



# NATIONAL WILDERNESS STEWARDSHIP ALLIANCE

NWSA NEWSLETTER • WINTER 2022

Building a  
wilderness  
stewardship  
community

## Join NWSA!

Joining the National Wilderness Stewardship Alliance is a wise investment in the future of wilderness stewardship. Membership comes in two forms: individual or organization memberships.

**Individual membership** shows support for the mission of the National Wilderness Stewardship Alliance and associates you with the greatest people on earth — wilderness stewards. An annual donation of \$25 or more qualifies you for National Wilderness Workshop discounts and subscription to the *International Journal of Wilderness*.

**Organization membership** qualifies groups for NWSA Grant programs, provides access to toolboxes and educational materials tailored to support wilderness stewardship organizations. It also gives enhanced opportunities to participate in review and comment efforts on industry-wide issues.

Members have access to NWSA services and support, including volunteer training, webinars and Wilderness Workshops, many at no or reduced cost.

**Collectively we are stronger.**

**For membership levels and annual dues, see page 5**

## WILDERNESS WORKSHOP "ZOOMS" TO SUCCESS

Though the original plan was to meet in Roanoke in person, the 2021 National Wilderness Workshop was once again a Zoom affair. Lingering concerns about COVID-19 sent NWW to the virtual side, yet registrations were plentiful, with agency personnel and their stewardship partners were there in force.

The Workshop overall was highly successful, with over 350 people registered, representing wilderness stewards from at least 36 states. Volunteers and staff from more than 100 different stewardship groups and institutions were present, as well as 68 Forest Service employees, 59 BLM employees, and at least a dozen employees from National Park Service.

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Outgoing NWSA Board Chair Andrew Downs (above) introduces Christy Hyman and her presentation "Researching History of Place," all via Zoom.



## 2021 NATIONAL WILDERNESS STEWARDSHIP AWARDS HANDED OUT AT WORKSHOP

In its second year, the NWSA Wilderness Awards program honored six individuals in three different categories; Rising Leaders, Individual Champions and Agency Partners. The fourth category, Organizations, had no entries. NWSA will soon announce the opening of nominations for 2022, so consider who you might want to honor.

Recipients of the 2021 awards were nominated by their peers in agencies and partner groups for outstanding wilderness stewardship.

### Rising Leaders of Wilderness Stewardship

**Jessi Meija, Glacier National Park and University of Montana Wilderness Institute.**

Jessi works seasonally as leader of the Glacier National Park ongoing Goat Volunteer monitoring in the park. She is also part of the Wilderness Institute's inclusive language project, part of the wilderness community's

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## About NWSA

### Our Mission:

The mission of the National Wilderness Stewardship Alliance is to develop a growing network of volunteer-based organizations to provide stewardship for America's enduring resource of wilderness.

### Our Vision:

Our vision is to see each wilderness area within the National Wilderness Preservation System adopted by a wilderness stewardship organization dedicated to protecting and nurturing the area's character and values. We envision effective partnerships between community-based, non-profit wilderness stewardship organizations and all government agencies charged with the management of our national wilderness areas.

### Our Goal:

Our goal is to improve wilderness stewardship and create an allied constituency for wilderness by connecting stewardship organizations with each other, linking our efforts and experiences, directing groups to resources, and fostering new organizations.

### Our Objectives:

- Identify wilderness stewardship groups nationwide in order to determine the present level of support.
- Through our website and other resources, share knowledge, experience and expertise among local, regional and national stewardship organizations.
- Provide new groups with start-up models of different structures, help them anticipate the questions that typically arise as groups form, and connect them with people who have built successful organizations.
- Sponsor national and regional gatherings of stewardship groups.
- Provide grants to help stewardship groups accomplish on-the-ground projects benefiting wilderness.
- Help foster a culture within governing agencies that values volunteer-based wilderness stewardship organizations and has the means to provide them with effective support.

