



Interagency Wilderness Fellows Initiative

Interagency Collaboration 2012

WILDERNESS FELLOWS: Advancing wilderness stewardship & engaging youth in federal land management

More than one hundred million acres of designated wilderness in the National Wilderness Preservation System are provided with the greatest degree of conservation protection in the United States. The 1964 Wilderness Act, all subsequent federal wilderness legislation, and the policies of the four federal agencies (BLM, FS, FWS, and NPS) administering this land mandate preserving the “wilderness character” of these lands.

Collaboration among the FWS, NPS, and FS, in partnership with American Conservation Experience, established the Interagency Wilderness Fellows Initiative in 2012 to help participating agencies fulfill this mandate. The Initiative uses the strategy developed and published by an interagency team in 2008, led by the interagency Aldo Leopold Wilderness Research Institute. This strategy¹ provides the definitions and protocols for monitoring change in wilderness character over time.

Wilderness Fellows are undergraduate and graduate-level students who are keenly interested in careers in federal land management, and who will become the next generation of federal land managers. Fellows will produce baseline assessments of wilderness character

and enter data into an interagency database, write wilderness character narratives for the parks addressing the special and unique qualities of the wilderness, and assist staff in many ways to accomplish work in the wilderness.

Expected Outcomes

The Wilderness Fellows Initiative is vitally important for:

- Fostering an unprecedented degree of federal interagency cooperation and coordination, resulting in increased cost-efficiency.
- Creating opportunities for youth to be directly engaged in federal land management.
- Helping managers and the agencies understand what wilderness character is, and how it provides the framework for understanding and evaluating the consequences of decisions inside wilderness.
- Improving communication and transparency among staff and with the public about actions taken, and not taken, inside wilderness.
- Providing accountability for the Congressional mandate and agency policies to preserve wilderness character.

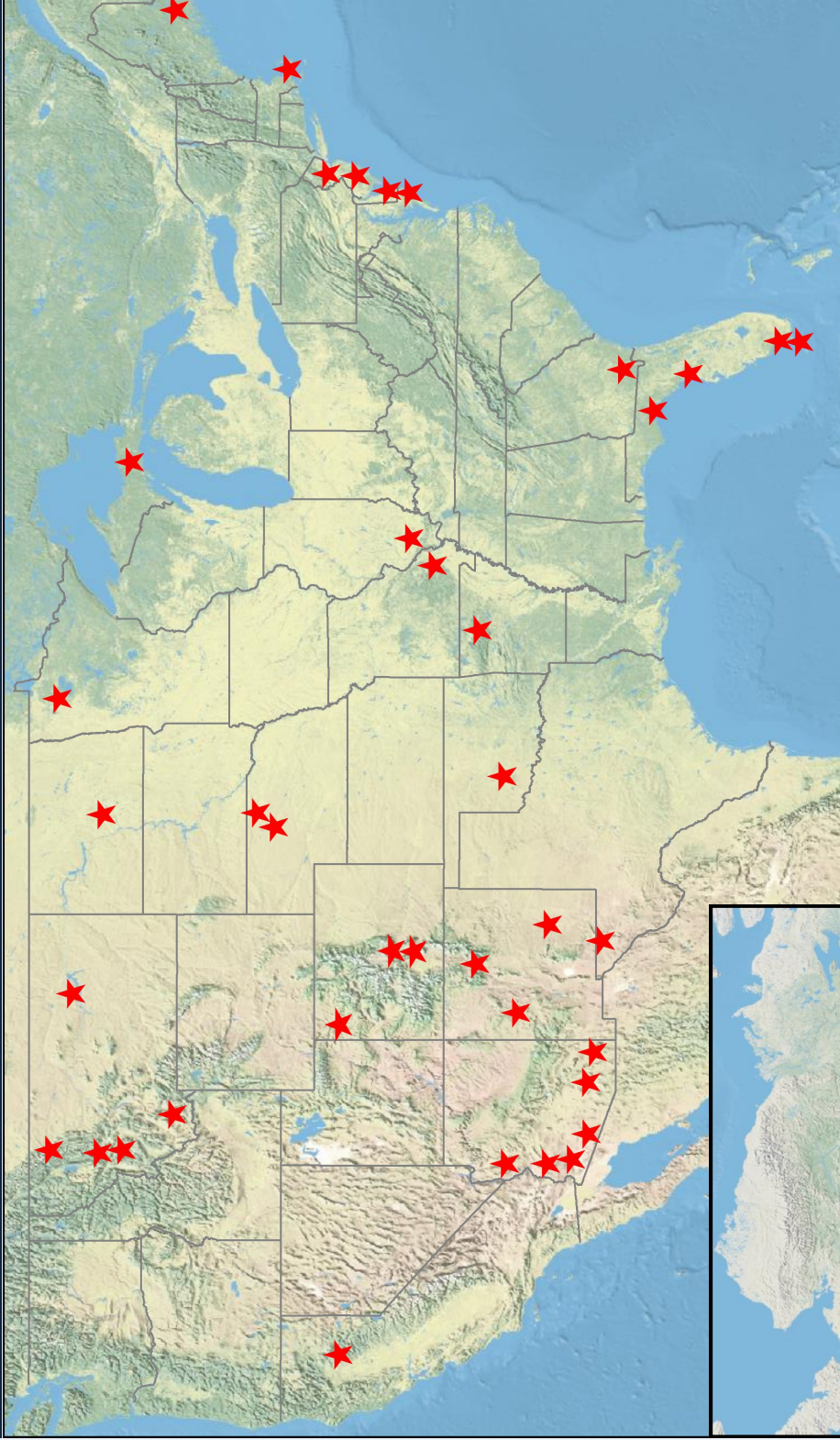
¹*Keeping it Wild: An Interagency Strategy to Monitor Trends in Wilderness Character Across the National Wilderness Preservation System 2008. USDA Forest Service, Rocky Mountain Research Station General Technical Report RMRS-GTR-212, Fort Collins, CO.*



