Key Messages: 50th Anniversary of Wilderness

September 30, 2013

Background: On September 3, 1964, President Lyndon Johnson signed the Wilderness Act establishing our National Wilderness Preservation System. Efforts are underway to commemorate the 50th Anniversary of this landmark legislation throughout 2014 in ways that:

- Raise Awareness so that more people understand and appreciate wilderness, its values, and its benefits;
- Engage Youth and underserved communities; and
- Foster Wilderness Stewardship by better connecting the broad wilderness network.

The Forest Service is actively participating in *Wilderness50*—the national coalition of government agencies, organizations, and tribal and citizen groups working to commemorate 50 years of wilderness. *Wilderness50* is planning a variety of projects and events and also developing resources to assist implementation of local activities throughout the country. The *Wilderness50* logo includes the national theme: "YOURS … To Enjoy … To Protect"

To complement *Wilderness50*, the Forest Service has developed four key messages for outreach to employees, partners, and the general public:

1. The Forest Service has a proud legacy of wilderness leadership:

- We stand on the shoulders of past wilderness champions, including Aldo Leopold, Arthur Carhart, and Bob Marshall. We are proud of our Forest Service legacy as the first agency in the world to set aside land for wilderness protection—the Gila Wilderness in New Mexico in 1924.
- The Forest Service manages more wilderness units than any other federal agency (439 wilderness areas totaling over 36 million acres) and more than half of all wilderness acres outside of Alaska. We continue to be a leader in wilderness stewardship and research.

2. Let's commemorate and celebrate the 50th Anniversary of the Wilderness Act in 2014:

- The 50th Anniversary of the Wilderness Act provides an opportunity to commemorate our Forest Service legacy and celebrate the importance of its continued preservation for future generations.
- Let's celebrate wilderness together throughout 2014! Find out about activities and events in your area by visiting *www.wilderness50th.org*.

3. Wilderness is everyone's to share and enjoy:

- Wilderness benefits everyone, whether you visit a wilderness or simply appreciate the continued existence of areas where the Earth and its community of life are untrammeled (not controlled) by humans. Wilderness also provides opportunities for primitive and unconfined recreation, including hiking, horseback riding, fishing, hunting, photography, and off-trail exploration.
- Wilderness gives us time to reflect and find solitude and solace to offset the busy world around us.
- Wilderness provides clean water and air, habitat for animals, and healthy landscapes for rare and endangered species to thrive.
- Wilderness includes the traditional ancestral lands of some American Indians and Alaska Natives; these lands are often held sacred by indigenous people.
- Wilderness showcases to the world some of America's most special places and landscapes—forested mountains, alpine meadows, rock peaks above timberline, tundra, lava beds, deserts, swamps, coastal lands, and islands.

4. Protecting these special places requires active stewardship and responsible use:

- Protect wilderness by learning more at *www.wilderness.net* and being a responsible visitor (see *www.LNT.org*).
- You can help the Forest Service in its wilderness stewardship by joining a local wilderness friends group (learn more at *www.wildernessalliance.org*) or volunteering with a nearby national forest (find out more at *www.fs.usda.gov*).