



National Wilderness Stewardship Alliance

Strategic Direction

July 15, 2022

THE NEED

The future needs wilderness.

- ***Wilderness supports all living things.*** Wilderness helps safeguard the genetic diversity of flora and fauna, and often acts as a haven for rare and endangered species. With climate change upon us, the future of many species may depend on those few havens where life can progress with minimal intervention.
- ***Wilderness supports people.*** Many people find joy and awe in a direct connection to wilderness. Wilderness also supports scientific inquiry, environmental education, and outdoor learning, which in turn foster connection to and care for the natural world.
- ***Wilderness supports communities.*** Whether or not people visit wilderness, nearby communities reap the fruits of wilderness protection and stewardship—clean air; fresh water; vibrant populations of important pollinators, songbirds, and game animals; and the boost wilderness visitors provide to rural economies.

Wilderness needs stewards and advocates.

- For America's federal wilderness areas to offer all these benefits, ***these landscapes and ecosystems must be protected and cared for, and baseline wilderness values upheld.***
- The four federal agencies charged with managing federal wilderness are at the core of this work. But they cannot do the job alone. ***A strong network of stewardship groups and dedicated volunteers is needed*** to work in partnership with the federal agencies to help care for wilderness throughout the United States, and to advocate for federal funding and levels of staffing needed by the agencies to manage wilderness.

The benefits of wilderness need to be shared equitably.

- The legacy and realities of systemic racism and other forms of discrimination mean many people do not receive the full benefits of wilderness. Concerted effort is needed to broaden knowledge of wilderness, create equitable opportunity for people to experience the direct and indirect benefits of wilderness, and ***make wilderness and wilderness stewardship welcoming and inclusive to all.***

OUR VISION

Our vision is that America's wilderness and wild places will be stewarded for generations to come through an enduring partnership of public agencies, community-based organizations, and volunteer stewards; and that the benefits of wilderness and wilderness stewardship will be shared equitably.

OUR VALUES

These principles guide us as we work towards our vision:

Community

We are responsive, helpful, and empathetic to member needs. We actively reach out to our members and partners collectively and individually. We provide others with opportunities to engage in the work of NWSA (such as serving on committees, planning National Wilderness Workshop, and developing resources). We listen, learn, plan together, and ask for feedback. We bridge opportunities rather than being in competition with others. We create community within our own board and staff as we grow, supporting a healthy and positive work environment. We communicate regularly, seek to understand each other, act respectfully, and give each other the benefit of the doubt. We keep each other accountable through clear structure and commitments.

Inclusion and equity

We invite and include people from all backgrounds in NWSA and the wilderness stewardship community. We actively recruit a diverse team of board and staff members that includes people from communities of color and other marginalized groups historically excluded from wilderness stewardship. We apply resources including money and time to our own learning and growth. We are open-minded, question our own cultural values, stretch ourselves to hear and understand other viewpoints, and look for ways to improve ourselves. We acknowledge and recognize the European concept of wilderness, and that belief in this concept is not universal.

Optimism and resourcefulness

We believe the mission is so important that we will always find a way to meet our goals. We operate creatively and optimistically, with open minds. We leverage resource to get a lot done with a little. We act with intention and with expectation of success. We anticipate change by keeping apprised of our role in the larger context and by always thinking about the possibility of what is next. We avoid paralysis, overcome barriers, and look for new ways to reach our goals even when there are setbacks. We clearly communicate our passion and commitment as individuals and as a group.

We recognize that it takes effort to maintain these values, and we invest accordingly.

We make our values statements public facing so we are accountable to our community. We commit resources including time and funds to engage in learning and other activities that keep us aligned with our values. We use our values as a guide in bringing new board and staff members onto our team. We regularly refer to our values when making decisions to ensure we are in alignment. We evaluate ourselves and ask others for feedback.

GOALS & STRATEGIES

Goal 1

NWSA provides for a strong, sustainable network of stewardship organizations to partner with government to steward all federally designated wilderness areas.

Strategies:

- Conduct regular analysis to understand current needs of NWSA members and partners.
- Provide education and technical assistance to support wilderness stewardship groups, volunteers, and staff.
- Find and create granting opportunities for wilderness stewardship groups.
- Foster communication and cooperation among wilderness stewardship groups.
- Respond to and support new and emerging stewardship groups as needed.

Goal 2

NWSA members have tools and support to engage new stewards that embody the full diversity of the larger community, including resources to help address issues of justice, equity, diversity and inclusion (JEDI) associated with public lands.

Strategies:

- NWSA models JEDI learning and commitment.
- Provide training in JEDI best practices to NWSA members.
- Include and prioritize JEDI in NWSA funding opportunities.
- Showcase successful NWSA member efforts to engage new stewards and incorporate JEDI into their work.

Goal 3

NWSA builds strong partnerships and undertakes effective public advocacy to support wilderness stewardship.

Strategies:

- Cultivate relationships with leaders in all four federal agencies charged with wilderness management and stewardship.
- Advocate for funding, staffing, and other resources needed for federal agencies to steward wilderness lands.
- Develop effective and sustainable partnerships with organizations whose missions and interests overlap with NWSA including our commitment to JEDI.
- Support NWSA members to broaden local and regional partnerships.

Goal 4

NWSA is a strong, sustainable organization and a great place to work and volunteer.

Strategies:

- Establish a sustainable and engaging board structure.
- Recruit a diverse board and staff team with the skills, connections, and attributes needed to achieve our strategic goals.
- Strengthen NWSA's financial sustainability.
- Establish systems and structures needed to be a responsible and responsive employer.
- Learn and plan for how NWSA can be more diverse, inclusive, and equitable.
- Maintain an organizational culture that aligns with our NWSA values.