

Lessons Learned Over Thirty Years Working for Wilderness in the Reddest State of the Union

Terri Martin, *Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance*

This presentation focused on the lessons learned by the Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance from working to defend and win protection of Wilderness lands over 30 years in one of the most challenging political environments in the country.

The reflections are relevant and helpful to any individual or group engaged in Wilderness activism, including those focusing on building an organization, defending wild lands against threats, developing political strategies and tactics, or organizing citizen activists.

The Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance is known as one of the premier state-based Wilderness organizations in the U.S. Over the last 30 years, it has grown from a “junk yard dog” born in the trenches of desperate times to a highly sophisticated organization which effectively integrates legal, legislative, communication and citizen organizing efforts. In those three decades, SUWA has: largely stopped the loss of Wilderness on the ground; gained some level of protection for over 5.5 million acres of Wilderness lands; built a national constituency for wild lands in Utah; and begun to turn the conversation around in Utah on Wilderness. And it has realized these accomplishments in the reddest state of the Union at the heart of Sagebrush Rebellion country.

Some of the issues we touched upon include:

- The relationship between being visionary, tough-minded and uncompromising in the defense of Wilderness and being strategically pragmatic
- The value and power of on-the-ground expertise
- The integrated roles of legal and political action
- The importance of building the organization and an army of citizen activists
- Surviving and thriving in seemingly politically impossible conditions

Role of NGOs in Caring for the National Wilderness Preservation System

Gary Macfarlane, *Friends of the Clearwater*

Louise Lasley, *Wilderness Watch*

Wilderness Watch is America’s only organization dedicated to defending and keeping wild the nation’s 110 million-acre National Wilderness Preservation System. Wilderness Watch, founded in 1989, watchdogs the federal Wilderness agencies to see that Wilderness administration preserves Wilderness character and follows the law. Wilderness Watch believes that Wilderness is defined by two primary characteristics. First, it is a place where nature is free to exist as it did in ages past, self-willed and untrammelled. Second, it is a place where humans are free to roam through nature in its wild condition, to experience a feeling of solitude and self-reliance found nowhere else. While NGO’s have been heavily engaged in Wilderness legislation and more recently many NGOs have been involved in trail maintenance or other projects—acting as agency volunteers—Wilderness Watch’s role is unique and one that needs to be filled.

Engaging 18-25 year olds in the Values of Wilderness:

Digital Media Arts and Encountering the Wild

Kimberly Sultze, *Saint Michael’s College*

Jon Hyde, *Saint Michael’s College*

Our concurrent presentation addressed practical and interdisciplinary approaches to engaging 18-25 year olds in research, analysis, and media production related to nature and the outdoors. We are two university professors with 40 years of combined experience in curriculum development and pedagogy in Media Studies, Digital Arts, and Environmental Studies. Our examples involved experiential learning, community interactions, and place-based education; they came from assignments and projects we’ve undertaken in our courses, but the projects could be adapted for students of various ages.

We began by profiling the current screen-based media diet of American 18-25 year olds, and how such habits provide barriers to and opportunities for the development of Wilderness values. We shared a series of assignments and projects we’ve had success with. Our focus has been engaging young adults in the values

of Wilderness, the outdoors, and environmental issues through multiple forms of digital media. The projects involve research – including field work and observations, natural history, and in-depth interviewing of experts, as well as various forms of digital storytelling (writing, online media, digital audio and video).

Here are some samples:

- The Encounters Project: Facilitating Solitude and Self-reliance Using Multiple Forms of Media
- The Wild Soundscapes Project: Cultivating a Deeper Sensory Experience of Nature through Sound
- Adventure Filmmaking and Community Partner Documentaries: Working Together for a Cause
- Environmental Film Documentary: Production and Critical Analysis
- The Week without Cellphones: Making it Possible to Be Alone and Out of Touch

Millennial Service Learning in California's Wild Places

Emilyn Sheffield, *California State University*

Millennials—America's most diverse generation—are transforming campuses, communities and the workforce. Their voices and vision will carry the Wilderness idea forward. What are their hopes? How and why do they choose to invest their time and talents? Hundreds of student volunteers preserve and enhance parks, forests, wildlife refuges, trails, and Wilderness areas every year through CSU, Chico Field Schools. They remove invasive plant species and restore trails. They staff special events, manage conferences, and provide Millennial consultations. They develop marketing materials and utilize social media to engage people of all ages. They volunteer, they return, and they bring their friends.

Millennials volunteer for reasons as diverse as the generation itself, and seek to develop different skills through their volunteer efforts. Chico's program grew from five to 500 volunteers in five years by incorporating Millennial preferences to increase the attractiveness of nature and wildlands as service learning settings.

Key findings from the research and field practice are illustrated through case examples from Field Schools sponsored by four federal agencies (Bureau of Land Management, US Fish and Wildlife Service, USDA Forest Service, and the National Park Service) and California State Parks. Recruiting strategies and program design elements are essential in efforts to engage diverse participants. Risk management protocols and third party partners augment campus resources to enable more students to participate. Techniques have been field proven to intentionally incorporate:

- Intergenerational mentoring for first-generation college students
- Story-telling and technology to increase the appeal of wildland stewardship
- Milestone celebrations to attract new participants
- A tiered leadership model to leverage student and sponsor strengths

Chico's Field School program has grown quickly, affordably, and safely through a four-step formula that focuses on the aspirations of Millennials, and coordinates closely with campus and agency sponsors. Chico's experiences in program development and strategies for funding campus field schools can be adapted by any campus or agency to engage Millennials in wildland and Wilderness stewardship efforts.

Sharing Civic Engagement Successes: Successful NGO Programs

Harry Bruell, *Conservation Legacy*

Nathan Newcomer, *New Mexico Wilderness Alliance*

Robert Dvorak, *Society of Wilderness Stewardship*

Rose Chilcoat, *Great Old Broads for Wilderness*

Bob Hazelton, *National Wilderness Stewardship Alliance*

This high-powered panel session offered attendees a myriad of practical/field-tested tools in the areas of non-governmental organization (NGO) development, management and program sustainability, and was presented by leaders of the most-successful Wilderness NGOs in the business. If you are involved in any way at any level with a Wilderness NGO or agency Wilderness program this concurrent session was not one to miss.