



AMERICAN HIKER

2018 VOL. 2



NATIONAL TRAILS DAY® JUNE 2, 2018

Together we'll
Improve
2,802 MILES
of Trail

THE PLEDGE

Join this historic event and leave the trail better than you found it!
In honor of the 50th anniversary of the National Trail System, pledge to
pack out trash, join a trail work project, or clean up a park.

TAKE THE PLEDGE AND FIND AN EVENT NEAR YOU

AmericanHiking.org/National-Trails-Day

ADVOCACY UPDATE

Following a successful Hike the Hill®, joined by the [Partnership for the National Trails System](#), and with strong advocacy from AHS's [NextGen Trail Leaders](#), Congress passed legislation to [fund the government](#) that included two major victories for trails and public lands: funding for the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) and a fix to wildfire management funding to protect Forest Service programs.

Congress provided substantial funding in the amount of \$425 million to the LWCF. The LWCF is America's most important conservation program, responsible for protecting parks, wildlife refuges, and recreation areas at the federal, state, and local level. For over 50 years, it has provided critical funding for land and water conservation projects, recreational infrastructure and activities (including trails), and the continued historic preservation of our nation's iconic landmarks from coast to coast. [See which LWCF projects have benefited your local community.](#) AHS will continue to push for a permanent reauthorization of the

LWCF, which expires on September 30. Over the coming months, AHS members will have opportunities to engage their Members of Congress, calling on them to reauthorize this fund that has overwhelming bipartisan support.

In addressing a problem that had been [growing for more than a decade](#), Congress finally came together to provide a [comprehensive wildfire funding](#) fix, which ensures adequate funding to fight the increasing number and severity of wildfires. The costs to battle wildfires have been growing year after year, now accounting for over half of the Forest Service budget. This has resulted in drastic cuts to essential non-fire programs, including maintenance of trails. The long-awaited, comprehensive fix no longer forces the Forest Service to cut non-fire program budgets, like trail maintenance, when the annual wildfire funding runs out. Now, any additional funding that is needed can be taken from an already-established natural disaster funding source. [AHS](#) and a [coalition](#) of organizations rallied in support of this legislation and our work paid off.

2018 National Trails Day® Sponsors and Partners



Cover: Ryan Nelson



THE WILDERNESS ETHIC:

Connection to Place through Restraint

By Tyler Lee

I am haunted by place. I am haunted to be trivial in the eternity of the land; granite peaks, profound meadows and valleys, scarce and open deserts, exposed plains, and serpentine rivers. I am haunted to be dislocated from self-willed land. What does it mean to roam wild places? What does it mean to hike a trail in Wilderness? What does it mean to be part of the landscape? These are the thoughts I grapple with every day as a Wilderness hiker and ranger. Among the alpine gentians, contemplating the

Wilderness idea has always been a favorite pastime for hikers. In 2018, we can no longer afford the leisure of wilderness reflection alone. We must act and speak out in support of Wilderness and public lands; outside forces are challenging the laws that govern national Wilderness in the highest levels of our American democracy.

[H.R. 1349](#), the “[Wheels in Wilderness](#)” bill, would amend the Wilderness Act of 1964 to allow the use of mountain bikes in Wilderness areas. Mountain biking is a fantastic form of recreation, and I’m in support of the sustainable growth of the sport on our public lands. With that said, allowing bikes in the Wilderness destroys the integrity of the Wilderness Act, the very idea of setting aside places from “[increasing population, accompanied by expanding settlement and growing mechanization](#)”, and makes the act

vulnerable to further change. The reason many hikers, like myself, head to trails in the Wilderness is to forge a connection to reality and escape the burdens of civilization. If there were one concept I’d like to convey from my years spent in wild places; it would be the Wilderness Ethic – the restraint of civilization. To understand the idea of a Wilderness Ethic is to understand the concept of how the National Wilderness Preservation System came to be.

