



“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has.”

~ Margaret Mead



Wild Child

A Resource Manual for Youth Wilderness Education Professionals

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Introduction

This document compiles input from a wide range of professionals promoting wilderness education for youth. It is a compendium of resources meant to benefit educators at the field level as well leaders at the programmatic level. The intent has been to cover a breadth of areas critical to ensuring the success of youth wilderness education programs.

There are three sections. The first describes successful wilderness education programs and the challenges they endure. The second part lists sources of grant funding that support wilderness education efforts and assesses a few topical grant programs in depth. The third section lists hardships that educators and wilderness educational programs face, including conventional and emergent difficulties that need to be addressed (or at least weathered).

This document was last updated in April 2013 and should be periodically updated thereafter.

Successes and Challenges in Promoting Wilderness Awareness in Youth

Established Programs

Established Programs are educational programs that are recurring and supported. Their structure and capacity may have evolved over time in order to survive. The programs are recognized and their success manifests the likelihood that they will continue.

WildLink

Contact Info

Laura Beardsley, Executive Director (209) 379-1993
WildLink/Wilderness
PO Box 577
Yosemite, CA 95389

Success Story

WildLink is a unique partnership of Yosemite and Sequoia-Kings Canyon National Parks, NatureBridge, Sequoia Natural History Association and the National Forests of the Sierra Nevada. The program engages underserved youth through a series of free programs that seek to inspire youth to become long-term environmental stewards with strong connections to the natural world in both wilderness and their home communities. WildLink's mission is to give underserved teens a series of wilderness- and home-based experiences that empower them to better their own lives and their communities, and to ensure that diverse California residents are informed, invested and committed to the enduring resource of Wilderness. The idea was born from an interagency staff position that was chartered to develop new and effective approaches to wilderness education that would reach the underserved communities that were located at the door of Sierra Nevada wilderness. The greater WildLink program is now operated as an independent program with support from the federal agencies.

WildLink uses a variety of programs to reach culturally diverse high school students, their peers, and families. Presentations, wilderness experiences, and stewardship projects are utilized to increase awareness and create a community that values Wilderness and is involved in its protection. Additionally, service projects in participants' home communities help the teens see themselves as agents for positive change. Their families and peers also benefit by seeing that even at a young age the participants are becoming leaders in making the world a better place. As students progress through the program they can become Wilderness Ambassadors (a sub program of WildLink) where they actively share their experiences and perspectives with their local communities, often organizing field trips to wild areas or service projects close to home.

Another subprogram, the Yosemite-WildLink Bridge, focuses on career planning and development. Participants not only learn the hard skills necessary for jobs with a federal land management agency but they also get introduced to various careers and have an opportunity to network with agency staff. A special two-week

program focuses on preparing program participants for the move into the job market. Students and recent alumni are introduced to NPS employees and non-governmental partners in public land management and have opportunities to attend sessions on valuable topics such as resume development.

Challenges

WildLink was developed with strong interagency influence and pooled resources but as the program evolved it became more independent and now interacts primarily with Yosemite National Park. This is largely due to a decrease in USFS cash contributions. The USFS and NPS have been supportive of the program even as funding has decreased and both agencies have provided office space and vehicles for use. Even in the absence of cash contributions this type of support has been critical for a program that does not generate revenue.

As was mentioned previously, the WildLink idea came from an interagency-funded position that served as the director of the Sierra Nevada Wilderness Education Project. In addition to WildLink, the position was responsible for a number of other initiatives that have increased wilderness awareness within the communities in and adjacent to the Sierra Nevada. Unfortunately funding for the position evaporated and the position has remained vacant since 2010. In the absence of this important position, the individual Forests within the area have reduced or eliminated funding for the WildLink program.

As agency budgets have declined at the national level, staffing vacancies have gone unfilled and the remaining staff have been tasked with a larger number of duties and responsibilities. As a result it becomes more difficult to engage general agency staff in WildLink programs because it may not line up neatly with any of the targets that they are required to meet. This will likely remain the case unless involvement with the program becomes a formal priority and at least one position has a portion of its duties assigned to support WildLink.

Funding source(s)

Initially funding came from federal agencies and a few non-governmental partners. One partner (the Yosemite Institute) was used to provide the expedition component of the program. Around five years ago another partner, NatureBridge, stepped up to act as the fiscal agent when agency cash contributions dwindled. Grants and funds specifically contributed to NatureBridge to support WildLink now form the majority of the program's operating budget. Both the NPS and the USFS continue to provide vehicles and workspace where appropriate and advantageous.

For more information

See <http://www.naturebridge.org/yosemite-wildlink>.

The Yosemite Leadership Program and UC Merced Wilderness Education Center

Contact Info

Jesse Chakrin; UCM Wilderness Education Center Director

Jesse_Chakrin@nps.gov,

209-379-1849 (NPS office)

209-228-9453 (UCM office)

Success Story

The Yosemite Leadership Program (YLP) is a partnership project among UC Merced, the National Park Service (NPS), and California State Parks. It is a leadership development program that educates and inspires environmental advocacy and social change through skilled, ethical, innovative, and intentional action, while respecting cultural heritage and community. The effort formally began in 1999 when the NPS and UC Merced entered into a memorandum of understanding to meet research needs, provide research opportunities for students, and to develop the next generation of National Park leaders, constituents and stewards in California's Great Central Valley. Planning began immediately on a number of initiatives and in 2007, Yosemite National Park was awarded a grant of \$103,200 to establish the YLP and the UC Merced Wilderness Education Center.

Twenty undergraduate students enter the YLP each year. Their courses of study are varied but wild places serve as the context for all participants' learning and development. Most students come from backgrounds with little if any wilderness experience. The YLP serves as a progressive introduction to the concept of public lands, areas intensely developed for public use, and finally, to the areas protected as congressionally-designated wilderness. The program develops wilderness awareness and personal relevancy of the dynamic constituency that will ultimately decide the fate of wilderness in the years to come. This is done regardless of whether the students intend to pursue a career based in wilderness because there is an acknowledgement that wilderness will benefit with every introduction made.

The YLP is a two-year campus-based program which integrates leadership seminars, speakers, wilderness experiences, summer internships, a capstone project, and cross-peer mentoring opportunities. The first year elements introduce students to public land management and serve to develop participants' skills, confidence, and understanding of their personal potential. A 12-week internship in the summer between year one and two creates a professional connection to the environment and provides intensive professional development. Students are paired with mentors, complete professional applied projects, and take an environmental leadership class for college credit. Internships vary with approximately 30% focusing on wilderness management.

During the second year capstone legacy projects and peer mentorship opportunities allow YLP participants to apply the knowledge and skills they have gained to assist with stewardship, educational, and/or social change. Some of the students that have shown interest and potential through their internships are offered the chance to work at the UC Merced Wilderness Education Center. Eight to ten students are hired as NPS employees under a student hiring authority (formerly STEP). The Center's function is similar to a student-staffed, campus-based NPS ranger station. "Student rangers" provide information similar to a traditional visitor center and offer

wilderness-based experiences to UC Merced students, faculty, and community members. This allows peer counseling and outreach so that communication barriers are minimized. The student rangers also develop on-campus programming such as speakers, films and events so that members of the Merced community are introduced to the wilderness concept. Additionally, second year students deliver in-class presentations to local high schools and provide teacher training programs for area teachers.

The YLP partners with the organization Adventure Risk Challenge (ARC) to provide valuable wilderness experiences for low-income, underrepresented racial/ethnic minorities, and/or first generation high school students. ARC's work with underserved youth helps link wilderness to academics, adventure to leadership, environmental science to literacy, and confidence to activism. YLP participants mentor high-school aged ARC students, assist with after school tutoring, lead wilderness trips, and serve as guides when ARC students visit the UC Merced campus for orientation tours. Through this partnership YLP participants are empowered by the realization that they are the subject matter experts in their conversations and can have a positive influence on the lives of those with whom they interact.

Challenges

Budget issues are listed as the number one challenge for the Yosemite Leadership Program. The UCM Wilderness Education Center Director initially spent all of his time on program development, delivery and support. More recently budget decreases have forced the director to spend between 30-50% of his time researching and applying for funding.

The YLP is the top rung in a program ladder that seeks to increase wilderness awareness, interaction and stewardship among the communities adjacent to the 28 wilderness areas of the Central Sierra. In order to fully realize the program's potential the lower rungs of the ladder (WildLink, ARC, etc.) need to have solid programs that create a pool of eligible college freshmen. In Merced County only 10% of high school graduates attend college and many drop out before a high school diploma is achieved. Wilderness is an esoteric concept that plays little, if any, role in the cultures that are most influencing the rapidly changing social demographics of California and the United States. For the YLP to grow in size and increase the quality of its participants wilderness awareness programs must reach the target audiences at an earlier age so that incoming freshmen already have an interest developed in wilderness.

The bureaucracies of the National Park Service and the University of California system create a number of challenges. Champions are needed in both arenas and such a project would not have a chance of success if both agency and university leadership didn't believe it was worthwhile. As long as the program is not considered "core operations" for the NPS it will remain threatened by decreasing budgets and increasing duties. Having partners involved helps provide some insurance against the possibility of funding being cut but agency involvement is critical regardless of whether cash contributions help support operations.

Additional challenges can be found in the hiring process for internships. Freshmen with little coursework and limited experience have trouble qualifying for positions even at the GS-3 level because applicants must have completed 30 semester hours of post-high school study. Seasonal housing is at a critical shortage in Yosemite

National Park and as a result many of the seasonal employees hired by the Park are the children of permanent NPS staff who reside in the Park. YLP students who reside in Merced are faced with a four-hour roundtrip commute to the Park Headquarters. For many this requires too great of a time commitment when compared to the paycheck they would receive. In addition many cultures place more familial responsibility on young adults and time away from home is equivalent to time lost unless financial contributions outweigh their absence.

Funding source(s)

YLP is still utilizing a year-to-year funding model and has been funded through a combination of grant funds, National Park Service (NPS) regional fund sources, NPS national fund sources, and in-kind contributions. Most money is currently soft money aimed at funding the project with no long term commitment. Outside of the contributions from the NPS and the University of California, the Yosemite Conservancy (Yosemite NP's primary nonprofit partner) plays the largest role.

For more information

See <http://ylp.ucmerced.edu>

Wilderness Class

Location

Craig Ranger District, Tongass National Forest, SE Alaska: Karta River & Maurelle Island Wilderness Areas

Contact Info

Tory Houser
Recreation Planner,
vhouser@fs.fed.us
(907)826-1614

Success Story

Craig High School offers 10th-12th grade students an Alaska Naturalist class one year and a Marine Biology the next. Craig Ranger District Recreation Planner Tory Houser visits the class once per month to discuss wilderness.

