

Expand Your Thinking: Who is a Wilderness and Conservation Thinker, Leader, and Advocate?

[Ralph Abascal](#) (1935-1997)

Abascal is a lawyer who won a landmark decision in 1969 on behalf of farm workers, many of whom were pregnant women, ending the agricultural use of DDT and other pesticides. This event is often viewed as an example of early organized Latinx environmental activism around issues of environmental justice and human/land relationships.

[Abiaka](#) (Sam Jones) (1760-1860)

When the Seminole Wars began, Abiaka was already a respected medicine man of the Mikasuki Nation. By the time the wars ended, he had helped guide the Seminole through nearly five decades of war. His voice was the strongest in opposing the removal of the Seminole from Florida to Oklahoma. At the end of the wars, he led the last Seminole remaining in Florida into the deep wetlands of what is now Everglades National Park and the Marjory Stoneman Douglas Wilderness. The Seminole Nation of Florida survives today because of him.

Ansel Adams (1902-1984)

Adams is best known for his stunning black-and-white landscape photographs that include sweeping vistas of Yosemite, the Sierra Nevada mountains, the desert southwest, and other wildlands prior to their designation as wilderness. He became a leader in pure, or straight, photography—the depiction of scenes in sharp focus, detail, and high contrast. Some of his lesser-known work includes documenting the lives of Japanese people interned at Manzanar Internment Camp, just west of what is now the Inyo Mountains Wilderness, ancestral homelands of the Northern Paiute. He spent 37 years on the board of the Sierra Club. California’s Minarets Wilderness, designated in 1964 and the ancestral homelands of numerous Mono/Monache, was renamed the Ansel Adams Wilderness in 1984.

Clinton Anderson (1895-1975)

Former U.S. Senator, Congressional Representative and U.S. Secretary of Agriculture, Anderson influenced government environmental policy by sponsoring the Wilderness Act and other pieces of environmental legislation.

[Maite Arce](#)

A native of Ensenada, Mexico, Arce founded the Hispanic Access Foundation in 2010. HAF started Latino Conservation Week in 2014 to provide Latinx families with outdoor recreation opportunities near their homes and demonstrate the Latinx community’s commitment to conservation. Latino Conservation Week started with just nine events and has grown to include nearly 200.

Antonio Armijo (1804-1850)

A Spanish explorer and merchant, Armijo led a caravan of 60 men and 100 mules from New Mexico to east of Los Angeles, formalizing a trade route that would be used for nearly 40 years before railroads connected the midwest with the Pacific coast. Designated a National Historic Trail in 2002, the Old Spanish Trail runs through and near many wilderness areas in the desert southwest.

Herma Albertson Baggley (1896-1981)

Baggley was the first female naturalist who worked for the National Park Service. She was a pioneer in botany and natural education at Yellowstone National Park starting in 1929. She paved the way for Fran Mainella, who became the first female director of the National Park Service in 2001.

Mollie Beattie (1947-1996)

Beattie became the first female director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in 1993. A forester by training, she sought to conserve species by managing entire ecosystems rather than waiting until individual species became endangered. The second largest wilderness area in the country within the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge was renamed in 1996 to bear her name.

Wendell Berry

Author of numerous books of essays, novels, and poetry, Berry often reflects upon the human relationship with place. His own place is his Kentucky farm, and his essay *The Unforeseen Wilderness: An Essay on Kentucky's Red River Gorge* was influential in the designation of the Clifty Wilderness and the Red River Gorge Wild and Scenic River, on the ancestral homelands of the Cherokee and Shawnee. He is also author of *The Hidden Wound*, a book on racism and white fragility published in 1968.

Stewart Brandborg (1927-2018)

Raised in the mountains of Montana, Brandborg was on the front line with Howard Zahniser in the late 1950s and early 1960s working for passage of the Wilderness Act. From 1964 to 1976, he served as executive director of The Wilderness Society, including negotiations for the Alaska National Interest Lands Claim Act of 1980.

Harvey Broome (1902-1968)

One of the eight founders of The Wilderness Society in 1935, Broome served as its president for 11 years. The author of both books and numerous articles, including *Faces of the Wilderness*, his writings were largely inspired by the Great Smoky Mountains, where he spent much of his life and focused much of his advocacy.