## FROM THE CHAIR

### KATIE CURRIER



I am honored to assume the role of Board Chair of the National Wilderness Stewardship Alliance for the next year. I have been a member of the board since 2016 and most recently held the role of Vice Chair.

I'd like to share my gratitude to Andrew Downs for serving as the Chair of the National Wilderness Stewardship Alliance for the past 5 years. His commitment and experience have contributed greatly to NWSA's successes and growth in the past half decade.

NWSA is in the unique position to support and connect wilderness stewardship organizations across the country, building community and opportunity. Under the leadership of our Executive Director, Randy Welsh, we recently convened a highly successful virtual National Wilderness Workshop with over 300 participants from across the country registering and engaging in Wilderness Stewardship conversations.

As we move into 2022 our highly talented staff and board of directors will continue guiding the progress of our strategic plan focused on promoting effective stewardship of wilderness areas, engaging wilderness stewardship partners and strengthening NWSA's capacity and operational excellence.

I look forward to this opportunity to serve our national stewardship community.

— Katie Currier

### NWSA MEMBER ORGANIZATION PROFILE



Wild Alabama might appear to be a new organization (NWSA helped them launch in 2020 with a startup grant), but the truth of the matter is that they were hatched 30 years ago as Bankhead

Monitor, a group dedicated to keeping an eye on Alabama's Bankhead National Forest. In 1994, the name changed to Wild Alabama, reflecting a desire from

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## MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

**RANDY WELSH**

I do believe 2021 was NWSA's best year yet. NWSA has grown to over 60 organization members, and has many generous individual membership donors. The stewardship community has really grown and pulled together.

This year our challenge cost share program exceeded \$750,000 in Wilderness Stewardship Performance and Trail Partner Stewardship proposals funded. That translates to over 80 different organizations participating in essential work on the National Forests. Thousands of partner volun-



teers were engaged, much needed work in over 30 wilderness areas was completed, and over 1,000 miles of trails were maintained to standard. NWSA is a catalyst to help the wilderness community achieve great things.

While our hopes for an in-person National Wilderness Workshop were dashed by the rise of COVID variants, we still hosted 350 people for a week-long virtual Workshop in November.

Themed around "Advocating for Wilderness Stewardship", the 2021 Workshop sessions helped train future

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## THE NWSA FUND: STEWARDED THE STEWARDS.

The NWSA Fund was formed in 2020 with a donation from The David Berolzheimer Foundation to honor wilderness champion, Elaine Dermody, a Founding Member of NWSA. Proceeds from this endowment support the goal of creating wilderness stewardship groups for every wilderness area in the National Wilderness Preservation System. NWSA established the Fund at the Oregon Community Foundation, where it can grow and nurture a program of active creation of new stewardship organizations.

To support this important fund, visit [wildernessalliance.org/donate](https://wildernessalliance.org/donate)

### *Wild Alabama, from previous page*

people statewide to get involved in protecting wild country.

A decade later, the organization morphed into Wild South, accepting a regional mandate. In addition to watching out for forest resources and water quality, work was begun on restoring National Forests to native forest communities.

After 17 years of successful advocacy and preservation work, Wild South "spun off" its own mother, you might say, and Wild Alabama was born again.

The "new-old" organization came into being on January 1, 2021 with a robust mission and many volunteers involved to make things happen. Their programs include Helping Hands working at trail maintenance, weed remediation and campsite rehab; Volunteer Wilderness Rangers who educate visitors and conduct trail assessments and solitude and recreation site monitoring; and Forest Ambassadors who educate visitors at busy trailheads. Add to that citizen science, outdoor education, guided hikes and virtual learning via their website.

You can learn more at [wildal.org](https://wildal.org).

## KAITLIN DE VARONA JOINS NWSA BOARD

Kaitlin de Varona is a Nevada native living near Asheville, North Carolina where she currently serves as the executive director for Southern Appalachian Wilderness Stewards (SAWS). Kaitlin has more than a decade of experience in the conservation world. Throughout her career, she has worked passionately to steward and protect our county's wildest public lands. In addition to SAWS, Kaitlin worked for California State Parks, U.S. Forest Service, National Park Service, Montana Conservation Corps, and Great Basin Institute. Kaitlin is committed to working towards equity in the outdoors and in conservation and continues to foster inclusivity in outdoor spaces and work to address past injustices to equitable access.