For the Alaska Naturalist class, Tory takes students to the Karta River Wilderness and engages in the following Wilderness Character Monitoring:

- Inventorying and monitoring invasives species
- Examining a lichen plot for air quality monitoring
- Inventorying campsite use
- Monitoring encounters to gauge solitude

Additionally, Tory leads

- A session on archeological studies
- A session on Leave No Trace principles and practices, and
- A traditional skills & tools session conducting trail work and cabin maintenance.

For the Marine Biology class, Tory and the students take a boat to visit the Maurelle Islands Wilderness. There, the class splits in two, with half going ashore and half working asea. The students then switch locations.

On shore, Tory leads the students in the following Wilderness Character Monitoring:

- Monitoring encounters to gauge solitude
- Inventorying campsite use
- Discussing outfitter-guide use and the stipulations needed to ensure that such use does not compromise wilderness character

The students asea:

- Take measurements assessing sea water quality
- Drop crab pots to check for invasive green crabs

Additionally, Craig Elementary & Middle Schools are also interested in participating in wilderness stewardship. For 2012 during a teacher in-service training, Carhart Center Educational Specialist Steve Archibald will give the teachers a Wilderness Investigations training. Tory hopes to follow up with an appropriately scaled program for conducting Wilderness Character Monitoring with Craig Elementary & Middle School students.

Challenges

1. The High School classes are electives: many children are not that interested in the classes and have bad grades. Only students with good grades get to go on field trips. One year the Wilderness Character Monitoring field trip had to be cancelled due to few students with good grades.
2. It is difficult to synthesize wilderness stewardship and marine biology with only one wilderness ranger who is ashore. The students asea enjoy their time there, but do not necessarily appreciate the connection between island and marine ecology and wilderness stewardship.
3. The program is successful but does not have a high profile. While the program is funded appropriately and run safely, there is a fear of being shut down due to institutional rigidity regarding some particular safety and/or funding protocol.

Funding source(s)

Wilderness monitoring funding from NFRW
Fleet pool costs for boat

For more information

[see page 12 of this edition](#) of the USFS R10 Newsletter

Mt. Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest: Skagit Wild and Scenic River Youth Partnerships

Skagit Wild and Scenic River, approximately 50 miles north of the Seattle metropolitan area, is an ideal location to initiate urban youth stewardship activities. The river system is managed by USFS staff and partners who are committed to youth programming. It is accessible, being close proximity to highway systems and urban centers, and provides visitors opportunities to view salmon and eagles in a pristine environment. Beginning high in the North Cascade Mountain Range, the Skagit Wild and Scenic River winds down steep slopes, through forested hillsides and wide, open valleys, eventually reaching Puget Sound, connecting the Mt. Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest to urban communities.

Skagit Partners

The MBS has historically partnered with numerous organizations to protect the Skagit River: Seattle City Light, Skagit Fisheries Enhancement Group, Skagit Cooperative, Skagit County, Skagit Land Trust, Washington Trails Association, Pacific Northwest Trails Association, North Cascades Institute, and North Cascades National Park. Youth programming along the Skagit has been ongoing for several years, primarily school education activities related to the Eagle Watchers program.

The MBS has increased youth programming the last few years because of regional and forest priorities, available funds and highly motivated USFS staff and partners. NCI was our first consideration to help lead programming for a new initiative on the Skagit. The North Cascades Institute has been our primary partner in youth engagement activities for more than 20 years on the river: collaborating with the USFS to create the Eagle Watchers Program, specializing in conservation education, and co-located with the Mt. Baker Ranger District. Additionally, NCI has the ability to expand our limited capacity, critical for program delivery with our limited staffing.

We connected NCI staff to other youth-related programs we have worked with in the past.

North Cascades Institute –MBS employees approached NCI to discuss opportunities to provide watershed-based conservation education to schools adjacent to the Skagit River. The Skagit Watershed Education Project and Eagle Watchers Program were both established in 1993. The organization shares a facility with the Mt. Baker Ranger District, North Cascades National Park and US Geological Survey. The organization has both a Special Use Permit and Challenge Cost Share Agreement with the MBS. Youth programs that we have participated in with them include North Cascade Wild, Climate Challenge and Kulshan Creek. Through an agreement with NCI, we also partner with City of Mt. Vernon and Catholic Community Services of Western Washington. NCI provides staff, administrative coordination of the Kulshan Creek program, complete oversight of the NC Wild program, and funding for food. In 2011, we hired a graduate of the NC Wild program as a Mt. Baker Ranger District trail crew member.

International District Housing Alliance – This Seattle-based organization houses an environmental justice based program serving Asian Pacific American youth. The youth participate in multiple conservation education and stewardship projects hosted by the USFS. We have exposed more than 300 youth and elders from the program and hired 25 youth as STEPS in the last 10 years. Seeking additional youth partnerships, IDHA introduced the MBS to Seattle Parks and Recreation.

Seattle Parks and Recreation Outdoor Opportunity Program – A city of Seattle program providing free

outdoor recreation and service-learning opportunities for diverse high school aged youth. This unique government program provides free outdoor activities to more than 300 diverse youth annually. Since 2003, we have partnered in several conservation education and multi-day stewardship activities through a Participating Agreement. Through their coordination, several events were conducted in coordination with other organizations, minimizing our need to complete formal partnership agreements. We have hired five students as STEPs.

Wild and Scenic Institute – A partner of seven years, this program provides free recreation-based activities for underserved youth. A small nonprofit with less than a \$15,000 operating budget and functions through the support of volunteers. The organization is closely tied to the rafting community as many volunteers are professional guides. The USFS Skagit program staff participated in conservation education float trips down the Skagit. The Skagit Wild and Scenic Institute provides several rafting trips to schools and youth programs each year. The largest annual event is the Hike, Bike and Boat project. Due to their limited administrative capacity, it is not efficient to create a partnership agreement. Instead we partner with them through our agreements with North Cascades Institute and Seattle Parks and Recreation.

Kulshan Creek Youth Program -- This five-year-old program provides free outdoor conservation education to Latino youth, introducing them to careers in natural sciences while providing positive role models. The Mt. Vernon Police Department initially started the program to reduce high-risk behavior and gang-related activity in that neighborhood. Crime has gone down, the police department has gained trust in the community and kids are enjoying the outdoors.

Funding

In 2011, the MBS received \$70,000 in R6 Youth and Community Engagement funds for forest-wide projects and \$20,000 in Wild and Scenic funds, specific to the Skagit. The intent of both programs is to initiate sustainable youth programming with partners and integrate stewardship. We required a match from partners through in-kind and/or grant funds. The majority of appropriated funds were placed into an agreement with partners, while some were also used for USFS staff time for project planning, oversight and coordination and program supplies. Funding from FERC relicensing (Seattle City Light and Puget Sound Energy) has also aided in the development of education programming along the Skagit and tributaries.

Funds distributed to partners paid for:

- Staff salary and youth stipends to emphasize careers in natural resources
- Transportation: bus, vehicle rental, gas, mileage reimbursement – this is consistent issue that prevents groups from accessing the forest
- Supplies, such as outdoor gear for programs, rentals, writing materials, educational books
- Other services such as transportation by raft

For services such as rafting, youth organizations reviewed a list of outfitters that would integrate conservation education into the experience. The organizations then coordinated directly with the outfitter that best suited their needs. These costs were identified in the partnership agreement. The MBS did not contract directly with outfitters for 2011 youth activities.

Getting Started

We develop youth projects based on the MBS youth engagement strategy that reaches them in three progressive age-appropriate levels: introduction to the outdoors, integration of stewardship, and exposure to

career development. This pathway provides meaningful and lasting connections to the youth that they can bring back to the urban environments where they live.

Youth programs are designed to be to:

1. **Sustainable**—not one-time events, but experiences that will grow in participation and involvement over years.
2. **One-on-one**—direct experience, rather than second or third-hand, such as media exposure.
3. **Career development** – exposure to leadership opportunities and youth that have transitioned to STEPs.

Our priorities in determining our target youth groups are:

1. **Underserved**—expose and involve underserved, diverse populations, and local tribes who have a historical presence on MBS NF land.
2. **Urban**—introduce and engages city youth to the outdoors. We are in the largest market in the PNW.
3. **Community**—participate in community activities, introduces and engages those who live in the immediate rural vicinity and other urban based communities.
4. **Economically disadvantaged** – provide free opportunities and in some cases paid (stipends) opportunities for youth.

It is necessary to identify the objectives and goals of the partner in order to decide the best match for a project.

The organizations we partnered with wanted to achieve the following:

- Build leadership skills
- Enhance outdoor experience
- Increase organization membership
- Reduce youth crime
- Expand family activities
- Provide career development

It is also important to keep in mind the motivations for youth participation. We identified the following needs of our participating youth help to improve retention and program ownership:

- Free opportunity
- Meet volunteer hour requirements
- Social experience with friends
- Safe opportunities
- Give back
- Employment
- Experience the outdoors

Projects

Each of the 11 Skagit watershed projects listed was created through discussions with partners, keeping the tiered youth engagement strategy in the forefront. Each event culminated to a “next step” for the youth. In addition, each youth organization participated in several other projects throughout the forest. The MBS is a partial funder for most of the projects listed, but was not necessarily the day-to-day coordinator of each event. As you can see from the examples here, we begin each program small and allow it to grow in participation slowly through the inclusion of other partners and their capacity to support the events.

The introduction phase of our strategy exposes diverse urban youth to a forest setting, environmental education and recreation. The USFS collaborates with partners to provide culturally relevant conservation education programming with fun experiential learning. This format provides meaningful and lasting connections not only to the youth's experiences but also to the urban environments in which they live. Skagit introduction projects include:

1. Eagle Watchers Intergenerational Event - This event was first implemented in January, 2005, with the International District and NCI. It has now grown to include the Kulshan Creek Program. Partnership between NCI, IDHA, City of Mt. Vernon and Sarvey Wildlife Center.
 - a. APA youth train as eagle and salmon educators and present their newfound knowledge to elders from Seattle's International District. The group travels to a wildlife viewing site along the Skagit and interpret information in 4+ Asian languages.
 - b. Kulshan Creek families also participate in a live eagle presentation and visited a site for eagle viewing.
 - c. Bus transportation for each youth organization is funded by USFS and coordinated by NCI. The transportation is provided by First Student (contractor for the Seattle School District) and Mt. Vernon School District Bus Program.
 - d. Approximately 10 staff total from each organizations provide logistical support.
 - e. NCI has completed coordination of this event annually. Initially an annual meeting was set to plan logistics, now details are all confirmed by email.
 - f. Due to limited funds, this event will be reduced to one day in January instead of two days.
 - g. \$3,000 in R6 Youth and Community Engagement funds were placed into agreements with NCI and IDHA. Funds supported staff salary and transportation.

