



United States
Department of
Agriculture



Columbine Ranger District
San Juan National Forest

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Wilderness Ranger – Volunteer Position Description

Wilderness rangers are *essential* to good Wilderness management. Wilderness rangers are the primary representatives of the Forest Service in Wilderness. They educate visitors, provide first-hand knowledge of Wilderness conditions, and protect Wilderness resources using primitive skills and tools.

Duties include:

- **Visitor education/Public contacts:** Wilderness rangers educate Wilderness visitors about proper backcountry camping and traveling techniques, Wilderness regulations, and values of Wilderness. Rangers spend a lot of time responding to visitors' questions about trails, terrain, and backcountry safety.
- **Campsite cleanup:** Rangers check campsites, clean up garbage in the sites, and clean ash out of fire rings. Rangers evaluate campsites and then may use restoration techniques to reduce campsite size or eliminate sites where necessary.
- **Trail maintenance:** Wilderness rangers use hand tools to clean and build water bars and clear fallen trees out of the trail.
- **Social monitoring:** Rangers collect data of the number of people encountered on trails, large groups, and dogs. They also maintain bulletin boards and registration boxes and enter data into a computer program.
- **Observe standard safety practices** for the work of a wilderness ranger. This includes, but is not limited to the use of Personal Protective Equipment, and safe procedures to deal with sanitation, water purification, lifting, walking in rough terrain, altitude acclimatization, stream crossings, lightning, public contacts, hypothermia and stock safety.
- **Tour of duty** is 5 to 10 days, depending on the work to be done.

Working Conditions:

Rangers work in the Weminuche Wilderness of the San Juan National Forest. The Weminuche is the largest Wilderness in Colorado - the mountainous terrain is steep, rugged and high elevation. Adverse weather conditions are common. Backpacking trips usually last eight days followed by two office days and four days off. Generally rangers patrol in pairs, rotating partners with each trip. Depending on the objectives of the trip, rangers may set up a base camp for several days or they may move every day. The elevation in the Weminuche ranges from 8,000 feet above sea level in the valleys to rugged peaks exceeding 14,000 feet. Rangers generally carry packs that weigh at least 50 pounds as well as a shovel, axe or other hand tool.

Forest Service will provide:

Housing is provided in a bunkhouse and certain rules apply. A uniform and government vehicle is provided for official use. Volunteer wilderness rangers are reimbursed for food with a field per diem of \$25.00 per day for each day worked. Personal protective equipment provided by the Forest Service includes leather gloves, hard hat, safety glasses and ear plugs. Volunteer will provide long sleeve shirt, long pants and sturdy all-leather hiking boots or leather work boots that are above ankle height.

Formal training for the volunteer will include: Safe and effective visitor contacts, evaluating and cleaning campsites, identifying and removing noxious weeds, crosscut saw operation, trail maintenance and Leave No Trace techniques. Duty station is Columbine Ranger District, 367 Pearl St., Bayfield, CO 81122.