David Brower (1912-2000)

Brower was an accomplished mountaineer credited with 70 first ascents of peaks around the United States. He served as the Sierra Club's first executive director from 1952 to 1969, successfully leading opposition to dams in Dinosaur National Monument and Grand Canyon National Park. Often considered militant and

opinionated, Brower was fired from the Sierra Club and went on to found Friends of the Earth, the League of Conservation Voters, and the Earth Island Institute.

Gloria Brown (1951-2021)

In 1999, Brown became the first female African American forest supervisor in the Forest Service managing Oregon's Suislaw National Forest. As a forest supervisor, Brown received many awards for mediating conflicts between the government and environmentalists. She helped pave the way for other Black women to begin assuming high-level positions within the federal agencies.

Arthur Carhart (1892-1978)

Throughout his life, Carhart wrestled with issues that still resonate with environmentally-aware Americans today, such as the tensions between modernism and anti-modernism and the problem of defining and delineating "wilderness." His contributions to the wilderness movement and his skill at uniting disparate groups, such as conservationists and hunters, toward a common goal are reflected in the organization that bears his namesake, the Arthur Carhart National Wilderness Training Center, which was founded in 1993 to foster interagency cooperation in wilderness stewardship.

Rachel Carson (1907-1964)

Carson was the first woman to take and pass the Civil Service Exam. During her time as a biologist and editor for the U.S. Bureau of Fisheries (which later became the Fish and Wildlife Service), Carson wrote several books about oceans and marine life. Her most famous work, *Silent Spring*, built heavily upon Latinx farm workers whose successful court case resulted in the banning of DDT. *Silent Spring* has been credited with revolutionizing the modern environmental movement through the regulation and banning of pesticides. At a time when homophobia was rampant and critics continually tried to discredit her scientifically-sound work with personal character attacks, Carson chose to hide her identity as a lesbian.

Charles "Chip" Cartwright

Cartwright began his forestry career in 1967 as a temporary fireman/lookout towerman on the St. Joe National Forest (now the Idaho Panhandle) in Idaho. In 1979, he became the first African American District Ranger, serving on the Okanogan National Forest in Washington; in 1988, he became the first African American Forest Supervisor, serving on Jefferson National Forest in Virginia.

George Catlin (1796-1872)

Famous for his painted portraits depicting the lives of Indigenous peoples, Catlin envisioned the western United States as a protected reserve where Indigenous peoples could continue to live in traditional ways. Angered by the extermination of Indigenous peoples, he used his exhibitions to document the nobility of Indians in their natural elements by painting their clothing, artifacts, customs, and recreational activities.

[Christopher Chalaka](#)

Chalaka is a second generation South Asian-Taiwanese American, who founded Outdoor Asian in 2016. The organization now has chapters in five states and serves to create community around Asian and Pacific Islanders in the outdoors, through connections to activities including fishing and mushroom gathering.

Frank Church (1924-1984)

Serving as a senator from Idaho from 1957 to 1981, Church was the wilderness bill's sponsor in the Senate. After passage of the Wilderness Act in 1964, Senator Church was involved in legislation designating wilderness areas across the United States, including the Eastern Wilderness Areas Act in 1975. Idaho's famous Frank Church-River of No Return Wilderness, ancestral homeland of the Nez Perce, bears his name.

[Perry Cohen](#)

In 2014, Cohen founded The Venture Out Project, which offers backpacking and wilderness trips for the queer and transgender community. He is an alumnus and former employee at Outward Bound who transitioned from female to male in his late 30s.

[LeRoy Criss \(1926-2008\)](#)

In 1962, LeRoy and his wife Helen Yvonne helped Helen Mary Williams and Bud Ross found Outward Bound Adventures (not to be confused with Outward Bound), which is the oldest non-profit focusing specifically on connecting overlooked, underserved, and avoided populations with the outdoors. While many outdoor organizations and land management agencies today are struggling with diversifying their staffs, from inception, OBA was founded and directed primarily by people of color, including LeRoy. Helen Mary Williams, the only White co-founder, served as a profound ally in helping to advance OBA. LeRoy spent 37 years as a high school teacher and served 30 years as co-director of OBA. He was one of the original Tuskegee Airmen Pilots, the first African American military aviators in the U.S. Army, and a mountaineer.