2. Padilla Bay Migratory Bird Festival – This annual April event began in 2009 as a free opportunity for families to learn about the importance of the whole watershed - upper to the estuary, for wildlife and humans. Approximately 100 youth and their families participate in hikes, wildlife viewing and education presentations. As a family event, we hope to continue building trust and recognition by parents.
 - a. Partnership between Washington State Parks, NCI, IDHA and Kulshan Creek. Approximately 15 staff from USFS and organizations provided logistical support for that day. In 2012, we will also add St. Mary's church in Seattle. NCI is funded through a challenge cost share agreement to provide sponsorship and full coordination of the event.
 - b. Bus transportation for each youth organization is funded by USFS and coordinated by NCI. The transportation is provided by First Student and Mt. Vernon School District Bus Program.
 - c. NCI purchased catered food from community members of Kulshan and the International District for the group lunch.
 - d. An annual conference call with partners confirms participation, logistics, safety, and timeline.
 - e. This event is funded for \$5,000 entirely by the USFS International Program. Funds supported staff salary, transportation and education supplies.
 - f. In recognition that some participants have returned each year, partners intend to modify education presentations, restructure the outdoor hike and include a shore cleanup for 2012.

3. Hike, Bike and Boat Event – This May event provides new opportunities for several youth from multiple programs including YouthCare – serving homeless youth, Outdoors for All – provides outdoor recreation for people with disabilities, and Seattle Parks and Recreation Outdoor Opportunity – provides outdoor activities for diverse youth. Youth participate in interpretive hike, rafting, biking and weed eradication activities. Approximately 20 adult leaders supervise and lead the activities.
 - a. Partnership between Wild and Scenic Institute, Outdoors for All, Seattle Parks and Recreation and USFS. Several phone meetings were scheduled to organize logistics. The weed eradication component was new for 2011.

- b. No USFS funding was contributed to this event. USFS hosts the event at the Clear Creek Campground adjacent to the Sauk River (tributary of the Skagit). Wild and Scenic River Institute sponsors the event.
- c. Transportation is provided by vehicles owned by organizations and/or personal vehicles.
- d. Food and outdoor gear is provided by the Wild and Scenic Institute

Through the stewardship phase of the strategy, participants use skills and knowledge gained during initial exposure trips towards on-the-ground stewardship projects. Youth learn how their work benefits the forest environment as well as the connection to their urban neighborhoods. Skagit stewardship projects include:

1. NC Wild and Kulshan Creek Stewardship event at Baker Lake (tributary to the Skagit) – NCI’s North Cascades Wild program provides a free August 12-day backcountry recreation and stewardship experience to diverse youth. Seven students and two adult leaders completed an expedition to Baker Lake. Five of the 12 days were spent completing recreation-based stewardship activities such as trail work and campground maintenance. NC Wild youth developed and led trail projects with 20 elementary and middle school aged youth from the Kulshan Creek program for one day.
 - a. Annual meeting with USFS, NCI and City of Mt. Vernon to confirm dates, locations, stewardship projects and safety. NCI staff manages the Wild youth.
 - b. Forest Service recreation crews meet NC Wild and provide tools and oversight for stewardship projects.
 - c. Forest Service and City of Mt. Vernon staff manages the Kulshan Creek youth.
 - d. Bus transportation is funded by USFS for Kulshan Creek youth. NC Wild youth are transported through program owned vehicles.
 - e. \$16,000 in R6 Youth and Community Engagement funds were placed into the NCI agreement for the project. These funds paid staff salary, gear rental (e.g. canoes), gas, outdoor gear, tools and other supplies.
2. Kulshan Creek Program Skagit Stewardship – Approximately 140 youth participated in 16 projects in which four (80 participants) were implemented along the Skagit and Baker Lake. This was the first rafting experience for all youth participants. Chinook expeditions provided the rafting service.
 - a. Projects included and eagle counting float trip along the Skagit, two blackberry removal projects (overnight trip), and the North Cascades Wild/Kulshan Creek Baker Lake stewardship project (list in the previous project).
 - b. We conduct an annual fall meeting to discuss projects for the fiscal year. Dates and trips are identified. The Forest Service staff coordinates and manages each event with support from NCI, Mt. Vernon Police Department and Catholic Community Service. NCI provides administrative support – youth waivers, payments, and purchases (they provide all the food).
 - c. Bus transportation was provided for each trip by the Mt. Vernon School District.
 - d. \$10,000 of the Region 6 Wilderness funds was placed into an agreement with North Cascades Institute.
 - e. Outdoor gear, rain pants, boots, backpacks, are loaned to students through the MBS youth supply cache.
3. Seattle Parks and Recreation Skagit Stewardship – 24 youth participated in a float trip down the Skagit to access the Ovenell property for blackberry removal. This was the first raft trip for 80 percent of the youth. Wild and Scenic Institute recruited volunteer guides to provide the rafting service. Forest Service and Seattle Parks staff provided the conservation education.
 - a. Seattle Parks transported students through city-owned vehicles and provided snacks and dinner for the youth.
 - b. Several phone meetings and email correspondences were needed to confirm logistics.

- c. \$5,000 of R6 Wilderness funds was placed into a participating agreement with Seattle Parks and Rec. Funds supported rafting services, outdoor gear, gas, and other supplies. Seattle Parks then worked directly with Wild and Scenic Institute to coordinate the service. Volunteer guides were reimbursed for mileage expenses.

The last phase of this progressive program is to transition to STEP and eventually SCEP positions with the Forest Service. The stewardship projects provide a conduit to a more in-depth and complex work experience on National Forest lands. These experiences assist partners and the USFS to identify youth who are inclined to excel in internship opportunities. The number of positions is based on the federal budgets and grant dollars.

Career development projects include:

1. Forest Service provides support for North Cascades Institute's youth leadership conference – open to all youth completing activities on the MBS and North Cascades National Park. Approximately 40-50 youth participate annually to discuss their experiences, gain leadership skills, prepare for higher education opportunities and learn about career opportunities in natural resources. Youth are encouraged to attend an inter-agency recruitment event. Prizes donated by Stanley/Aladdin were given out to youth.
2. Inter-agency recruitment event targets youth programs including IDHA, Seattle Parks and Recreation and North Cascades Wild. Coordinated by the MBS, we invite youth to learn about positions, meet supervisors, and submit resumes for positions in the MBS, North Cascades National Park and Klondike National Historic Monument. By including the National Park, we are expanding the type and location of positions available, with positions even available in downtown Seattle. Many of these youth have participated in multiple events with the Forest Service and have developed relationships with staff. In 2011, the MBS placed eight students into recreation and fire positions. The 2012 event is scheduled for January 27.
 - a. We will be following up with the eight students to confirm interest in returning for 2012.
 - b. Improve connection with regional office to identify high performing candidates for potential transition to SCEP positions.

Organizing the Events

Capacity is an important consideration when creating and planning projects with new or existing partners. With fewer staff and more work, it has become increasingly difficult to designate time and funds for projects. The MBS has been fortunate to have partnered with the National Forest Foundation in a shared Youth and Volunteer Programs Coordinator position. This individual coordinates and leads a majority of youth activities with the MBS. But even with this assistance the USFS must be prepared to meet the following responsibilities: 1) train the intern; 2) manage and supervise the position; and, 3) provide logistical support. The USFS staff need to determine what events the Forest will participate in keeping in mind:

- Total project cost
- USFS staff time
- Organization staff time (providing enough commitment)
- Organization's reputation (research their accomplishments, can find out quite a bit with some background research)
- Project logistics and timeline
- Supervision and management of youth (by USFS or organization staff)
- Safety (project location and work type)
- Supplies and materials needs (tools, outdoor gear, portable bathroom)
- Transportation (organization have vehicles to transport participants)
- Type of agreement (partnership or volunteer)

- Event sponsorship by organization or USFS (if by organization, they will provide comprehensive liability insurance)

For the MBS, we greatly depend on the organization's staff to effectively manage and supervise the youth. In most cases, Forest Service specialists provide excellent technical support, but have limited training to manage youth. We have made decisions not to partner with organizations if they were not organized and successful in managing youth.

The synergy created by a face-to-face meeting cannot be replicated by a teleconference. New partnerships and events should require scheduled in-person meetings to help establish trusting relationships. As organizations become more familiar with staff, logistics, and process, correspondence by email and phone becomes more efficient and cost effective.

Measuring success

Reporting stories and accomplishments is crucial to maintaining and building support for the program. Based on our strategy, measureable results include: # events, # of youth reached, # youth returning, # of youth entering STEP/SCEP, on-the-ground accomplishments, media coverage and matching funds. Our PAO staff pitch stories about events before they occur, write and photograph feature stories about the events, which they release to the media, post on our website and develop into handouts. Stella Torres, the USFS/NFF Youth and Volunteer Program Coordinator provided blog updates about events to the Northwest Service Academy and National Forest Foundation websites.

This year we developed an evaluative tool to gauge areas of success as well as areas where our overall program could improve. We began with a survey intended for every participant at each event. This method was unsuccessful, as youth gave one-word or minimal responses. We sought input from Dale Blahna, research social scientist with the Forest Service Pacific Northwest Laboratory, Kathy Wolfe of the USFS and Weston Brinkley of the Cascade Land Conservancy. They recommended using focus groups, reasoning that it takes at least five days of experiencing an event before an individual is able to adequately reflect upon it. A second attempt developed an evaluation tool comprised of a set of focus group questions aimed at youth who had experienced at least five days of events. A facilitator led the discussion with youth 14 to 18 years about their experiences and recorded their responses. This year's results are a baseline as our programs grow and change. Fortyfive youth (some participated in the Skagit projects) were surveyed by questionnaire and/or focus groups:

Ages and previous involvement

14-18

- 74% youth had never visited a national forest or participated in a stewardship project on the forest prior to this year's experience
- 26% had participated in our projects before (returning volunteers)

Reason for joining projects

- 55% chose to participate in a project for job skills training/stipend
- 35% joined because they are interested in nature and care about the environment
- 10% joined for affiliation (meeting new people/making new friends)

What they enjoyed most

- 55% enjoyed the sense of pride and accomplishment in getting work done
- 30% enjoyed learning/doing something entirely new
- 15% simply enjoyed being outside

What they would change/improve

- 59% stated they would like to see more of a variety of projects and locations
- 15% would like to see more interactive educational lessons
- 6% would like the trips to be longer than one week
- 10% would not change or improve anything

Employment interest in the natural resources field (As a result of their involvement)

- 44% would be interested employment opportunity with the Forest Service
- 36% might consider an employment opportunity with the Forest Service
- 20% would not consider an employment opportunity with the Forest Service if it involves strenuous manual labor

Outlook for 2012

Most organizations on this list have contacted the MBS about funding concerns. We expect a reduction of grant funding and appropriated dollars for youth programs. The MBS is primarily focused on sustaining current operations.

