

Core Team meeting notes from 12/8/2006:

Group A Partnerships, Volunteerism and Education

1) Boots on the Ground - it is time for the Forest Service to get back in the field. Field presence of wilderness rangers must increase and be part of their job description.

Rationale:

Element Number 10 of the Chief's 10 year Challenge. Specifically, "Wilderness has a baseline workforce in place for each wilderness".

2) Each District must have a designated Forest Service Liaison (i.e. Wilderness or Recreation Manager) who must be given enough time in their job description to properly manage and supervise their wilderness responsibilities including working closely with wilderness partners, stake holders and friends groups.

3) The Forest Service Liaison should consider working with the local community to support existing and/or establish Wilderness Friends Groups to bolster effectiveness.

4) Increase District management priority to provide for adequate training and region wide consistent uniforms for partners providing volunteers in the field

Rationale:

District experience has shown that trained, uniformed volunteers are the most effective method for educating visitors in Wilderness. (Indian Peaks, CFI Peak Rangers) The same uniform provides a consistent presence across the entire region.

5) The Regional Office should establish formal partnerships with foundations and organizations that focus on wilderness stewardship

Rationale:

Relationship with grant funding organizations that provide non-matching and invitational only funds provides the best opportunity for the sustainability of Wilderness Friends Groups.

6) The Forest Service must back up the Chief's 10 Year Wilderness Stewardship Challenge.

Rationale:

(Keep if you want you want to Ralph) The Chief's 10 year Challenge covers a fire plan, invasive weeds, air quality monitoring and baseline, education, standards, recreation site inventory, data collection and an adequate workforce.

7) Management of Wilderness should not be a for profit venture. Any revenue generating activities should benefit non-profit or partner organizations.

Group B Wilderness Forum Core Group

Goal: prepare a summary report for regional forester that presents recommended solutions for high recreation use in Colorado magnet wilderness by December 18

1) GROUP B: funding & fees (Vera, Kim, Tom)

- a) The user groups represented on the Core Team are not ready to support fees or permits, other than overnight camping permits, for access
- b) In magnet areas, such as 14ers, implement management tools based on ecosystem protection rather than on solitude
- c) Increase funding from the Regional Office for Forest Service wilderness rangers, wilderness management tools such as designated campsite; camping permits; hardening landscapes, parking; and camping facilities
- d) Fee revenues go, in part, to wilderness management and protection
- e) Increase FS presence and law enforcement in wilderness areas
- f) Extend the mandate of the Core Team into 2007
- g) Continue to host wilderness forums that bring in speakers
- h) Because wilderness is so popular and suffers without adequate and consistent management, it is fundamental that Congress must consistently appropriate adequate funds to maintain our world-class wilderness areas, especially before conditions cross a threshold where recovery costs increase dramatically. We do not recommend fees for wilderness access; fees for wilderness access are not consistent with REA and we recommend that it should stay this way.

Group C
Wilderness Management Tools
In
Colorado Magnet Areas

Of primary concern to the Core Team is the degradation of Colorado Wilderness or a slippage down the management prescriptions (Pristine to Primitive, Primitive to Semi-Primitive, etc.). In Colorado, with our growing population, popular mountain peaks and numerous “urban interface” forests, an attempt to drive down use in magnet areas will likely have two undesirable results:

- 1) Displacement of use to lesser used areas.
- 2) Many existing and budding Wilderness users and advocates may be alienated from the NWPS and its benefits.

While many tools are available, the Forest Service must be judicious in their application and wise to the ramifications for Wilderness and visitors. The philosophy for on-the-ground Wilderness management is anchored fast to the “minimum tool” concept. The cross-cut saw trumps the chain saw. In developing management tools to manage visitor use and mitigate visitor impacts, the agency should adhere closely to their own “minimum tool” mandate.

While education – not unlike partnerships – may seem a convenient, amorphous and somewhat predictable answer, members of the Core Team has been audience for, participant in and promoters of manifold effective educational tools for protection and promotion of Colorado Wilderness. The agency should:

- Extend mandate of Core Team into 2007.
- Continue to host Wilderness forums that address challenging issues and bring in quality speakers. Particularly effective is the participation of field staff.
- Reg. 2 must be vigilant for and adaptive to new technologies that can enhance the wilderness experience, educate users, facilitate visitation and assist in management of use and mitigation of impacts.

Such technologies run the gamut from high tech [minimizing search and rescue operations through GPS, cell phone and satellite technology] to low tech [insulating fire blankets or fire pans for LNT “mound” fires].

Recommendations:

1) The Core Group recommends management tools to reduce and/or prevent ecological damage. Examples discussed by the group include; controlled parking and access areas; manipulating ease of access; sustainable trails; designated campsites; overnight camping permits; and wilderness zones.

- Agency should consider minimum tool strategies in magnet areas to manage use and mitigate impacts within those areas and avoid displacing significant amounts of use to areas that currently have significantly less use and may still be pristine.
- Science, monitoring and planning must form the foundation of Wilderness management.