Throughout her time working to safeguard America's wildest places, Kaitlin has seen the role volunteerism and non-profits are playing in wil-

derness stewardship as well as the value of partnerships working toward stewarding America's enduring wilderness resource and preserving wilderness character. As such, Kaitlin

joined the National Wilderness Stewardship Alliance board in 2021 and proudly serves as a board member.

Kaitlin is absolutely enamored with her family, currently raising two young boys, and enjoys spending time with them outdoors hiking, camping, rock scrambling, gardening, and

adventuring down the creek in their backyard. She earned a B.A. from the University of Nevada, Las Vegas and a M.S. from North Carolina State University in Raleigh, NC. Kaitlin is certified in crosscut saw, holds a red card in wildland firefighting, and earned a Graduate Certificate in Geospatial Information Sciences from North Carolina State University.



**Workshop, from page 1**

To begin the workshop, the four federal wilderness managing agencies' wilderness leads gave news of their agency's wilderness programs; including Peter Keller, BLM; Peter Mali, USFS; Nancy Roeper, US Fish and Wildlife Service; and Roger Semler, National Park Service.

Following was a series of sessions discussing on-the-ground stewardship work in various places; research needs and progress; connecting stewardship with advocacy; expanding inclusiveness to better connect with diverse wilderness users; Indigenous wilderness stewardship; preparing for the

Wilderness Act 60th anniversary; technology concerns vs benefits, and more.

One of the benefits of using Zoom for the Workshop — which will likely be part of all future gatherings, in-person or not — was the ease with which sessions could be recorded for future reference and viewing.

Anyone interested in viewing or reviewing sessions can do so online at [wildernessalliance.org/2021\\_nww](http://wildernessalliance.org/2021_nww)

The 2022 workshop, with the Society for Wilderness Stewardship in the lead, is planned for Missoula, MT in the fall. Details will be available soon on the NWSA website and at [wildernessstewardship.org](http://wildernessstewardship.org)

## NWSA WEBINAR SERIES FEATURES NATIONAL WILDERNESS SKILLS INSTITUTE FEEDBACK

The National Wilderness Skills Institute (NWSI) has been held in May for several years as a way to train wilderness field crews. Prior to COVID 19, the sessions were held at Powell Ranger Station on the Lochsa River in the Nez Perce National Forest.

The 2021 NWSI was a virtual event, and NWSA will host a follow-up recap webinar on February 2, 2022 at noon PST. The webinar will offer participants

an opportunity to give feedback on the skills workshop and provide suggestions for future training. Join us for this exciting webinar series with an all-star line up of experts will review your feedback, and answer questions as part of the informative NWSA webinar series.

Questions to be addressed are: Did it work? Should we do it again? What changes or adjustments are needed? These and others will be addressed as an expert panel reviews feedback received about NWSI and looks forward to the future.

Key speakers include John Campbell (Wilderness and Wild & Scenic Rivers Program Manager – Southern Region); Jimmy Gaudry (Wilderness and Wild & Scenic Rivers Program Manager – Northern Region); Bill Hodge (Executive Director – Bob Marshall Wilderness Foundation); Nancy Taylor (Wilderness and Wild & Scenic Rivers Program Manager – Pacific Northwest Region); and Dusty Vaughn (Wilderness and Wild & Scenic Rivers Specialist – Washington Office)

To sign up for the webinar, visit [wildernessalliance.org/webinars](http://wildernessalliance.org/webinars).

## BOARD AND STAFF OF NWSA

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***If you missed the 2021 National Wilderness Workshop, Zoom captures of many sessions are online at [wildernessalliance.org](http://wildernessalliance.org)***

***While you're there, check out the recordings of the entire NWSA Webinar Series.***

### Stewardship awards, from page 1

effort to increase diversity and recipient of the Bob Marshall Wilderness Foundation Diversity Residency.