Youth organizations have all identified that employment opportunities for youth has been a priority for students especially during these difficult economic times. The MBS will fund youth “apprentices,” which will support the Kulshan Creek and North Cascades Wild programs. These students will be younger than 18, thus not qualified for majority of summer positions with the MBS. The youth will develop leadership, organizational and public speaking skills, coordinate activities and establish connections within the community. This experience will create highly desired candidates for STEP or SCEP positions.

Our partner NCI has expressed concern of limited capacity to lead youth programming in 2012. USFS will need to fill this void and provide more oversight of programming. Although we may lose capacity with a few partners, we hope to balance this with greater internal support. Stella Torres will continue her role and the Youth and Volunteers Program Coordinator through September, 2012. This will help us retain consistency and experience in the position. She will help to train a USFS Mobilize Green intern (10-month AmeriCorps) starting in spring 2012 through winter 2012. This intern will also support youth and volunteer activities throughout the forest. Stella Torres intends to enter graduate school in fall 2012 and we are working towards retaining her as a Forest SCEP. She wants to pursue a USFS career focused on her passion of introducing youth and communities to the great outdoors.

Outdoor Explorers: Mentoring Present and Future Generations

Engaging young people in the implementation of America's Great Outdoors to connect underserved youth and their trusted mentors with the wild places in their backyard.

Good for kids, good for mentors, and good for public lands!



The Outdoor Explorers Mentoring Program fosters life-long engagement with nature, stewardship and community, and provides stepping stones to inspire current and future generations of natural resource professionals by connecting underserved youth and their trusted mentors with the wild places in their backyard through intergenerational, place-based outdoor adventures planned and lead by organized university groups who are trained by public land managers.

The interagency Arthur Carhart National Wilderness Training Center has leveraged the very best that three existing, successful groups have to offer. By working together, partners can more effectively and efficiently meet their outreach goals.

- Big Brothers Big Sisters mentors and their Littles bring existing trusted mentoring relationships to the table. Littles are 6-14-year olds, 63% living at or below poverty level, 25% have an incarcerated parent, 75% from single parent households, 12% Native American, Hispanic, or Asian Pacific Islander. BBBS was selected by Forbes Magazine as one of its top ten charities.
- The public land manager (Carhart Center) provides training to university students skilled in outdoor pursuits to ensure safe, fun, educational adventures.
- University students plan and conduct safe, fun, educational adventures for the Bigs and Littles.



Empowering staff to explore new ideas and approaches, OEMP was launched, January 2011, by a Student Conservation Association Intern at the interagency Arthur Carhart National Wilderness Training Center. 10 trips were conducted over 12 months for 400+ hours of engagement on BLM, FWS, FS, NPS and Tribal lands, among nearly 200 participants. 93% of program participants, "Found a new or renewed appreciation for nature and learning in a natural setting." A Step-by-Step Replication Guide has been developed and posted on www.wilderness.net so others can capitalize on lessons learned from this successful pilot effort.



"Because my Little had minimal exposure to the outdoors, she was always hesitant to try outdoor activities. She has really blossomed and become much more open minded about the outdoors after the summer experiences with the Outdoor Explorers program. It was a great gift to have this opportunity."

The Outdoor Explorers Mentoring Program:

- Improves health and fitness and demonstrates the benefits of healthy lifestyles by teaching transferable outdoor habits and skills through meaningful experiences.
- Fosters lasting networks of community and cultural connections by enriching relationships across generations.
- Provides stepping stones for higher education and careers in natural resources.
- Enhances knowledge and leadership growth among Bigs, Littles, and university students, increasing competitiveness for careers in natural resources.
- Develops awareness and sense of stewardship for public lands among populations who infrequently visit them.



A node of innovation, the interagency Arthur Carhart National Wilderness Training Center is replicating OEMP at 3 more universities in MT in FY12. Through recognition, illumination, and support of this successful idea, we can replicate OEMP in 3-6 more states with partners eager to bring OEMP to underserved young people in their communities!

Wilderness Investigations: Bringing wilderness to teachers and students!

Exploring wilderness themes and wild places in classrooms and around the school community.

Supporting teachers with training, materials, and resources.

Wilderness Investigations (*WI*) inspires connection, responsible stewardship, and respect among 5th – 8th grade students for the wild places in their backyard, and for Tribal and non-Tribal peoples who are the caretakers of wonder in these places by equipping teachers to provide real-world, hands-on outdoor educational experiences for their students.



WI includes five subject-integrated plans for classroom, field, service-learning, and family learning that increase student awareness; inquiry skills; appreciation of natural landscapes and those who work to protect them; and, storytelling and communication abilities. WI is aligned with AGO goals:

- Promote and support replicable programs that teach about and connect children and families with their natural and cultural heritage.
- Make the outdoors relevant to youth – make it inviting, exciting, and fun.
- Build upon a base of environmental and outdoor education, both formal and informal

"What a pleasure it is to read and discover new aspects about our nation's wilderness. That's what happened for me as I reviewed *Wilderness Investigations*. I loved the *Wilderness profiles*, the *Wilderness Heroes*, and the *Wilderness What's Up* (note to parents) that are included in each investigation. Nice job you folks at Carhart have done."

ARTHUR CARHART National
Wilderness Training Center
32 Campus Drive #3168, Missoula, MT 59812-3168
(406)243-4682 phone, (406)243-4717 fax
www.carhart.wilderness.net



Wilderness Investigations



WI components include:

- Two-day teacher workshops providing state in-service credits that are co-sponsored by locally-based BLM, FWS, FS, and NPS offices and partners including Tribal Culture Committees, Tribal Departments of Education, nature centers, state environmental education associations, school districts, science schools, and other non-profits.
- A *WI* Toolkit that includes lessons and activities correlated to national and state standards.
- An online *Wilderness Educator* website that builds the community of practice by giving teachers access to further training, the ability to download desired *WI* components, and to communicate with other *WI* teachers on topics related to wilderness and conservation education.

Interest and partners in *WI* workshops has been overwhelmingly positive:

- Endorsed by leadership from the *Confederated Salish-Kootenai Tribal Education Committee* and the *Salish/Pend d'Oreille Culture Committee* as being respectful of Native People and integrated with educational goals shared by tribal communities.
- Introduced to 500 teachers as part of: the Flathead Reservation Professional Development Day for reservation teachers; MT and ID education conferences; and, as part of university classes for in-service and pre-service teachers.
- 21 *WI* workshops scheduled in MT, ID, UT, CO, NV, WY, OR, CA, GA and AK to reach more than 400 teachers and 8,000 students in FY12
- Commitment from 2 schools to fully integrate as part of their *Year for Wilderness* to include overnight trips for students into wilderness
- Proposal for a *WI Train-the-Trainer Workshop* developed to meet ever increasing national demand to reach an additional 1,260 teachers and 25,200 students in FY13.



The 50th anniversary of America's Wilderness Act is in 2014. The interagency Arthur Carhart National Wilderness Training Center is uniquely positioned to capitalize on this milestone. With support, we can conduct hundreds of *WI* teacher workshops all over the country reaching thousands of students with holistic, place based outdoor learning and adventures that promote meaningful and culturally sensitive connections between public and tribal lands and schools.

To learn more about the *Outdoor Explorers Mentoring Program* or about *Wilderness Investigations*, contact:
Steve Archibald, Wilderness Education & Outreach Specialist,
srarchibald@fs.fed.us, 406-243-4653 – OR - Connie G. Myers,
Director, cgmymers@fs.fed.us, 406-243-4654

Funding Sources for Youth Wilderness Education

There is no consistent agency commitment to wilderness education funding that is sufficient for the need. Consequently, youth wilderness education programs will only succeed as long as employees and partners are resourceful in securing funds. To that end, this section lists potential sources of grant funding and examines two topical grant programs in terms of what programs have received funding.

The grant sites listed contain a very wide range of grants with an environmental education focus. Few, if any, have a focus on wilderness education; however most are applicable toward efforts to promote wilderness awareness in youth. The specific grant programs studied in detail are America's Great Outdoor: Developing the Next Generation of Conservationists and More Kids in the Woods.

Sites listing Multiple Grant Opportunities

The sites listed below afford numerous grant opportunities. Wilderness educators should be able to find multiple opportunities for grants that support any valid endeavor. Note that some sites are more current than others.

[Captain Planet Foundation](#)

1. Grants are made for activities that conform to the mission of the Captain Planet Foundation which is to: promote and support high-quality educational programs that enable children and youth to understand and appreciate our world through learning experiences that engage them in active, hands-on projects to improve the environment in their schools and communities.
2. All applicant organizations or sponsoring agencies must be exempt from federal taxation under the Internal Revenue Code Section 501, in order to be eligible for funding (this includes most schools and non-profit organizations).
3. The Captain Planet Foundation primarily makes grants to U.S.-based schools and organizations with an annual operating budget of less than \$3 million.
4. Preferential consideration is given to requests seeking seed funding of \$500 or less and to applicants who have secured at least 50% matching or in-kind funding for their projects. (Projects with matching funds or in-kind support are given priority because external funding is a good indicator of the potential for long-term sustainability of the activities.) Captain Planet Foundation will on occasion consider grants up to \$2,500.
5. Deadlines: May 31 – September 30 – January 15

[Cyber-Sierra's Conservation Grant Center page](#)

1. This site lists a broad sample of grant programs and also contains more refined links such as "tribes," "rural," "by state" and more.
2. This site is similar to this document in that it lists conservation grant sources - more than are listed here.

[Environmental Protection Agency Environmental Education Grants page](#)

1. This webpage is updated periodically and should be revisited to see if new material has been posted. It does contain useful contacts and links.
2. It has a notice that 2013 grants were due December 12, 2012 and that projects should start no later than March 11, 2013.

[Foundation Center](#)

1. Established in 1956, the Foundation Center is the leading source of information about philanthropy worldwide. Through data, analysis, and training, it connects people who want to change the world to the resources they need to succeed. The Center maintains the most comprehensive database on U.S. and, increasingly, global grantmakers and their grants — a robust, accessible knowledge bank for the sector.
2. Maintains unique databases of information on the nearly 100,000 foundations, corporate donors, and grantmaking public charities in the U.S. and 2.1 million of their recent grants.