- Management strategies should be tailored and site-specific. Anticipate impacts and set thresholds for field actions. Using a tiered or escalating approach to management, agency mandates should only be brought to bear as use and/or resource impact approach thresholds.
- While management should be site-specific, following the lead of the Leave No Trace program, Wilderness education, skills and ethics should whenever possible be simple, uniform and ever present. For example: Camping should always be 200 feet from water.
- Because regulations will need to be site-specific and differing regulations in differing locations can be confusing, it is imperative that:
 - The agency establish a single, sanctioned Web site for accessing individual wilderness regulations and visitor use information in Region 2.
 - Practices and protocols for securing registration materials, permits or designated campsites should be uniform and available on this Web site.
 - Seek coordination and compatibility with other agencies managing Wilderness with regard to regulations.
- Be cautious about implementing restrictions on the Wilderness Experience.

2) Take advantage of our Colorado-based Leave No Trace program to strengthen and unify Wilderness use regulations and ethics in Colorado Wilderness:

- Mandate stoves and no “open” campfires in all Colorado Wilderness areas.
 - Promote stoves for cooking.
 - Mandate LNT mound fires, the use of an insulating fire blanket or devise and appropriate disposal of ashes.
 - Prohibit fires in pristine, high altitude or ecologically sensitive areas.
- Mandate that visitors pack out toilet paper in Wilderness areas with enforcement of a littering fine for violators.
- Promote new technologies for packing out human waste.

3) Institute, promote on aforementioned sanctioned Web site, and enforce consistent policies regarding dogs across Colorado Wilderness areas.

4) Continue to utilize trailhead data collection as a Wilderness Management Tool.

- The core group recognizes the need for required registration.
- Required registration should be viewed

The following Zoning language is potential for general or preamble language for our report to the Regional Forester.

Of primary concern to the Core Team is the preservation of pristine areas and less popular Colorado Wilderness with lower visitation and fewer impacts. Clearly, one approach to wilderness is the “strict constructionist” approach or philosophy of managing the system as a whole to an idealized level of “untrammled” Wilderness.

In Colorado, with our growing population, popular mountain peaks and numerous “urban interface” forests, an attempt to drive down use in magnet areas will have two undeniable results:

- 3) Use will diversify and be pushed out into those currently more pristine areas.
- 4) Many existing and budding Wilderness users and advocates will be denied access and alienated from the NWPS and its benefits.

The Core Team, after deliberation and note without dissent, endorses the concept of zoning in Colorado Wilderness. Zoning in Wilderness is current practice in Wilderness areas across the country and across Colorado. Whether de facto – 14ers as magnet peaks in Wilderness; agency policy – tent platforms and designated sites; or law – motorized zones in the Boundary waters, zoning has allowed more Americans to enjoy their Wilderness areas while protecting those areas for future generations. Region 2 should continue to utilize a network of Wilderness zones to promote the Wilderness experience in Colorado.

Group D Wilderness Forum Core Group

Goal: prepare a summary report for regional forester that presents recommended solutions for high recreation use in Colorado magnet wilderness by December 18

GROUP D: Landscape Level Planning Tools (Vera, Steve, Dave, Mark)

Introduction

In recognition of the current state of wilderness in Colorado, and the trends in population growth and recreation, it is imperative for the Forest Service to (1) collect information and data on the condition of wilderness, and (2) to develop strategies that effectively and comprehensively address present and anticipated threats.

Recommendations 10 Year Challenge Elements 5, 6,9

1. Complete a comprehensive research study of magnet wilderness sites within the region that identifies and utilizes:
 - existing data and data gaps utilizing, in part, a required registration system
 - “magnet” areas and their definition
 - current conditions
 - site specific prescriptions
 - costs of implementing prescriptions and maintaining over time
 - standardized inventory and data collection protocols

1. Develop a region-wide, landscape-level plan for the management of wilderness that:
Element # 8
 - Develops non-motorized, non-wilderness opportunities, especially near busy/magnet areas
 - Develops tiers (zones) of recreation opportunities and experiences
 - Consider displacement to areas adjacent to magnet areas.
 - Creates two social standards: one for on-trail and one for off-trail where the off-trail standard maintains solitude.

- In order to prevent “displacement activities” management changes for a magnet area, involves all districts which have responsibility for that wilderness area.
 - A piece meal approach runs the risk of causing considerable damage because it lacks that landscape level view.
 - Highlights the preservation of currently pristine areas
 - Provides different solutions to different types of magnets (urban proximal, peaks, beautiful destinations)
 - Develops a statewide strategy for landscape and site monitoring
 - a. Establish/refine a consistent Forest Service monitoring protocol
 - b. Consider rolling monitoring sequences among magnets and other wilderness areas
 - c. Make it rigorous
 - d. Tie it to goals of the statewide plan
 - Uses gateway wilderness areas such as Mt. Bierstadt to educate users about the value of wilderness, etc.
 - Applies recommendations to all Colorado wilderness areas to protect future ecosystem damage.
2. Through the forest plans, recommend more suitable areas for wilderness designation, particularly near magnet areas. Element 8
 3. Manage more areas so as to provide for a wilderness-like opportunities, particularly if near magnet wilderness sites. Element 8 , 5
 4. In wilderness, especially in magnet sites, make ecosystem protection a priority in developing and implementing management tools. Element 8, 5
 5. Fund the implementation of an ongoing inventory and assessment of wilderness conditions across the region. Element 9.

Items to be deferred:

We do not recommend fees for wilderness access; fees for wilderness access are not consistent with REA and we recommend that it should stay this way.

Identify and secure new funding designated specifically to insure adequate management both currently and in the future wilderness

Items to be Refined

Magnet areas and their surrounding areas.

Funding in general

Required Registration