[Oscar De Priest \(1871-1951\)](#)

De Priest was the first African American Congressman outside the South, and during his three consecutive terms (1929–1935), he was the only Black representative in Congress. He amended the Civilization Conservation Corps legislation to include no discrimination language, although the Corps still discriminated against African Americans through quotas and locational restrictions and barred them from officer positions. During its existence from 1933-1942, the Corps built numerous trails, bridges, and other infrastructure allowing access to many wilderness areas, parks and forests.

William O. Douglas (1898-1980)

Douglas, the longest-serving justice of the U.S. Supreme Court (1939-1975), was also an ardent conservationist during his time. He is author of two books, *My Wilderness—the Pacific West* and *My Wilderness—East to Katahdin*, and helped with efforts to protect Olympic National Park and the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge.

Marjory Stoneman Douglas (1890-1998)

Douglas wrote and spoke prolifically and passionately about the value of the wetlands in southern Florida. Her book, *The Everglades: River of Grass*, was instrumental in raising public awareness that led to the establishment of Everglades National Park in 1947. The wilderness area in Everglades National Park, the ancestral home of the Seminole, bears her name.

Polly Dyer (1920-2016)

Dyer was a vanguard female conservationist who left a sweeping 50-year legacy, including using the word "untrammelled" to describe and successfully defend imperiled beaches in Olympic National Park against a 1958 road-building proposal. Although "untrammelled" can now convey some discriminatory meanings in addition to its original definition, Howard Zahniser, who drafted the Wilderness Act, and used the term coined by Dyer and applied it to wilderness.

Helen Fenske (1923-2007)

Fenske led citizen efforts that thwarted the plans of the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey for a metropolitan jetport and led to the creation of the Great Swamp National Wildlife Refuge. It became the first Fish and Wildlife Service-managed wilderness, designated in 1968 and is the ancestral homeland of the Munsee Lenape. The visitor center at the refuge bears her name.

Ruth Bader Ginsburg (1933-2020)

Although best known for championing women's rights, Ginsburg left behind a remarkable environmental legacy as Supreme Court Justice for 27 years. She was the second woman to serve on the court. Famous examples of her environmental jurisprudence include: the 2011 case *Massachusetts v. EPA* in which the court established that EPA has the authority to regulate greenhouse gases under the Clean Air Act; and her majority opinion in 2000 in *Friends of the Earth v. Laidlaw Environmental Services*, which granted environmentalists standing to sue.

José González

Self-identifying as a "Green Chicano," González is the founder and director emeritus of Latino Outdoors, an organization he founded in 2013 to engage Latinx communities in the outdoors and embrace *cultura y familia* as part of the outdoor narrative. He is also a partner with the Avarna Group and recent Pisces Foundation fellow.

Jaylyn Gough

Gough is a member of the Diné in New Mexico. As a former guide, mountain bike race coordinator, and avid outdoorswoman, she founded Native Women's Wilderness in 2017 to promote education of ancestral lands and their people, inspire women to get outside and promote women of color in the mainstream advertising campaigns of the outdoor industry.

Victor Green (1892-1960)

Green published the *Negro Motorist Green Book* in 1936 while working as a mailman and later as a travel agent. The book is the best-known African American travel guide, which helped the emerging African American middle class navigate auto travel during Jim Crow. It included directories of hotels, camps, road houses, restaurants, and gas stations that served African American customers. While African Americans typically avoided backroads and other natural areas during this time and for many subsequent years, due the real risk of physical violence, the book facilitated the beginning of African American roadtrip exploration of the United States.

Francis Guardipee (1885-1970)

In 1932, Guardipee, also known as Chief Lodgepole, became the first Indigenous park ranger, working in Glacier National Park until 1948. He was a member of the Blackfeet Nation. Prior to joining the National Park Service, he formed Boy Scout Troop 100, believed to be the first Native American troop in Montana, which earned him two of the three highest honors from the Boy Scouts of America. The American Indian Scouting Association's Francis X. Guardipee Grey Wolf Award bears his name, as does a peak in Glacier Park's Two Medicine area named Chief Lodgepole Peak.