[Fundsnet Services page](#)

1. The [Environment & Conservation Grants page](#) includes quite a few pages of grant programs, including many by groups that may be traditionally overlooked such as oil companies, software makers and an array of foundations.

[Grants.gov](#)

1. This source includes grants available for government organizations, educational organizations, public housing organizations, non-profit organizations, for-profit organizations, small businesses and individuals.
2. The [Browse by category page](#) includes Natural Resources and Environment as areas where grants are available.
Note: click on “Sort by Close Date” to review the most current opportunities.

[GrantStation](#)

1. GrantStation is an online funding resource for organizations seeking grants throughout the world.
2. Full access requires paid membership. There is limited access for free.

[Mt Baker – Snoqualmie National Forest Partnership & Grants page](#)

1. Includes calendar of grant deadlines.
2. Lists dozens of grants in alphabetical order.
3. Also lists funders who accept proposals year-round.

[National Environmental Education Foundation page](#)

1. The homepage has some grant information.

2. The [Grants & Awards page](#) has even more info on current grant opportunities.

National Fish & Wildlife Foundation

1. The [Grants Program link](#) serves as a gateway to many programs supported by NFWF.
2. The [NFWF conservation programs link](#) under the above Grants Program Link is a good place to look at current proposals.

National Forest Foundation page

1. The [NFF Grants Program page](#) is a great starting place for the various grant opportunities supporting national forest and grassland stewardship.
2. The Award Program Continuum Chart linked [at the bottom of this page](#) provides an overview of established NFF programs, their focus and their beneficiaries.

North American Association for Environmental Education Blog Posts on Grants

1. Includes a list of grants, courses, camps and conventions focused on environmental education. This site might not be regularly updated.

USA.gov for Non-Profits

1. Links to sources for grants from federal sources, including the Environmental Protection Agency, the Department of Education, the Department of Health and Human Services.
2. Also links to the [Save America's Treasures grant program](#) which awards grants to Federal, state, local, and tribal government entities, and non-profit organizations through a competitive matching-grant program, administered by the National Park Service in partnership with the National Endowment for the Arts, the National Endowment for the Humanities, the Institute of Museum and Library Services and the President's Committee on the Arts and the Humanities.

Specific Grants

America's Great Outdoor: Developing the Next Generation of Conservationists

Grant Administrator:

National Fish and Wildlife Foundation

Program Overview:

The America's Great Outdoors: Developing the Next Generation of Conservationists will leverage federal dollars with additional contributions from corporations, foundations and other non-federal sources to provide critical financial support for new conservation job training programs. The initiative is modeled on existing successful programs, such as Federal Youth Conservation Corps and Public Lands Corps, to achieve both work and environmental learning goals through hands-on implementation of habitat restoration, assessment, monitoring, and other conservation related projects. This new program also addresses an urgent need to put young people, particularly urban and minority youth,

back in touch with the natural world which has been shown to be a valuable way to improve academic performance, problem-solving skills, and mental and physical health.

Geographic Focus:

Nationwide with an emphasis on projects located on or directly benefitting BLM lands and/or National Forests and National Grasslands administered by the US Forest Service.

Funding Goals & Objectives:

The goal of Connecting Youth to the Outdoors is to provide financial support for innovative youth employment opportunities in conservation through a competitive grant program to achieve the following objectives:

- Innovative full-time or part-time conservation job opportunities that include conservation education for young people, particularly urban and minority youth;
- Hands-on implementation of on-the-ground restoration, stewardship, monitoring, and other conservation related projects to benefit BLM and/or FS lands and adjacent areas;
- Partnership building with diverse entities including corporations, state and local agencies, and foundations to leverage federal dollars awarded with non-federal contributions to the project;
- Increased mentorship, field internship, and training opportunities for youth with natural resource professionals.

The most competitive proposals will include:

- Nexus with a NFWF focal area, America's Great Outdoors initiative priority or signature project, or direct partnership and coordination with local BLM or FS units;
- Quantifiable and meaningful conservation outcomes (native fish focused stream restoration, species focused landscape restoration, invasive species removal, native plant restoration, wildlife surveys/assessments, project monitoring, trail restoration, etc);
- Quantifiable job creation (full-time and/or part-time) numbers
- Quantifiable and meaningful conservation education outcomes
- Plans for long-term sustainability of the project;
- Diverse partner collaboration and support.

Eligible Applicants:

Non-profit organizations, government agencies, academic institutions, tribal groups

Total Funds Available:

\$1.4 million for 2013

Typical Grant Size:

\$40,000 - \$100,000

Grant Period:

Project may extend 6-18 months

Matching Requirement:

A minimum 1:1 match of non-federal cash and/or in-kind contribution is required and higher match ratios are preferred. Partnerships with corporations and foundations are strongly encouraged. Amount and diversity of matching funds will be given consideration as part of recommended awards.

Timeline:

Full Proposals Due: Friday, January 21, 2013 (received by 11:59 p.m. Eastern Time)

Grant Awards Announced: Early April 2013

Application Process:

When you are ready to begin the application process, [go to www.nfwf.org/Easygrants](http://www.nfwf.org/Easygrants) to register in our Easygrants online system (if you are already a registered user, use your existing login). Enter your applicant information and then select America's Great Outdoors: Connecting Youth to the Outdoors from the list of programs and follow the instructions. Once you get started, you may save your application in progress and return another time to complete and submit it.

Applicants are encouraged to contact the NFWF staff representative to discuss potential projects prior to applying. Applicants are also encouraged to work with BLM and/or FS field staff when developing proposals to ensure coordination with existing agency programs and activities.

Staff Representative:

Claire Thorp

Assistant Director, Southwestern Partnership Office

claire.thorp@nfwf.org

Related Information:Connecting Youth to the Outdoors: 2011 Pilot Projects

Three pilot projects from around the country were identified for initial support based on the public-private partnerships that were developed, the connection to BLM and/or FS lands and programs, and their ability to serve as examples for the types of projects that will be competitive through this solicitation. Funding for these projects is independent of the funding available through this RFP. The three pilot projects are as follows:

1. Maryland Department of Natural Resources: Potomac River Conservation Job Training

The Maryland Department of Natural Resources, in partnership with the BLM, will expand the Maryland Conservation Corps (MCC) and the Civic Justice Corps (CJC) and involve students and young adults in conservation projects along the Potomac River at Douglas Point. Participants will conduct shoreline restoration, tree plantings, and invasive plant removal activities, participate in the planning and design of the Captain John Smith Chesapeake Trail, and be guided and instructed by professionals in park planning and natural resource restoration science. The project includes a large volunteer restoration day.

2. University of Alaska: Alaska Native Science & Engineering Program

The University of Alaska, together with the BLM and FS, a local foundation and several corporations, will expand the Alaska Native Science & Engineering Program to encourage high school and college age Alaska Native youth to pursue conservation careers via mentorship programs and hands-on internship opportunities. Students will be teamed with practicing conservation professionals as field assistants for tree plantings and riparian/wetland restoration, shoreline restoration, fish sampling surveys, monitoring, and invasive plant removal projects and learn about careers available in natural resources management including administrative, economic financial and science based jobs.

3. Los Angeles Conservation Corps: Promoting Careers in Conservation in Southern California

In partnership with Southern California Edison, the BLM and FS, the Los Angeles Conservation Corps will provide opportunities for at-risk youth from the Los Angeles area to learn about conservation and career opportunities through L.A. Conservation Corps's Young Adult Corps Program. Participants will assist with the removal of invasive species and planting of native species. Projects will occur on the San Bernardino and Angeles National Forests and BLM preserves within the Coachella Valley in Southern California.

More Kids in the Woods (MKIW)

More Kids in the Woods is another popular program that includes grant opportunities. In order to help prospective applicants increase their chances of success, an assessment of common themes from funded programs in 2010 and a list of the programs funded for 2012 follow below.

Assessment: 2010 More Kids in the Woods (MKIW) Projects Funded for \$25,000 or More:

The following assessment of 2010 MKIW Projects Funded for \$25,000 or More was conducted by a veteran leader of interpretation – conservation education programs. It may offer helpful insights for those considering applying for MKIW grants.

Conclusions:

1. Every program had more money in partner contributions than in MKiW funding.
2. Every program had some Forest Service funding. Judges may have considered “If a unit does not care enough to invest some of its own budget into the program, then it must not be that important.”
3. Every program involved some or all of the participants in programs of significant length. It was hard to tease out exact number of hours, but it looked like every child was involved at least 6 or 8 hours, and some were involved for more than 10 days.
4. All reached 250 or more children. This is the one condition that would be hard to meet in many small communities; thinking though in terms of cost per child leads to a useful guideline: generally, these programs did not cost more than \$100 per child. That would probably be a good parameter to follow.
5. Instructions said proposals to reach children ages 6-12 would receive 5 extra points. Of the top nine, five did that. That means you might get funding if you don’t say what age group you are reaching or say you are going for a different age group, but you better have a proposal that is mighty strong in other ways.
6. Most programs reached underserved children.
7. All had a plan for continuation without MKiW funding, and most plans were strong.
8. All had a plan for evaluation, and most plans for evaluation were strong.
9. All had strong partnerships.
10. Most programs were multi-faceted, including 2-6 different program elements.
11. Programs that were ongoing, had existing partnerships, agreements and some funding in the past had an extra advantage. Brand new programs were often at a disadvantage.
12. Many had innovative approaches, for example:

#1 Having a shared camp for valley students and reservation students

#2 Training the adults as naturalists and science teachers

#4 “Forest interface” sites operated by partners. Teachers and museum workers trained.

#6 Youth team paid to design and build edible forest in a Richmond park

Etc.