Wilderness Fellows with USFWS Biologists at 2012 Interagency Wilderness Fellows Training, Fort Collins, CO.

For more information about the Interagency Wilderness Fellows Initiative for 2012, contact:
Suzy Stutzman, NPS Intermountain Region Wilderness Coordinator, suzy_stutzman@nps.gov, (303) 987-6671
Nancy Roeper, USFWS National Wilderness Coordinator, nancy_roeper@fws.gov, (703) 358-2389
Peter Landres, USFS Ecologist, Aldo Leopold Wilderness Research Institute, plandres@fs.fed.us, (406) 542-4189

Wilderness Fellows Location 2010-2011-2012



Background of Collaboration

The Wilderness Fellows Initiative began in 2010 when NPS recruited six Fellows. The FWS recruited 10 Fellows in 2011, who worked with local staff at 18 refuge wildernesses. In 2012, the NPS and FWS coordinated the recruitment and training of 10 Wilderness Fellows, in partnership with ACE. Also in 2012, two USFS Fellows were recruited, in partnership with the University of Montana's Wilderness Institute. All 2012 Wilderness Fellows participate in weekly conference calls to share and learn from one another. Some of the Fellows are working on contiguous wildernesses managed by different agencies with the goal of finding common ground and preserving wilderness character on a landscape scale. Valuable lessons are being learned by both the Fellows and local agency staff. The map on this page shows all the wildernesses where Wilderness Fellows have worked to improve wilderness stewardship.

Wilderness Locations

- Agassiz NWR (FWS)
- Alaska Maritime NWR (FWS)
- Assateague NS (NPS)*
- Bandelier NM (NPS)
- Becharof NWR (FWS)
- Bitter Lake NWR (FWS)
- Buffalo NR (NPS)
- Cabeza Prieta NWR (FWS)
- Charles Russell NWR (FWS)
- Chase Lake NWR (FWS)
- Chassahowitzka NWR (FWS)
- Chincoteague NWR (FWS)*
- Chiricahua NM (NPS)
- Crab Orchard NWR (FWS)
- Dinosaur NP (NPS)*
- El Malpais NP (NPS)*
- Everglades NP (NPS)
- E.B. Forsythe NWR (FWS)
- Fort Niobrara NWR (FWS)
- Glacier NP (NPS)*
- Great Sand Dunes NP&P (NPS)
- Great Swamp NWR (FWS)
- Guadalupe Mountains NP (NPS)
- Havasu NWR (FWS)
- Imperial NWR (FWS)
- Izembek NWR (FWS)
- Kenai NWR (FWS)
- Kofa NWR (FWS)
- Lassen Volcanic NP (NPS)
- Mingo NWR (FWS)
- Mission Mountains Wilderness (FS)
- Monomoy NWR (FWS)
- Moosehorn NWR (FWS)
- National Key Deer NWR (FWS)
- Okefenokee NWR (FWS)
- Red Rocks Lakes NWR (FWS)
- Saguaro NP (NPS)
- Sangre deCristo Wilderness (FS)
- Selway Bitterroot (FS)
- Seney NWR (FWS)
- St. Marks NWR (FWS)
- Valentine NWR (FWS)
- Wichita Mountains NWR (FWS)

* Unfinished wilderness