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Wilderness Education Opportunities

As many of you know, most mountain areas in the United States, especially the western part of the country, are on federally managed land. A common theme that runs throughout these lands, regardless of the agency that manages them, is that of Wilderness. Not just wilderness in the sense of being backcountry, but Wilderness designated by Congress under the authority of the Wilderness Act of 1964.

However, how many of us really understand the history and significance of the Wilderness designation, and can relate this to our guests in a manner that will enhance their appreciation for the natural environment? Do we really understand that Wilderness, "... shall be administered for the use and enjoyment of the American people in such manner as will leave them unimpaired for future use and enjoyment as wilderness, and so as to provide for the protection of these areas, the preservation of their wilderness character..." Wilderness is a hot topic these days, and the more understanding we have of it, the better, regardless of our political leanings.

In 2014, the Wilderness Act will be 50 years old. As part of the anniversary, the land management agencies are collaborating on various projects.

<http://www.wilderness50th.org/> links to these initiatives. However, as users and educators about the wilderness ethic, we should ourselves be educated more closely about the meaning of Wilderness. I wanted to pass along a few resources that I have found to be quite useful in educating myself about this important topic in American public land management.

<http://www.wilderness.net/> is probably the best online resource to everything Wilderness. It contains a wealth of information, ranging from definitions to policy to toolboxes for managing various aspects of Wilderness.

The Arthur Carhart Wilderness Training Center is the interagency group that provides collaborative research and training for land managers. They partner with the Eppley Institute for Parks and Public Lands at Indiana University to provide a series of free online courses about various aspects of wilderness management. <http://www.wilderness.net/NWPS/elearning>. I would recommend these to anyone wishing to further their understanding of the nuances of Wilderness management, and the issues surrounding it. I've found them to be informative and user-friendly. They do not yet have a course for Managing Commercial Services in Wilderness, but I even found the basic course, The Wilderness Act of 1964, to be quite interesting.

I hope that these resources can be useful in our continuing education, and the education we pass on to our guests. If anyone has any additional notable resources that they employ, I would love to hear about them. Until next time, Happy Holidays!