

Resolution #28
Federation of Western Outdoor Clubs

REQUIRE MONITORING OF WILDERNESS CHARACTER IN THE NATIONAL WILDERNESS PRESERVATION SYSTEM

Submitted by: Wilderness Watch

Background: The National Wilderness Preservation System (NWPS) encompasses nearly 20 percent of all public lands in the U.S. or more than 110 million acres. By law, these areas are to be administered so as to preserve their wilderness character. Yet, little is known as to whether the wilderness character of most Wildernesses is improving, stable or in decline. The lack of monitoring occurring in Wilderness has been raised as a significant concern by numerous internal agency reviews, a General Accounting Office (GAO) report, research scientists, and wilderness-advocacy organizations.

To address this serious shortcoming in the agencies' wilderness stewardship programs, the Forest Service embarked on a major effort to develop a wilderness monitoring protocol. Titled "Monitoring Selected Conditions Related to Wilderness Character: A National Framework," this protocol represents the first serious effort by any federal agency to determine whether the Wilderness System is being properly administered and protected. Subsequently, the National Park Service, BLM and US Fish & Wildlife Service joined with the Forest Service to create the "Interagency wilderness monitoring framework..." Though significant resources have gone into developing the monitoring framework, agency leaders has chosen not to fund its implementation.

Congress should require that the wilderness monitoring protocol be implemented, and the results reported to Congress on an annual basis. Congress should ensure the agencies are funded to complete the monitoring task.

Resolution: The Federation of Western Outdoor Clubs urges Congress to require the Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, National Park Service and U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service to implement the interagency wilderness character monitoring framework, to allocate sufficient funds from existing budgets for the effort, and to report to Congress on their findings.

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