Deb Haaland

A citizen of the Pueblo of Laguna and a 35th generation New Mexican, Haaland became the first Indigenous Presidential cabinet secretary for the Department of Interior. She served as a New Mexico Congresswoman from 2019-2021, including as Chair of the House Natural Resources Subcommittee for National Parks, Forests, and Public Lands. During her tenure in Congress, she focused on environmental justice and climate change, including introducing the Simplifying Outdoor Access for Recreation Act which aims to make outdoor recreation more accessible to everyone by streamlining the permitting process for outfitters, education institutions, and community groups.

Clare Marie Hodges (1890-1970)

Hodges was the first paid female park ranger for the National Park Service, appointed at Yosemite in 1918. Her job consisted of taking the gate receipts from Tuolumne Meadows to park headquarters, an overnight ride on horseback. Although other women began working in national parks after this, for nearly 30 years, they were mostly relegated to jobs like waitressing and were not allowed to wear the same uniforms as men until the 1970s.

Grace Hudowalski (1906 – 2004)

Hudowalski was the first woman to climb all 46 high peaks in the Adirondack mountains, and was a founding member of the Adirondack Forty-Sixers. She served as its first president from 1948-1951 and the club's historian until her death. Hudowalski was a staunch defender of Article XIV, the Forever Wild Clause, of the New York State Constitution. In 2014, East Dix mountain was renamed Grace Peak in her honor.

Celia Hunter (1919-2001)

A champion for Alaska's wildlands, Hunter focused much of her energy on advocacy in the Pacific Northwest. She arrived in Alaska as a military pilot in the 1940s. She initiated and maintained efforts for wilderness legislation, in particular the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act. In the late 1970s, Hunter became executive director of The Wilderness Society.

Bill Irwin (1941-2014)

In 1990, Irwin became the first and only blind person to thru-hike the Appalachian Trail without human assistance. He was 50 years old and a recently-recovered alcoholic at the time. Accompanied by his guide dog, Orient, he used pre-made audio cassette tapes to "talk" him through mileage, shelter and town locations, hostels and other areas. Irwin is the author of *Blind Courage*, published in 1991, and Orient is the subject of the children's book *Orient: Hero Dog Guide of the Appalachian Trail*.

Sarah James

A Neetsa'ii Gwich'in Alaska Native, James advocates for the protection of her ancestral homelands through designation of wilderness in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge to protect caribou calving and nursery grounds. She didn't speak English until her teens, when she was sent to Bureau of Indian Affairs boarding school in Oregon, then to learn secretarial skills at a business college in San Francisco. She returned to Arctic Village, Alaska in 1970 and, since then, has testified numerous times before Congress for protection of the Arctic and the Porcupine Caribou Herd as a spokesperson for the Gwich'in Steering Committee.

Shelton Johnson

A Yosemite park ranger of African American and Indigenous ancestry, Johnson remains one of very few people of color employed by the National Park Service as rangers in parks that contain wilderness. He is an author, poet, playwright and actor in a stage production about Yosemite's African American military history entitled "Yosemite through the Eyes of a Buffalo Soldier, 1903."

Winona LaDuke

An Ojibwe writer, environmental activist, and hemp farmer, LaDuke is the founder of the Indigenous Woman's Network in 1985 among other organizations, and is known for her work on Indigenous land claims and sustainable development. In 1996 and 2000, she ran for Vice President of the Green Party on a ticket headed by Ralph Nader, and in 2016 she became the first Green Party member and indigenous woman to receive an electoral vote. She has authored and co-authored numerous books, including *Native Struggles for Land and Life*, about native resistance to cultural and environmental threats, and has received numerous awards.

Greg Lais

In 1977, Minnesota Senator Wendell Anderson is quoted as saying that "the handicapped" would never be able to enjoy wilderness without the use of motors. In response, Lais organized the first formal trip into the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness, ancestral homeland of the Ojibwe, for two people who used

wheelchairs and two people who were deaf. The next year, he co-founded Wilderness Inquiry, an organization that offers wilderness experiences for people with disabilities who face barriers to use of public lands and waterways.

