Forest Service in this three-nation effort between Mexico, Canada and the United States to improve coordination, cooperation, and management across North America. In this setting, she led the United States agencies in shared learning and dialog for landscape conservation or protected areas.

### **Wilderness Partnership Champion Award**

**Zachary Bumgarner**, Forest Service Volunteer and New Mexico Wilderness Alliance  
Wilderness Ranger

During the 2017 season, Zack was hired as a Wilderness Ranger through an agreement with New Mexico Wilderness Alliance to work in the Chama River Canyon Wilderness and the San Pedro Park Wilderness. Zack completed a comprehensive recreation site inventory, conducted a condition assessment of system trails, undertook management actions to bring system trails into conformance with Trail Management Objectives, developed a local strategy and inventoried user-developed trails, wrote a solitude monitoring plan and conducted a baseline inventory of solitude per the national minimum protocol. At the end of the field season, Zack created a geodatabase linked to digitized photos, with 350 campsite data points, 77 range data points, 703 trail feature data points, 76 points of interest, and 14 user trails. The data will help in identifying priority projects in the upcoming field seasons. These efforts resulted in a substantial increase in the Wilderness Stewardship Performance scores for both wilderness areas. Zack's work is an example of what can be accomplished through partnerships.

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

*/s/ Allen Rowley (for)*

CHRISTOPHER B. FRENCH

Acting Deputy Chief, National Forest System