Humanity has an undying yearning for a sense of home and place; it is perhaps this desire for validated habitat that has driven the human conquest for purpose. I recently visited the ancestral lands of the Taos Pueblo, who have settled lands in the American Southwest for over 1,000 years and have a sense of place in the soil their ancestors wandered. The Tarahumara people of Mexico have no word for “wilderness;” they coexist and co-create as a part of the natural world. The American dream has a nomadic mythos – moving across the landscape, from place to place, in pursuit of purpose, happiness, and success. The pursuit of the American dream has dislocated us from cohabiting with the landscape. Environmental philosophers such as Thoreau, John Muir, Aldo Leopold, Wallace Stenger, Edward Abbey, and many more have noted throughout time the growing disconnect of society with the land. Nonetheless, designated Wilderness may be the last thing connecting humanity to untamed lands. The Wilderness

Act in its most basic form is an ethic – a restraint against human development.

The idea of untrammled land is to have a self-willed domain that humbles us and sometimes even scares us. To have consciousness and clarity in regard to the complex and interconnected ecology of a landscape, and more importantly to dream of place. National Wilderness might be the best chance for the American dream and nomadic mythos to reconnect to the land and find self-renewal; like the Taos Pueblo and Tarahumara. Civilization with restraint can coexist among wilderness; civilization without restraint cannot. Not allowing mountain bikes in the Wilderness or weakening of the Wilderness Act in any other way is exercising restraint on humanity’s use of the land; by limiting the pace and mode with which we experience our

wilderness areas, we increase the connection we can have with them. As a civilization, we should exercise our freedoms on the land, so long as those freedoms do not destroy the integrity and self-willed nature of the land itself.

The battleship is turning; an uneasy wind foreshadows the storm to come. The idea and concept of a Wilderness Ethic is once again at odds with the human desire to control and dominate the earth. As hikers, we can no longer afford the leisure to contemplate our relationship to the land in Wilderness alone. We must contemplate and fight for the idea and preservation of Wilderness in the American democracy. Hikers - it’s time we took a few minutes from the trail to hike to our Congresspeople to demand the protection of wild places from bills such as H.R. 1349.

Tyler Lee has worked in the outdoor conservation industry for over six years. He currently works for the U.S. Forest Service as a seasonal Wilderness Ranger (this article reflects his personal views and not that of the Forest Service). His contemporary focus is [Integrative and Public Land Management](#) in the [Master of Environmental Management](#) program at Western State Colorado University. For his master’s project, he is assisting the Aspen Sopris Ranger District of the White River National Forest with the strategic implementation of an [overnight limited use permit system](#) at Conundrum Hot Springs in the Maroon Bells-Snowmass Wilderness. Tyler is also an American Hiking Society [NextGen Trail Leader](#) and Policy Intern with the [Back Country Horsemen of America](#).



TEENS ON TRAILS

The longevity of America's trail system rests on the shoulders of individuals who invest time and sweat equity into sustaining their local trails. American Hiking Society recognizes the necessity of getting new faces involved with trail stewardship projects, and trail organizations across the country have begun developing new ways to get younger generations passionate about and contributing to trail conservation. Stewardship programs, geared specifically towards high school students, have flourished over the past few years.

While the concept of "building hiking trails" might seem like a job reserved for professionals, with the proper guidance, training, and motivation, many high school teens are making a real environmental impact by dedicating time to trail conservation projects. AHS Alliance member, [Volunteers for Outdoor Colorado \(VOC\)](#), engages students in monthly outdoor activities and stewardship projects throughout the school year through their [Cairn Youth Program](#). Taylor Drive, Programs Manager with VOC, comments, "Hands-on stewardship opportunities provide an avenue for young people to engage with their environment and feel rewarded by the immediate and tangible difference they can make. Engaging young people in stewardship opportunities demonstrates that they're not just the future – they are a viable force in outdoor stewardship right now, capable of serving in leadership positions and completing quality stewardship work for land managers."

[Appalachian Mountain Club \(AMC\)](#), also an AHS Alliance member, offers high schoolers more than 30 opportunities to volunteer through their [Teen Trail Crew Program](#). Designed specifically for teens, these trips

"Engaging young people in stewardship opportunities demonstrates that they're not just the future - they are a viable force in outdoor stewardship right now"



make positive improvements to trails in the Northeast, but also educate and inspire participants to the possibility of a career in natural resources. “During each trail program, we strive not only to focus on the daily trail work, but also to establish why it’s important, how it connects to the larger conservation world, and the different career paths that exist within this field. Our public lands are in need of so much support, and the efforts of our teen trail crews effect real and positive change, while also helping to maintain the integrity of our regional landscapes,” commented Alex DeLucia, AMC’s Trails Volunteer Program Manager.