J. Drew Lanham

A Clemson University professor, Lanham is the author of *The Home Place: Memoirs of a Colored Man's Love Affair with Nature* and other essays and poetry in publications including *Orion*, *Audubon*, *Flycatcher*, and *Wilderness*, and in several anthologies, including *The Colors of Nature*. He is a Fellow of the Clemson University Institute for Parks and, in 2016, was named as a Brandwein Fellow for his work in Environmental Education. A birder and naturalist, his scholarship, research, outreach, and writing have focused on how culture and ethnic prisms can bend perceptions of nature and its care.

Aldo Leopold (1887-1948)

Although Leopold is widely-known for his role in wildlife management, his notable influence in the wilderness movement is as author of *A Sand County Almanac, and Sketches Here and There*. Earlier in his career, Leopold was an opponent of Asian immigration and a proponent of the argument that overpopulation is the root cause of environmental problems, which was likely rooted in his longstanding work in wildlife population management. In 1920, he published a paper criticizing what he termed "Piute Forestry," the Indigenous practice of deliberate light-burning. However, the post-humorous publication of *A Sand County Almanac* illustrates changes in his latter-life thinking. Beyond his descriptions of the natural world, in this book, Leopold articulated an idea known as the "land ethic." Although touted as new and innovative at the time, his "land ethic" mimics the human/nature relationship long held by Indigenous peoples.

Regina Lopez-Whiteskunk

Lopez-Whiteskunk is a member of the Ute Mountain Ute of Towaoc. She is a former co-chair for the Bears Ears Inter-Tribal Coalition and education director for the Ute Indian Museum in Montrose. She remains active in seeking protection for Bears Ears.

Georgina Mace (1953-2020)

A British zoologist, Mace redefined the International Union for Conservation of Nature's Red List, a global mechanism for determining which species are endangered and threatened. She developed the criteria to standardize assessments, making the Red List the most-used and trusted source for assessing trends in global biodiversity.

Fran Mainella

Mainella was the first woman to become director of the National Park Service from 2001-2006. Prior to her position at the National Park Service, she served for 12 years as director of Florida State Parks. She is currently a visiting scholar at Clemson University where she is co-chair of the US Play Coalition.

[Rue Mapp](#)

Mapp is the founder of Outdoor Afro, an organization that connects African Americans with nature and outdoor experiences. Since she founded the organization in 2009, Mapp has received numerous awards and informed the launch of First Lady Michelle Obama's "Let's Move" initiative. She was appointed to the California State Parks Commission by Governor Jerry Brown in 2014 and was part of Oprah's 2020 Vision Tour.

Bob Marshall (1901-1939)

Marshall was a voracious athlete, often trekking 30-40 miles per day over mountains and rugged terrain. His article, *The Problem of the Wilderness*, published in 1930, helped ultimately found The Wilderness Society. Although he is one of its founders, he died at age 38, many years before the Wilderness Act was conceptualized. Marshall was active in combatting racial and religious discrimination, at a time when this was uncommon. After living in Alaska, Marshall published *Arctic Village*, sending half of the profits to the Koyukuk people he had written about. As Director of the Indian Forest Service, he fought for the rights of the Indigenous peoples and stressed the spiritual and aesthetic values of the nature for all people. Montana's Bob Marshall Wilderness, the ancestral homeland of the Salish Kootenai, bears his name.

[Ynes Mexia \(1870-1938\)](#)

Mexia became the first Mexican American female botanist around 1925 and, in her 13-year career, collected more than 145,000 specimens from across the Americas. A new genus was named after her along with over 50 species and she "discovered" and categorized over 500 plants. She was an early member of the Sierra Club and championed efforts to save redwood forests across northern California.

[Linda Moon Stumpf](#)

Moon Stumpf is San Carlos Apache and professor emerita at Evergreen State College, where she founded the Native governance program. She continues to conduct research and has written extensively on Indigenous perspectives and practices and restoring relationships to wildlife, wild places and traditional values.

[Randy Moore](#)

In 2021, Moore became the first African American Chief of the Forest Service. He started his conservation career with the Forest Service in 1978 in North Dakota, then served as Regional Forester for the Eastern Region. Since 2007 he has served as Regional Forester for the Pacific Southwest Region in California.