#### **Sarah Rodriguez, Kaibab National Forest.**

In the interest of working in Wilderness, Sarah achieved a master's degree in conservation leadership and a bachelor's of science. As a wilderness ranger on the Kaibab National Forest, she has finished character baseline monitoring and recreation site inventory on two wilderness areas within the Kaibab and character baseline monitoring in seven areas on the Prescott National Forest. She has now accepted a full-time job on the Carson National Forest in Wilderness Recreation Management.

#### **Amber Wong, Coconino National Forest.**

Amber is a wilderness and wildlife resource assistant with the Forest Service. Her job includes solitude monitoring and creating a wilderness wildlife monitoring program. She proactively thinks about inclusion, particularly about how to incorporate tribal voices into her wilderness work.

### Individual Champions of Wilderness Stewardship

#### **Jack Hanley, Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance.**

Jack has served as the primary stewardship coordinator for SUWA. His enthusiasm, character and integrity have made great impressions on his partners with the BLM and volunteers alike. Among other protective measures, Jack borrows strategies from the Forest Service to mitigate incursion by vehicles into designated Wilderness across the San Rafael Swell and Utah at large.

#### **Allan Rockwood, Friends of Mount Evans and Lost Creek Wilderness.**

Alan has been addressing noxious weeds for many years, continuing to personally eradicate invasive plants in the Mount Evans and Lost Creek Wildernesses as well as lead volunteers in that effort. He coordinates efforts across multiple state and federal agencies and works with contractors. He has received grants from the state of Colorado, NWSA and many charitable contributions to help in his efforts.

### Agency Partner of Wilderness Stewardship

#### **Andy Smith, San Bernardino National Forest.**

Andy has been on the wilderness trail staff and is now the San Jacinto NF recreation officer. He coordinates with multiple volunteer groups, including the Pacific Crest Trail Association, The Backcountry Horsemen and the FS Volunteer Association. He been instrumental in rehabbing fire damaged areas to get trails reopened. Andy has been described by his volunteers as the one constant they can turn to for help getting the job done.

*The Awards ceremony is featured in a recording from the 2021 NWW at [wildernessalliance.org/2021\\_nww](https://wildernessalliance.org/2021_nww)*

### Director, from page 3

wilderness advocates as well as bringing the latest learning in wilderness stewardship to participants. Check out the sessions on our website, at [wildernessalliance.org](https://wildernessalliance.org).

And speaking of virtual presentations, NWSA produced a record number of webinars this past year for the community on a host of topics. Key this summer was our Wilderness Stewardship Advocacy webinar series. With the help of current advocates on Capitol Hill sharing their insights for the community to grow its own stewardship advocacy efforts. These webinars are also on our website.

Looking ahead to 2022 we plan to continue a full slate of webinars and Coffee Hours to bring you the latest in wilderness stewardship topics, training, and useful presentations.

We expect our funding programs to have another great year of proposals, and we continue to look for ways to grow our membership and value to the community. Here's to an exciting and fruitful 2022!

**JOIN NWSA AND ADD THE STRENGTH OF YOUR PERSONAL OR ORGANIZATIONAL VOICE TO THE GROWING COLLECTIVE POWER OF A NATIONAL WILDERNESS STEWARDSHIP GROUP.**

#### **NWSA PARTNER MEMBER ORGANIZATION MEMBERSHIP LEVELS:**



**\$25 (or more): Individual supporter**

**\$75: Local/Regional organization - single entity**

**\$125: Statewide/Multi-state organization — 2 or more locations**

**\$200: National organization — single entity — 2 or more locations**

**\$1,000: Multi-Chapter organization (all chapters eligible for Partners-Only Benefits including granting programs) - 10 or more entities.**

**SIGN UP AT [WILDERNESSALLIANCE.ORG/DONATE](https://wildernessalliance.org/donate)**

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