For more detailed information, see the following chart:

2010 MKiW Projects Funded for \$25,000 or More

	MKiW \$	Partners \$	USFS \$	# of Kids	Age	Audience	# of partners	Program
1. Earth Stewardship- Bitter Root NF	39,055	77,490	5,300	420	7 th graders	400 + from 5 valley schools, 20+ from Flathead Indian Reservation	10	Valley students - 7 EE lessons, 2 stewardship projects, 2 cultural perspective lessons. Flathead students- 2 geog/cultural perspective lessons. 30-40 students from valley schools and the reservation - summer cross cultural camp. Hire half time proj coord. Good evaluation tools, good plan for continuation without MKiW.
2. 4-Mile Ranch – San Juan NF	25,000	27,883	2,000	800	K-4	High # of Latino, Native American, and low-income students; Adult Educators	8+	Classroom and field sessions for children. Volunteer Educators Program trains adults as naturalists and science teachers. Good evaluation tools, good plan for continuation without MKiW.
3. Sci at the Station - RMRS	28,965	119,895	5,500	3,000	5-18	Socially and economically diverse urban kids.	7+	4-8, one-day long programs for 40 students; one multi-day camping trip for 25-30 students each month. Hiring full-time coordinator. Good evaluation tools, good plan for continuation without MKiW.
4. More Kids in Woods – Caribou Targhee NF	48,000	66,585	15,500	225		Target: 115 under-served Latino and home-schooled children	9	Variety of ed programs at “Forest Interface Sites-“ (museums, parks, ed centers, backyards). Teachers and Museum workers trained to incorporate MKiW philosophy. Series of 1-10 day long summer classes targeting specific youth and adult audiences. Good evaluation tools, good plan for continuation without MKiW.
5. Nat. Resources Sci Camp – Pac SW	30,000	36,200	16,500	490	6-14	6-14 yr olds	12+	Series of 14, week-long summer day camps. Evaluation. Good plan for continuation without MKiW
6. Richmond Edible Forest – Pac SW RS	40,000	91,000	5,200	490 – 700	6-19	Inner-city kids – Richmond, CA	6	Youth team will design and install one pilot edible forest in a Richmond park, engage youth in ed programs on forest ecology, botany, nutrition, create materials so other communities can have edible forests. Good evaluation tools.
7. Ryan Meadow – Deschutes NF	40,000	132,600	41,800	500		Targeting: Latino students; students w/disabilities, and at-risk youth	18	Wetland restoration, ecosystem monitoring , conservation ed – over 3 yr period, w/traditional school curriculum, field trips, community ed outreach, youth conservation work projects. Good evaluation tools. Plan for continuation without MKiW.
8. Greenway Trust –Mt Baker-Snoqualmie NF	26,000	64,050	3,400	2,500	4 th -12 th grade	Kids	14+	Ongoing program. Year-round series of land stewardship and ed projects. Curricula for 5 th -10 th graders in more than 100 classrooms. 5-day summer camps. Youth leadership/apprenticeships. Good evaluation tools, good plan for continuation without MKiW.
9. Project Wild – NFs in Florida	45,000	85,000	10,000	1,000		Includes 250 underserved youth	10	Tie together existing EE efforts of many agencies/organizations by providing introductory ed component in schools and CE experience at a youth conservation center. 20 groups participate in a 1-day educational workshop and a 1-day conservation field day. Good evaluation.



NEWS RELEASE

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Contact:
Forest Service Press Office (202) 205-1134

USDA Forest Service Makes \$1 Million Commitment to Get Kids Outdoors
Agency conservation education grants will benefit children's projects across 18 states

WASHINGTON, March 2, 2012—Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack today announced USDA's continuing commitment to get kids outdoors and connected to the natural world around them through \$1 million in cost-share funding from the U.S. Forest Service to enhance children's programs in 18 states. Vilsack will highlight the announcement later today at the Interior Department during the White House conference, *Growing America's Outdoor Heritage and Economy*, which emphasizes the link between conservation and strong local economies through tourism, outdoor recreation, and healthy lands, waters and wildlife. The conference has attracted boaters, hunters, anglers, farmers, ranchers, land conservationists, historic preservationists, outdoor recreationists, small business owners, local governments, tribal leaders and others from across the 50 United States to discuss ways to spur and support successful conservation projects around the nation.

The Forest Service grants align with President Obama's America's Great Outdoors and First Lady Michelle Obama's *Let's Move!* Initiatives. America's Great Outdoors seeks to engage the public to work together to conserve and restore our lands and to connect to the outdoors. *Let's Move!* focuses on solving the problem of childhood obesity, a segment of which aims to improve physical and mental health through outdoor activities.

"These programs provide an essential connection to our great outdoors, which we hope can be a key part of growing up for children from all walks of life," said Vilsack. "We need kids to experience the wonders of the great outdoors and take ownership of the future of natural resources. Today's children are tomorrow's stewards of the land."

The funding will be distributed to the agency's *More Kids in the Woods and Children's Forests* programs. Augmented by partnership money or in-kind donations, the funding will benefit existing programs or act as seed money for new ones that help kids explore their role in natural resources. Twenty-three of the grants will go toward *More Kids in the Woods* projects and eight will go toward the development or expansion of *Children's Forests*.

"These grants strengthen our bonds with communities with a bottom line goal of getting kids to explore and appreciate America's great outdoors," said US Forest Service Chief Tom Tidwell. "There are few things more gratifying for me than seeing our youth gain an appreciation for the amazing landscapes we have in this country."

More Kids in the Woods projects include activities and programs designed to spark curiosity about nature and promote learning. This is a cost-share program where thousands of partners contribute their time, energy and resources to help connect kids and families with the natural world.

Children's Forests differ in that they are centered around developed outdoor spaces on national or state

forests, in urban parks or at schools. The core mission of a Children's Forest is to get young people to take a leadership role in forest management by giving them a voice in caring for the land.

The 2012 More Kids in the Woods grants awarded to:

More Kids in the Central Alabama Woods, National Forests in Alabama: The grant will help expand conservation education programs in central Alabama by using the Alabama Nature Center facility and staff to promote the importance of national forests to students from a three-county area. The proposed project will engage approximately 7,500 youth through meaningful hands-on experiences. \$25,000

Yakutat Future Scientists, Tongass National Forest, Alaska: The purpose of this project is to create a community based environmental education program in which local students participate with biological research and restoration occurring in Yakutat City and Borough. Yakutat is a small isolated village in Southeast Alaska, where the economy and way of life are entirely dependent on the area's natural resources. \$9,500

Angoon Outdoor Skills Initiative, Tongass National Forest, Alaska: The project is aimed at engaging youth and families in outdoor nature-based activities in a remote Alaska Native community. The program will be used as a model for other outdoor programs in rural Alaska Native villages. \$33,810

Yellow Belly Ponderosa Performance Outreach, Kaibab National Forest, Arizona: Reaching out to underserved kids and their families, this program provides a traveling show about forest health, stewardship and the value of science for elementary schools throughout northern Arizona. Included are lessons on fire and flooding safety. Targeted audience includes more than 4,000 elementary students from Hopi, Navajo, Yavapai Apache, Kaibab Paiute, Havasupai and/or Hualapai tribes adjacent to the Kaibab and Coconino National Forests. \$17,994

Big Bear Discovery Center's Nature Explore Classroom, San Bernardino National Forest, California: The project will engage underserved youth ages 6 to 12 of non-traditional and diverse backgrounds in the development of a Nature Explore Classroom at the Big Bear Discovery Center. Workshops will be designed through a partnership with the San Bernardino National Forest Association. Once implemented, the classroom will provide formal environmental education programs for 2,000 students and reach up to 250,000 visitors annually. \$25,000

A Century of Leaders: Invoking the Vision of Teddy Roosevelt, Sequoia National Forest, California: The overarching purpose of this program is to help children in kindergarten to eighth grade develop a sense of place and connect with nature. The target population is the students at a new public school in Lindsay, located in one of the state's poorest areas, named after Theodore Roosevelt. In spite of the proximity to the national forest, surveys indicate that 95 percent of children here have no experience in the forest. \$48,000

Stormwater Habitat Education Development, or WaterSHED, Rocky Mountain Research Station and Arapaho-Roosevelt National Forest, Colorado: WaterSHED promotes stewardship of the Poudre River watershed by teaching kids how land use affects water quality. The program includes teacher training and direct student interaction. Teachers are trained in wetland studies, water chemistry, and stream ecology. \$8,420

Boise Youth Engagement in Nature, Boise National Forest, Idaho: The program will engage thousands of underserved youth in experiences on the forest that focus on restoring the watershed habitat. Vital fisheries habitat degraded by historic mining will be restored while students gain first-hand experience of restoration programs. \$32,400

Mountains to Meadows: The Boulder Creek Study, Payette National Forest, Idaho: The study builds upon existing partnerships and activities to strengthen environmental literacy and watershed stewardship among underserved students in rural Valley County, Idaho. Trout Unlimited will manage the project and the

majority of funds will be used for educational supplies. Students will investigate stream health and restoration while improving their science, math and technology skills as they work alongside Forest Service, Fish and Game and Idaho Department of Environmental Quality professionals. \$14,425

Our LAND – Learn, Admire, Nurture, Dream, Forest Service Regional Office and the Huron-Manistee and Hiawatha National Forests, Michigan: The project will reach 250 underserved fifth and sixth grade students at 10 schools in Detroit. Activities combine yearlong, multi-session classroom lessons, stewardship activities, and field experiences at Rouge Park, Detroit's largest park. The goal of Our LAND is to help develop connections between Detroit youth and natural areas. \$50,000

Pioneering Discoveries: A Natural and Cultural Resources Field Camp for Tribal High School Students, Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest, Montana: The curriculum places equal emphasis on outdoor experience, natural resources, and expanding cultural heritage awareness. The curriculum will be incorporated into high school science classes with lesson plans involving both in-field data collection and classroom laboratory analysis. Lesson plans will also highlight career opportunities in resource management and a cultural heritage element that will assist schools in meeting Montana's Indian Education for All Act. \$10,000

Discovering Flathead's Feathered Friends, Enhancing Schoolyard and National Forest Habitat, Flathead National Forest, Montana: This year's funding will support expansion of a school-based native bird garden and the development of native plant gardens at three additional low-income elementary/middle schools, including curriculum-based lessons and materials, and class field trips to the forest to participate in wildlife surveys, planting, wildlife observations, signing and education. \$16,000

Kids in the Headwaters, Lolo National Forest, Montana: The project, through a partnership with the Watershed Education Network, will expand current stream monitoring protocols by establishing gauging stations at three of the sites on the forest. Data from these stations will educate students about stream flow and other measures of water quality. The seasonal stream monitoring will give students the opportunity to collect field data that will ultimately yield data sets that can be incorporated into the classroom science curriculum. \$13,500

Get Outdoors With Conservation, Climate & Careers!, Nebraska National Forests and Grasslands, Nebraska: By creating the Outdoor Learning Center and weather station at Chadron State College, this project dramatically increases opportunities and capacity to get students outdoors and involved in science and environmental activities. The Learning Center includes full eco-scape, wildlife areas, on-line climate tools, a rain garden and a prescribed burn area. \$49,500

Children's Water Festival Enhancement Project, Gila National Forest, New Mexico: The Gila Conservation Education Center partners with the Gila National Forest to provide science education programs on the forest. Since 2004, they have hosted a Children's Water Festival for local fourth and fifth graders. However, due to expense of the project, only students from one urban school district can be served. The project will now reach 820 underserved youth, adding three participating school systems and four new collaborating partners. \$15,626