John Muir (1838-1914)

A Scottish immigrant, Muir advocated for protection of Yosemite Valley, helped lay the groundwork for public support for future wilderness legislation, and founded the Sierra Club. Many of his writings speak of the necessity of wilderness, while others include harmful racist stereotypes of African Americans and Indigenous peoples. Despite these darker parts of his personal history, Congress recognized Muir's conservation legacy

by designating the John Muir Wilderness, the ancestral homelands of numerous Indigenous Nations including the Miwok, Yokuts and Monache, with the passage of the Wilderness Act in 1964. The 310-mile John Muir Trail also bears his name, and his figure appears on the 2005 California commemorative quarter, with Yosemite Valley's iconic Half Dome.

Mardy Murie (1902-2003)

Margaret (Mardy) Murie and her husband Olaus, a wildlife biologist, traveled extensively in Alaska, Mardy was a field biologist, teacher, and author. In her book, *Two in the Far North*, she advocated for wilderness protection in Alaska and was instrumental in the passage of the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act, which added more than 56 million acres to the wilderness system.

Syren Nagakyrie

Nagakyrie (they/them) grew up with multiple invisible disabilities, including chronic illness and pain, that present numerous barriers to outdoor recreation. They founded Disabled Hikers in 2018, which provides detailed information on trails and a custom rating system, and are the author of *The Disabled Hiker's Guide to Western Washington and Oregon: outdoor adventures accessible by car, wheelchair, and foot*, published by FalconGuides.

Glenn Nelson

A Japanese-born journalist based in Seattle, Nelson is a founding member of the Next 100 Coalition and The Trail Posse, which regularly covers race, diversity, and inclusion in the outdoors.

Chiura Obata (1885-1975)

Obata was one earliest Japanese American artists, best known for capturing majestic views of the American West. After emigrating to the United States in 1903, he had a seven-decade artistic career, including teaching as an influential art professor at UC Berkeley for nearly 20 years. In 1927, he visited Yosemite National Park where he created now-famous pencil, watercolor, and sumi ink pieces both of iconic landforms, like El Capitan and Half Dome, but also of lesser-known backcountry locations.

Ernest Oberholtzer (1884-1977)

A defender of northern Minnesota wildlands, Ober - as he was called by friends - was one of the eight founders of The Wilderness Society. His advocacy led to the designation of today's most popular wilderness, the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness, ancestral homeland of the Anishinabewaki.

Osceola (Billy Powell) (1804-1838)

Osceola's skill as a speaker, prowess in battle, and staunch opposition to removal of the Seminole from Florida, led him to becoming a prominent warrior and spokesman. Though he was never an Indigenous leader, his skill and charisma quickly made him famous. During the wars in which the Seminole fought the U.S. Government to retain their ancestral homelands, Osceola's attack on Fort King was swift and calculated, and brought him to the American People's attention. Osceola was captured under a controversial flag of

truce, a betrayal that remains one of the blackest marks in American military history. He was taken from Florida, and died in prison in South Carolina. The dishonorable nature of his capture and his subsequent death turned many Americans against the long war against the Seminole people.

Mamie Parker

Parker was the first African American woman to serve as regional director in the Fish and Wildlife Service, overseeing 13 Northeastern states and key conservation successes, including pivotal work to remove dams and restore fish passage for Atlantic salmon. She went on to serve as Head of Fisheries nationally.

Gifford Pinchot (1865-1946)

Pinchot was the first Chief of the Forest Service and later became Governor of Pennsylvania. He advocated that public lands could not only be used for recreation but should also be used, responsibly, for logging, mining, research and other purposes. His philosophy created what we now term utilitarianism and, today, it underlies the multiple-use missions of the Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management. Pinchot has recently been criticized for his application of utilitarianism to nature as a colonialist practice used to justify Indigenous land dispossession.

John Wesley Powell (1934-1902)

Powell is best known for his first documented descent of the Colorado and Green Rivers through the Grand Canyon, but he was also an early disabled explorer, having lost his arm during the Civil War. As accounts of technical ascents by climbers with disabilities began to appear in newspapers in the 19th century, Powell made the first well-documented ascent of Longs Peak, now within the Rocky Mountain National Park Wilderness, ancestral homelands of the Cheyenne.