Organized and structured trail stewardship projects, put on by organizations with many years of volunteer management experience, can provide an inclusive and welcoming environment for first time volunteers. Many teens will sign up for a stewardship project without knowing anyone, but that won’t last for long. Through AHS Alliance member [Washington Trails Association’s \(WTA\) Youth Volunteer Vacations](#), high school students spend a week outdoors building and maintaining hiking trails in a safe, teamwork-oriented environment. “The majority of our youth volunteers participate on their own and meet new friends on the trip. Teens often tell us how great it is to meet new people who share their love of the outdoors. It is amazing the bonds that form over a week of hard work during the day and shared stories in the evenings,” said Krista Dooley, Youth and Volunteer Programs Director for WTA.

With a mission to protect the places you love to hike, American Hiking Society is proud to promote these teen-centric volunteering opportunities. Together we are creating passionate and skilled next generation trail stewards that will transform the conservation landscape into the future.

📷 Appalachian Mountain Club



Appalachian Mountain Club (AMC)

Teen Trail Crews

Ideal for adventurous teens interested in the experience of camping or backpacking and learning or improving on outdoor skills, while engaging in meaningful conservation service projects. Each crew consists of up to 10 teens and 2 college-aged crew leaders. Dayhiking and backpacking options are available. Meals and experienced supervision are provided throughout the trip.

Location: Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York

Ages: 14-19

Time Commitment: 1 Week, 10 Days, 2 Week, and 4 Week options are available depending upon age.

Highlights: The program offers a wide variety of trip experiences with options for those new to trail work or looking to sharpen their outdoor skills. Meet new friends and challenge yourself in the mountains of the Northeast!

More Information:
AMC Trails Volunteer Programs Registrations Coordinator
603-466-8156 or 603-466-2727
amcvolprojects@outdoors.org
[Website](#)

📷 Volunteers for Outdoor Colorado



Volunteers for Outdoor Colorado (VOC)

Cairn Youth Program

Students participate in monthly outdoor activities and stewardship projects throughout the school year across the Front Range. Supervision and guidance are provided by experienced young adult mentors. Participants will have a hands-on impact as they plan and lead their own stewardship project.

Location: Colorado

Ages: 14-18

Time Commitment: September – May (Once per month)

Highlights: The program offers a wide variety of trip experiences with options for those new to trail work or looking to sharpen their outdoor skills. Build your college resume and learn about careers in natural resources, while improving the trails of Colorado!

More Information:
Taylor Driver
303-715-1010 ext. 114
taylor@voc.org
[Website](#)

📷 Washington Trails Association



Washington Trails Association (WTA)

Youth Volunteer Vacations

Every summer, teens join WTA to learn about the world of building and maintaining hiking trails. Each crew is comprised of 10 teens and 2 adult crew leaders. Dayhiking and backpacking options are available. Meals and experienced supervision are provided throughout the trip.

Location: Washington

Ages: 14-18

Time Commitment: 1 Week

Highlights: The program offers the opportunity to develop leadership and outdoor skills, all while giving back to trails. Earn service hours for school while exploring the beauty of the Pacific NW!

More Information:
Britt Le
206-557-3406
britt@wta.org
[Website](#)

BUILDING TRAILS AND OVERCOMING CHALLENGES ON AN ALTERNATIVE BREAK



In March of 2018, a group from North Carolina A&T State University (NC A&T) participated in the university's first-ever Alternative Break. Since this was a pilot program, they reached out to American Hiking Society to organize a trip that was nature focused, driveable from campus, and inclusive of participants who were largely unfamiliar with hiking and outdoor recreation. We knew the group was in good hands, volunteering in James River State Park and led by Ron Griswell, an [AHS NextGen Trail Leader](#) and outdoor advocate. We caught up with Ron after the trip to reflect on the experience.

Foremost, I'm not your typical college student. Most of the students participating in this Alternative Break are on the traditional path. They started college right out of high school and have been continuing on the righteous path to obtain a degree. Me – I became disillusioned my junior year of college. I wanted to do something – something extraordinary and fulfilling. I was tired of the motions of the college experience.

