

# At Your Service

## Wilderness Stewardship Division

By Erin Drake and Wade M. Vagias

### THE WILDERNESS STEWARDSHIP

Division (WSD) of the National Park Service (NPS) provides guidance, training, and technical assistance to support the protection and management of wilderness resources. More than 80% of NPS lands are managed under a wilderness prescription that takes into account wilderness character and wilderness values. The division is composed of support staff at the national office, regional offices, and wilderness park units in addition to several interagency and partner programs.

The Wilderness Stewardship Division, the national-level wilderness office housed under the Visitor and Resource Protection Directorate, provides leadership and guidance on wilderness stewardship planning, wilderness character monitoring, minimum requirement analysis, the wilderness designation process, and policy formulation. In addition, the division responds to congressional and interagency inquiries, fosters international relationships, oversees the National Outdoor Ethics (i.e., Leave No Trace) Program, collaborates with and provides training opportunities through the interagency Arthur Carhart National Wilderness Training Center, and works with science and research programs. The division is overseen by a division chief with the support of two natural resource specialists in Washington, D.C., and a training manager stationed at the Carhart Training Center in Missoula, Montana. Also at the national level, the associate director for Visitor and Resource Protection serves as the representative to the interagency Wilderness Policy Council, which consists of policy-level representatives of the four wilderness management agencies and research representatives from the U.S. Forest Service and the Department of the Interior. The council works

directly with other various NPS program areas, including Fire and Aviation, Park Planning and Special Studies, and Facilities Management as well as agencies, institutions, interest groups, and the public.

At the regional and field levels, regional wilderness coordinators facilitate information exchange among the division, regions, and individual parks. Park wilderness coordinators serve as technical advisors in wilderness and backcountry management for one or more wilderness parks and are responsible for the development and implementation of the park's wilderness program. The NPS Wilderness Leadership Council, and advisory and support body composed of staff from multiple disciplines across the National Park Service, work with the Wilderness Stewardship Division chief to strengthen the agency's ability to address critical wilderness stewardship issues.

National-, regional-, and park-level wilderness staffs also coordinate with other NPS programs and councils. The division works with the NPS Inventory and Monitoring Program to collaborate on monitoring efforts that occur in wilderness.

As an interagency partner, the Wilderness Stewardship Division also provides support for the Arthur Carhart National Wilderness Training Center, a critical component in ensuring the continuity of wilderness stewardship, preservation, and education throughout the National Wilderness Preservation System. The training center strives to improve interagency and public understanding of wilderness philosophy, values, and policy through outreach and technical trainings. Read more about the training center on the following page.

To learn more about the NPS Wilderness Stewardship Division, please visit its Web site at <http://wilderness.nps.gov/>. National Park Service employees can also visit the program's InsideNPS page at <http://inside.nps.gov/waso/waso.cfm?prg=116&lv=2>.

### About the authors

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