Elizabeth Titus Putnam

Founder of the Student Conservation Association, Putnam modeled the organization after the Civilian Conservation Corps and enlisted student volunteers in wilderness work. In 1957, 53 high school, college and graduate level volunteers assisted rangers and naturalists in Olympic and Grand Teton National Parks. Today, the Student Conservation Association enlists more than 85,000 volunteers nationwide. Putnam was awarded the Presidential Citizens Medal in 2010.

Sacajawea (1788-1884)

Sacajawea was a member of the Lemhi Shoshone Nation. At age 13, she was sold into a non-consensual marriage to an abusive Canadian trapper, who was hired by the Lewis and Clark expedition. Although early suffragists lionized Sacajawea as a symbol of women's worth and independence, her role was one of an enslaved interpreter, diplomat, and symbol of peace when the expedition encountered Indigenous peoples. Although Europeans considered the expedition to be a success, in large part due to her unacknowledged contributions, Lewis and Clark's charting of a path to the West coast triggered a wave of epidemics, forced assimilation, culture-purging, and Indigenous land dispossession by European settlers. A contemporary likeness of what she may have looked like graces the Sacajawea dollar coin, minted in 2000.

Tie Sing (?-1918)

Although many Asian immigrants were laborers, road builders, and lodge workers in the National Parks, few of their stories or personal information are well-documented. Sing, believed to be Chinese, is one of the better-known. He served as head cook for USGS cartographers who were mapping the early National Parks, like Yosemite. He was legendary for his creativity in backcountry camp cooking: To prepare sourdough bread, he would knead the sourdough, then keep it next to a mule's body to rise during the day's ride. Sing Peak in the Yosemite Wilderness, ancestral homelands of numerous Indigenous Nations including the Miwok, Yokuts and Monache, bears his name.

Robert Stanton

Stanton started as a seasonal park ranger in Grand Teton National Park in 1962 and was the first African American to be appointed as Director of the National Park Service, serving from 1997 to 2001. As Director, Stanton supported increasing staff diversity, as well as programs to ensure recognition of cultural and historic sites related to contributions of disenfranchised peoples in the United States. He is also an executive professor in the Department of Recreation, Park and Tourism Sciences at Texas A&M University.

John Sterling

Sterling was the first executive director of The Conservation Alliance, founded in 1989 by outdoor industry leaders from REI, Patagonia, The North Face and Kelty. Through Sterling's leadership, the Alliance grew into the primary vehicle through which contributions to conservation from outdoor gear companies are funneled. A competitive bi-annual grant program distributes funds to conservation non-profits, including many organizations that work to designate more wilderness.

Robert Taylor

An unknown pioneer in the hiking world, Taylor was the first African American to thru-hike both the Appalachian and Pacific Crest Trails in the late 1990s. Although his experiences on the PCT were like those of many other hikers, he encountered racist threats throughout his journey along the AT.

Trevor Thomas

Currently, Thomas is the only professional long-distance blind hiker. Following in Bill Irwin's footsteps, in 2008, he completed the Appalachian Trail solo with the assistance of a highly-trained guide dog. He is the founder of Team FarSight Foundation, which supports young blind people in outdoor activities.

Susan Tixier (1942-2015)

Tixier founded the Great Old Broads for Wilderness in 1989 to challenge then-Senator Orrin Hatch's assertion that wilderness designations would harm the elderly by denying them access to unroaded backcountry. What started as a grassroots environmental advocacy organization for older women now has around 8,000 members. Tixier was also a lawyer and former associate executive director for the Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance.

Harriet Tubman (1822-1913)

Tubman is a well-known African American abolitionist who rescued approximately 70 families through the Underground Railroad. Although the escape routes she and other conductors used remain secret, the Blue Ridge Mountains were ideal for freedom seekers escaping to the North, due to the tough forested terrain and abundance of hiding spots. It is possible that escaped enslaved African Americans traveled, rested and hid in what are now wilderness areas traversed by the Appalachian Trail. Tubman is less known for her woodcraft—her skills as a botanist, pathfinder, and wilderness guide through rough, unmapped country, using the stars for navigation at night.