Connecting Kids to the River Forest, Santa Fe National Forest, New Mexico: Focusing on the forest and uplands at Buckman, a historic railway town on lands managed by the Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management, this project involves forest restoration and a direct water diversion from the Rio Grande River. Activities include monitoring vegetation, erosion control and water quality testing. Teacher training in water quality, forest ecology, and ecological monitoring will be included. \$12,350

Stewardship in the Woods on 3 Forests, Rogue River-Siskiyou National Forest, Oregon: This is a

comprehensive outdoor education program that challenges students to think critically about conservation and sustainability. Students in the Woods will bring 600 underserved kids to their local national forest four times throughout the year to observe wildlife, work with biologists, and enjoy recreation activities. Educator Workshops will train 50 educators to independently use national forests as outdoor classrooms to meet state and national education standards and reach MKIW goals. \$47,400

Immersion in Nature, Willamette National Forest, Oregon: This program consolidates seven in-depth nature education experiences reaching urban, rural, underserved, and minority youth. The immersion will include several programs that include camping and learning about nature, participation in restoration work, outdoor education and in-classroom natural resource education. \$40,800

Partners in Education, Northern Research Station, Pennsylvania: Opportunities to experience hands-on, in-the-field research and explore forest and woodland resources are out of reach for most underserved student populations in the urbanized Philadelphia area. The Forest Service and Morris Arboretum will pilot a new school partnership model for urban forestry field experience and resource-based learning for Title 1 schools in the Philadelphia region. \$40,000

Sewee Earth Stewards, Francis Marion National Forest, South Carolina: In its 11th year, the multi-week integrated curriculum on freshwater wetlands and salt marsh includes standards-based fifth-grade lessons for the classroom, visits by educators to classes with animals, and field studies at the Sewee Center and on the forest. Since 2000, more than 5,000 students have participated in the interactive, hands-on activities, reinforcing their science standards while learning about the native habitats of the Coastal Plain of South Carolina. \$8,000

More Kids in the Pineywoods, Angelina-Sabine National Forest, Texas: This in-depth conservation education program will provide science field trips for 3,200 kindergarten to fifth-grade public school children, weekly outdoor experiences for at-risk youth, monthly field trips and outdoor activities for underserved families, and four week-long day camps for children. \$41,677

The EVOLVE Project, Uinta-Wasatch-Cache National Forest, Utah: The purpose of EVOLVE is to develop an outdoor-based career-oriented youth leadership course for ethnic American teens. The project's goals are to increase participation in outdoor recreation among ethnic American teens, foster awareness among ethnic-American families and provide access to outdoor-oriented career opportunities. The grant will provide three semester-long outdoor leadership courses for 45 teens. Participants also will engage in job-coaching, leadership training, and environmental stewardship classes. An essential element of the EVOLVE Project is job skills training and internship placement. \$17,804

National Fishing in Schools Program, Shoshone National Forest, Wyoming: The Shoshone National Forest will partner with Wyoming Game and Fish Department, Trout Unlimited, and Fremont and Park County school districts for the pilot year of the National Fishing in Schools Program. The program educates students about fish, insects, aquatic environment, resource stewardship and conservation using fishing as the instructional tool. \$6,800

The 2012 CHILDREN'S FOREST GRANTS awardees:

Integrated Assessment of Chugach Children's Forest Programs, Chugach National Forest, Alaska: The Chugach Children's Forest enters into its fourth year of innovative programming engaging youth and families in the outdoor environment of South Central Alaska. Programs have been integrated into a network of "stepping-stone" opportunities, with an aim toward developing a lifelong stewardship ethic for America's public lands. This joint proposal includes the Chugach and three of Alaska's leading educational institutions:

Alaska Pacific University, University of Alaska, Anchorage and Alaska Geographic. \$43,000

Pope-Baldwin Children's Forest, Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit, Pope-Baldwin Recreation Area, California: The children's forest will include the Tallac Historic Site and Taylor Creek Visitor Complex in South Lake Tahoe and engage students in educational programs, service learning projects, and outdoor experiences that connect local youth to the natural world. Emphasis areas include the expansion of the Washoe Tending and Gathering Garden and education of local students on ecosystem health and land management conservation programs. \$40,815

Atlanta Children's Forest Network, Forest Service Southern Region Office, Georgia: Offering greater opportunities to get families active in nature, the network will put emphasis on underserved communities and introduce them to publicly-owned forested areas in their neighborhoods. Creating the network will allow partners to expand existing urban forestry education and stewardship programs at underutilized parks and nature preserves and also introduce information about national forests within a two hour drive of Atlanta. \$80,000

Children's Forest Community Partnership, Payette National Forest, Idaho: The partnership includes Trout Unlimited and other organizations, promotes existing and new youth projects in the vicinity of McCall, Idaho. Forest and partner programs such as stream investigations, service learning projects, riparian restoration, conservation field days, trout in the classroom and native plant propagation will be unified under the Children's Forest program. \$48,800

The Children's Bosque, Albuquerque, N.M.: The Forest Service's Southwest Regional Office, National Hispanic Culture Center and Coronado Elementary School will designate 20 acres of forest along the Rio Grande for the Children's Bosque. The Bosque (Spanish for forest), includes the riparian cottonwood forest along the river and will serve as an outdoor destination for children and families. The goal of the Children's Bosque is to reconnect underserved, urban youth and families to healthy, outdoor activities within walking distance from their home or school in a way that is culturally relevant and meaningful. \$51,500

Upper Columbia Children's Forest, Colville National Forest, Washington: The Upper Columbia Children's Forest will reach beyond forest boundaries to serve the communities of Stevens, Ferry and Pend Oreille counties in Washington. The Children's Forest and matching funds will provide seed money for a Stevens County Conservation District Conservation Educator, who will help identify and develop cohesive conservation themes over the years that are consistent with school curricula and state standards. \$45,500

Children's Forest Environmental Literacy Model, Medicine Bow-Routt National Forests, Colorado: This unique project builds upon the 19-year partnership between the Forest Service and the Yampatika School District and joins with the Colorado Alliance for Environmental Education to develop a literacy model that is expected to be replicated across Colorado's rural communities. The program is innovative in that existing field and in-class programs are integrated into the school curriculum, institutionalizing these opportunities throughout three school districts. The money awarded the program will expand its reach from three to five school districts and from 750 to nearly 1,000 students. \$47,000

Children's Forest in the City, Forest Service Eastern Region, Milwaukee, Wis.: The Milwaukee Rotary Centennial arboretum will be created in the heart of Milwaukee. The 40-acre space includes a two-mile trail loop with wheelchair access to the Milwaukee River. Children's kiosks, nature play areas, and sensory gardens will give young people a rare opportunity to connect with nature in an urban setting. More than 100,000 people live within a two-mile radius of the planned arboretum. \$50,000

The mission of the [U.S. Forest Service](#) is to sustain the health, diversity, and productivity of the nation's forests and grasslands to meet the needs of present and future generations. Recreational activities on our lands

contribute \$14.5 billion annually to the U.S. economy. The agency manages 193 million acres of public land, provides assistance to state and private landowners, and maintains the largest forestry research organization in the world.

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Challenges Faced in Promoting Wilderness Awareness in Youth

The following challenges have been compiled by input from professional wilderness educators and leaders. They run the gamut from conventional longstanding issues to emergent modern ones. Some of the challenges presented are specific to wilderness education, some to educating youth and some to wilderness education for youth. The challenges are not ranked or listed in any particular order; indeed, it seems that any one of the challenges could prove to be the most formidable on a given day. Lastly, it must be acknowledged that the challenges are rarely - if ever - faced individually but rather often overlap in an exacerbating manner.

These challenges have been compiled not to present the myriad hurdles surrounding wilderness education, but as a collection of lessons learned from subject matter experts. They have been gathered so that wilderness educators may design tomorrow's programs in such a way that these challenges are avoided or abated. The most robust wilderness education initiatives will be insulated from the difficulties described and will be resilient enough to adapt as new impediments arise.

Wilderness is Not Understood by the Agencies Administering It

Wilderness is an outlier designation to many. It is an alien concept to have a landscape where we do not develop it or exploit it, or at least actively manage the wildlife and natural processes. Wilderness is viewed as a passing social construct theme (e.g. 50th anniversary of the Wilderness Act), not as an ecological long-term benefit by some. In this context, it is near-impossible to receive steady and sufficient resources for educating youth as to its value.

Need for Greater Supervision = Demand for More Staff for Youth Programs

In the words of a professional wilderness educator:

Bringing 20 youth into the wilderness requires much more supervision than bringing 20 adults into the wilderness. Youth programs require more staff, which many programs simply do not have or cannot afford to spare for such non-priority work. This is a big deal and is the reason that a lot of non-wilderness people do not take kids out to the wilderness (they do not consider themselves qualified to do so). The additional supervision is not merely a numbers issue, but a quality issue: these people [supervisors] must be trained.

Overbearing Combination of Agency Safety Culture & Litigious Society

Before a wilderness awareness endeavor with youth can be realized, everything must be supremely-well documented: training; planning; medical/evacuation plan/supplies; safety meetings; gear; schedule; back-up plans and emergency contacts. The litany of requirements is a substantial time commitment and impedes even the most steadfast wilderness educators.

Even if diligent preparations are made, insurance requirements may still diminish the quality of the experience. One example given was a school's liability insurance requirement that kids collecting insect specimens around a pond must be in water below their knees. While that may serve as a general good practice, the fact that insurance does not cover instances when children step in over their knees may deter some from having an outing in the first place. This example also reaffirms the point covered in the first challenge: youth outings require more supervision.

While society seeks to mitigate for and insure against all misfortune, wilderness is purposefully managed to be an undeveloped place where visitors benefit by facing risk and challenge. It would be difficult to overstate how the tension between these two paradigms overshadows wilderness awareness endeavors, especially those addressing youth.

Rigidity in Adhering to State Standards

The rise in standardized testing has promulgated evermore prescriptive curricula which require teachers to match all instruction to specific testable objectives. This has crimped the latitude teachers have in terms of affording opportunities for their students to engage in wilderness lessons. Wilderness lessons can still be done, but the lesson must be conformed to a standard or a standard must be found which can be interpreted as allowing for wilderness awareness. This barrier is not insurmountable but it must be hurdled, and in conjunction with other barriers, it may be disincentive enough to dissuade wilderness educational efforts.

Kids Disconnected from Nature More than Ever

These days it is difficult for educators to connect with kids in the first place, let alone bring the kids to a place (physically and/or mentally) where they can appreciate wilderness. We need to convince ourselves that we are doing kids a favor in unplugging them for a while. We also need to find ways to relate to the children and to take them on a journey toward wilderness appreciation, even if only metaphorically.