Stewart Udall (1920-2010)

During Udall's time as secretary of the Department of the Interior, major conservation laws were passed, including the Wilderness Act, Endangered Species Preservation Act, Wild and Scenic Rivers Act, and National Trails System Act. Udall was influential in the establishment of the Great Swamp National Wildlife Refuge, which includes the first Department of the Interior-designated wilderness area on the ancestral homelands of the Munsee Lenape. On the social justice front, he recruited African Americans to serve as rangers in national parks, fought successfully to end Jim Crow segregation at the university of Arizona, and fought for redress and compensation for Navajo uranium miners and other victims of the atomic age.

Jolie Varela

Varela is the founder of Indigenous Women Hike, which she started in 2018 when she and six other women hiked the Nüümü Poyo—the Indigenous name of what is commonly known as the John Muir Trail—without permits under the 1978 American Indian Religious Freedom Act. Varela has been advocating for the history of her people—the Paiute—to be acknowledged on this trail, one of the most popular hikes in the United States that passes through multiple wilderness areas along the Sierra crest between Yosemite and Sequoia-Kings Canyon National Parks.

Leslie Weldon

Weldon's 35-year career with the Forest Service led her to become the first African American woman to hold the position of Deputy Chief for the National Forest System in 2011. She is now the Chief of Executive Work Environment and Performance for the Forest Service.

Mark Wellman

From 1986-1991, Wellman worked as an Interpretive Ranger and was Director of the Disabled Access Program in Yosemite National Park. He is now an adventure athlete, two-time Paralympian, author, filmmaker, motivational speaker, and adaptive climbing equipment business owner. After an accident left him paralyzed from the waist down, he became the first professional paraplegic climber, ascending El Capitan in 1989.

Bob Wick

Wick is a gay self-taught landscape photographer and wilderness manager who retired in 2021 from the Bureau of Land Management. During his more than 30-year career, Wick's photographs showcasing the stunning beauty of lesser-known wilderness areas and other public lands have changed the way many people view the Bureau of Land Management.

Terry Tempest Williams

As an acclaimed author, Williams' writing focuses on social and environmental justice including the protection of public lands and wildness and relationships to culture and nature. The recipient of numerous conservation awards, her work includes notable wildness and wilderness quotes, such as, "To be whole. To be complete. Wildness reminds us what it means to be human, what we are connected to rather than what we are separate from."

George Meléndez Wright (1904-1936)

Of Salvadoran ancestry, Wright pioneered a holistic approach to wildlife management in the National Park Service by advocating for an ecosystem-wide approach to managing species within, and bordering, parks. The George Wright Society, founded in 1980, bears his name, as do mountains in both Denali and Big Bend National Parks.

Robert Sterling Yard (1861-1945)

After researching why American tourists were being drawn to the wilds of Europe, the Alps or the Dolomites, Yard produced the first marketing pieces for America's wild landscapes, which resulted in the creation of the National Park Service in 1916. He was also an early proponent of what are now park concessions—businesses within parks that provide services and amenities to tourists. He is also the founder of what is now the National Parks Conservation Association and served as The Wilderness Society's first president until his death in 1945.

Colonel Charles Young (1864-1922)

In 1903 Young became the first African American National Park Superintendent when he and his troops, the Buffalo Soldiers, were assigned to manage and maintain what are now Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks. In 1866 Congress had established six all-Black regiments, nicknamed the Buffalo Soldiers, to become the first caretakers of the national parks. In addition to their soldier duties, the Buffalo Soldiers under Young's command fought fires, constructed roads, built trails, and curbed poaching. Young's greatest impact was managing road construction, which allowed more visitors to enjoy the parks. His troops completed a wagon road to the Giant Forest, home of the world's largest trees, and a road to the base of the famous Moro Rock. Young was the third African American to graduate from West Point. The Charles Young Buffalo Soldiers National Monument in Wilberforce, Ohio honors his lengthy military career, including building and growing the military science and tactics program at Wilberforce University.

Howard Zahniser (1906-1964)

Zahniser is the most well-known champion of the Wilderness Act for his role in drafting the legislation. He shepherded it through 65 rewrites and 18 public hearings over the course of nine years. Although it can evoke discriminatory meanings today, he chose word "untrammeled," suggested by long-time Seattle conservationist Polly Dyer, to embody his vision of free-willed nature, and it has become one of the hallmarks of wilderness management.