Flavor-of-the-Month Approach to Popular Educational Programs

There are frequent changes in what education/outreach programs resonate at the Department level and come funded or offer funding. These frequent changes are exacerbated by a lack of direct communication to the field that identifies said changes and reasonably foreseeable shifts in emphasis. Such communication is critical so that field-level staff can repackage projects in order to be competitive for available funding.

Lack of Overall Staff Dedicated to Promoting Wilderness Awareness

For the 36,000,000+ acres of wilderness managed by the US Forest Service, we have only two positions that are 100% dedicated to promoting wilderness awareness: the Arthur Carhart Forest Service representative and the Arthur Carhart Education and Outreach Specialist. The latter is a term position that may or may not be renewed; even its short term existence is tenuous as the position is viewed as a discretionary project/program and not as nondiscretionary unit funding.

There are others who conduct wilderness awareness programs; however, this is done in addition to other duties and, as noted below, the other duties take priority. The scarcity of dedicated wilderness education professionals means that the employees engaged in programming have few resources to provide support when developing, implementing and evaluating their programs. Because they are not primarily educators these employees are often not aware that there are state, regional, and national environmental education and interpretive associations that can help agency folks link up with valuable resources outside the agency. Inefficiencies are the result. Just as Forest Service employees engage in “teach the teacher” type programs, the agency lacks someone who can “educate the educator” and help wilderness managers pair their subject knowledge with sound educational theory and available resources.

Promoting Wilderness Education is not Specifically Prioritized/Funded

There is no commitment to consistent wilderness education funding. There is little interpretive and conservation education funding within our agency and far less for wilderness education. With the rise of auditable accountability, only those projects that are funded are prioritized. And only priority projects are staffed. Another way of summarizing this would be: Considering that the agency’s priorities are measured by its funding, wilderness education ranks amongst the lowest priorities.

Lack of a Truly Interagency Approach to Wilderness Education and Outreach

A truly interagency approach to wilderness education and outreach has not been achieved on a sustained basis. Some agencies seem to be interested only if their agency is credited and/or their lands are visited. Where there have been interagency efforts and positions, consistent funding and support from all sides has been the exception and not the rule – if it has ever been achieved. This uncertainty, or perhaps better put, this certainty of wavering support, undermines any chance to realize the full potential of an interagency approach. Too much time will be dedicated to seeking funding, trying to secure commitment from un-committing agencies and hedging for when things fall apart rather than on realizing top-notch education programs.

Lack of Familiarity with Learning Theory and Effective Education Methods

There is no denying that not all personnel with wilderness experience are good teachers or trainers. Many agency staff that are currently involved in wilderness education efforts have little if any training in the principles of learning and teaching. These types of knowledge, skills, and abilities are not formally valued for agency positions with but a few exceptions, notably interpretive and conservation education positions. The vast majority of agency personnel engaged in wilderness education programming are doing so as a collateral duty without any specialized training. The issue is best expressed by a professor with over thirty years experience conducting wilderness education:

In my experiences working with FS folks over the years to deliver wilderness education, few are actually trained as educators. With an education degree I wouldn't qualify for jobs in the 401 series where most wilderness management jobs are. Perhaps you need to look at other job series so that educators or interpreters WOULD qualify for federal jobs to deliver wilderness education.

As trained educators, we know what message is appropriate for each audience and setting, and know how to evaluate the effectiveness of educational programs. More often than not, agency people I've worked with don't know what message or content is appropriate for different ages or audiences. There are marked differences in what works with 1st graders, 4th graders, middle-schoolers, college students, senior citizens, or the general public. The focus on elementary students shouldn't be JUST 6th graders. You can't expect a trained forester to know how to be an effective educator, nor can you expect a trained educator to be an effective forester. There is common misperception that "anyone can teach" but that is not the case. Otherwise teachers wouldn't be required to get a specialized college degree in education or interpretation.

Non-wilderness Staff who Could and Should Promote Wilderness Awareness are not Required or Trained to do so

The 10-Year Wilderness Stewardship Challenge has done a good job of integrating wilderness management across program areas such as Fire, Air, Botany, Recreation and Special Uses. But wilderness education efforts still largely fall on wilderness rangers. Put another way: all programs that are part and parcel of integrated wilderness management are not engaged in wilderness education. Just as all resource areas are called to the interdisciplinary table when a wilderness project needs to be analyzed, the responsibility for raising wilderness awareness is shared by all resource areas that have stewardship responsibilities in wilderness. This duty is not readily recognized as there is no funded support or accountability in this regard.

The Number of Wilderness Rangers Who Strive to Promote Wilderness Awareness is Dwindling

As measured by Element 10 (Baseline Workforce) of the 10-Year Wilderness Stewardship Challenge, the trend in wilderness program staffing is well below what is needed and either declining further or flat-lining. Some of the best educators are those in the temporary field positions that we are cutting first.

Promoting Wilderness Awareness is Sidelined by Other Duties

As agency budgets have declined, the remaining staff have been tasked with a larger number of duties and responsibilities. As a result it becomes more difficult to engage agency staff in wilderness awareness programs because they are not the targets that they are required to meet.

The Effort to Find Non-agency Funding for Wilderness Education Programs is Daunting

As promoting wilderness awareness is not an agency priority in terms of having dedicated funding, those who seek to implement programs often have to write grants for themselves and/or for non-profit partners. Having to write grants is a substantial barrier in that it takes a lot of time and effort. The application process is competitive and requires a thorough and professional effort to have any chance of procuring funds. It may be difficult to sustain grant-supported projects across federal fiscal years when key positions and/or funds are not certain to be continued.

Key Audiences are Not Being Reached

In the words of an experienced wilderness education professor:

There needs to be a qualified wilderness educator for EACH region of the Forest Service and the target audiences need to be focused in urban centers like Detroit, Pittsburg, Los Angeles, Boston, and places where wilderness is NOT on anyone's radar screen. As educators we need to help people of all ages, income levels, and ethnic backgrounds to understand the importance of Wilderness.

The most common types of wilderness education that currently occur are face-to-face contacts in the field or visitor center and indirect contacts through educational materials at trailheads, visitor centers, and on websites. With the exception of the content found on the internet, these efforts are largely aimed at those who have already arrived at the doorstep of wilderness. In order to change their behaviors these same visitors need to be accessed far earlier and in order to improve societal understanding of wilderness a much wider audience needs to be reached. Some of the most important audiences to target are those that would not otherwise be introduced to the values of wilderness through their family, friends or culture. Urban areas provide an obvious opportunity to reach a great number of individuals within this target audience.

Difficulty in Evaluating Success of Wilderness Awareness Programs

A small proportion of today's existing wilderness education efforts have evolved based on traditional educational design and evaluation methods are sometimes nonexistent. To complicate the matter, measuring efficacy can be an extremely complex process especially when concerned with a program's impacts on values and behaviors. The result is that our agency often focuses on the number of public contacts made as a proxy for success and views higher numbers as better (e.g. 1000 contacts is better than 100.). This is not necessarily true as quality trumps quantity when meaningful change is the objective.

Education is an investment in the future and not all meaningful efforts produce immediately measurable results. There is a faith component with this investment that abrades with our system's standard approach of How many widgets will we get with this many dollars? This fundamental difference in the way that success is evaluated must be recognized if agency support for wilderness awareness is to be acquired and maintained. Cultivating awareness can be viewed as a long-term exercise regimen seeking build up wilderness awareness muscles. It doesn't happen overnight but with steady application.

Difficulty in Using New Media

Youth are often engaged in cutting-edge social media that baffles preceding generations. Wilderness educators are challenged to keep up and offer lessons through such topical media. This situation is compounded when agency controls and low funding preclude purchasing the newest devices, and even when they are attained, educators simply lack the time to master the new technologies.

Conclusion

Wilderness youth education is both a noble and daunting undertaking. When the difficulties seem to outweigh possibilities, it is worth reflecting on the words of two individuals who dedicated their lives to expanding wilderness appreciation and who died before their legacies were fulfilled.

John Muir eloquently attested to the intrinsic value of wild nature and championed the preservation of our wilderness heritage. Muir also knew of the rightfulness of the preservation cause and of the context in which struggles to save wild nature would occur. He mused:

The battle we have fought, and are still fighting for the forests is a part of the eternal conflict between right and wrong, and we cannot expect to see the end of it. ... So we must count on watching and striving for these trees, and should always be glad to find anything so surely good and noble to strive for.

John Muir spent the last seven years of his life fighting to keep Hetch Hetchy Valley in Yosemite National Park from being dammed. Ultimately Muir lost the fight and he died soon afterward. But because he had rallied the people, the National Park Service was founded soon thereafter with a codified mission emphasizing preservation and visitor enjoyment. Today over 80 million acres are protected as National Parks and the high degree of protection allows this smallest land management agency to administer the highest amount of designated wilderness: over 43 million acres.

Howard Zahniser, chief architect of the Wilderness Act, tirelessly fought for passage of the law, even in the face of formidable odds. Despite little funding, opposition by powerful Senators, Representatives and lobbyists, the Cold War threat of nuclear annihilation, and – near the end – failing health, Zahniser remained optimistic, respectful and never ceased reaching out to allies and adversaries alike. He saw wilderness preservation not as a last chance defensive effort, but as a nascent proactive movement:

Working to preserve in perpetuity is a great inspiration. We are not fighting a rear-guard action, we are facing a frontier. We are not slowing down a force that inevitably will destroy all the wilderness there is. We are generating another force, never to be wholly spent, that, renewed generation after generation, will be always effective in preserving wilderness. We are not fighting progress. We are making it. We are not dealing with a vanishing wilderness. We are working for a wilderness forever.

Zahniser's perseverance over decades created an irrepressible upwelling of public support for wilderness. He passed away four months before the Wilderness Act was signed into law, though he knew its time had finally come. When the law passed in 1964, over 11 million acres were designated as wilderness. In the first 50 years of the law's existence, over 109 million acres of public land would be designated wilderness.

Wilderness youth education occurs in a difficult context: the struggle to preserve wilderness is unending and the challenges ever formidable. But there are upsides as well: The wilderness cause is worthy. Wilderness values resonate with the people. The legacies of dedicated wilderness champions often continue to manifest long after the champions have passed on. While our efforts as wilderness youth educators may seem inconsequential at times, we can never truly know what lasting good we affect. What we do know is that in these times of environmental crisis when there is a dire need for shared stewardship, we can have faith that our endeavors are “so surely good and noble,” a part of the epic effort to generate an inexhaustible force that will renew “generation after generation” and redefine progress as that which we preserve as “wilderness forever.”