In March 2010, I went on a service learning trip with my university. With ProWorld, we ventured into Punta Gorda, Belize. The week was filled with learning about local cultures through living with and talking to them. Belize now holds some of my most cherished adventures to date. From the good

to the bad to the terrorizing - that's what I wanted.

So, I made a radical decision that fall in 2011—I got rid of most of my belongings, removed myself from most social media, terminated my apartment lease, and moved to Minnesota in the dead of one of their coldest winters to intern at an outdoor adventure nonprofit, Wilderness Inquiry. What was supposed to be one year away from school turned into three as I made amazing memories all over the country. Everything from dog sledding in the Boundary Waters, white water rafting down the Grand Canyon, canoeing urban waterways from California to New York, backpacking in the Stanislaus National Forest, trail running and camping in Yosemite, and partnering with the National Park Service for invasive species removal and water testing with youth groups. I found the excitement and the fulfillment that I was longing for.

At the end of that third year I resubmitted to NC A&T to continue my student track. This time was different. Now as a nontraditional student with the experience, skills, and resources, I wanted to help

“I have had trouble venturing outside of my comfort zone. Trying so many different things while on the trip has definitely made me more thirsty to explore new hobbies & activities.”

- Paige P.

my school, a predominantly black university, offer more outdoor recreational experiences for the students. If there was one thing that I learned from the three years I was away, it was that there were not enough people of color recreating in the outdoors. I wanted to change this narrative starting at my university.

“If there was one thing that I learned from the three years I was away, it was that there were not enough people of color recreating in the outdoors. I wanted to change this narrative starting at my university.”

Fast forward to December of 2017, I receive an email asking if I would like to help the school start a pilot program for an alternative break trip. Recalling the excitement I had from my service learning trip in Belize and my desire to solidify more outdoor programs for the university, I immediately hopped on board. Though, I was skeptical about how many students would want to trade in their traditional spring break to volunteer. Luckily, my skepticism was unfounded as we received interest from 140 people!

The next part of the process proved to be the most difficult for me. I had to make sure the group had the time of their lives and came back to Greensboro to their loved ones in the same, if not better, condition in which they left. My concern was based off my love of the outdoors through all of the





fun and experiences I have had, which molded me into a steward of these wild places. The last thing I wanted was for someone to have a terrible time and never step foot on a patch of grass again. And worst, for them to tell other people to not go try outdoor activities. I want to introduce as many people of color to the outdoors as possible. One unhappy student could mean one step forward and 20 steps back depending on the effect of their stories on family and friends. After three days of no complaints, I thought to myself ‘maybe my co-leaders, and I are doing something right.’

James River State Park, in Virginia, was the perfect place to pilot an NC A&T Alternative Break. The park has trails that rise to great elevation in some areas and dip alongside the river in others. It was breathtaking and we all were mesmerized with each new view. We worked at maintaining a trail for the James River State Park Annual Adventure Triathlon. We hacked at roots, rocks, and stumps and removed “hazards” pointed out by one of the rangers. We learned techniques like benching and different tools we could use.

The amazing meals my students cooked – so impressed. There was also the volleyball game that really got our competitive juices going that carried over into hilarious games of Taboo, Cards Against Humanity, Uno, and Black Card Revoked. We climbed trees and became childlike with each new discovery in the park. We tossed

a Frisbee and did yoga as some watched the setting sun dip behind the far-off mountain range. We sang and danced every evening before and after dinner – dinners were family-style as we sat around a table and laughed about the blunders of the day.

We made s’mores by the campfire – for many, their first. As the stars danced in the night sky, we grabbed blankets and lay on top of our vans, hunting for shooting stars. My favorite memory is from the last evening when everyone cried together as the realization of heading back home sunk in. For me, this memory proved that the group, a bunch of random students and strangers in the beginning, became family by the end.

We arrived at a place that wasn’t the original destination. Some thought of themselves as weak before beginning the trip. Through removing trail obstacles, hiking roughly 4 miles a day, and pushing through swollen and sore hands and feet to get the job done,

they proved to themselves just how strong they were. No one necessarily saw ‘confidence in oneself’ as the destination or takeaway of this trip, but that is what happened. One student learned to step outside of their

“Only after the trip was over and I read the students’ reflections did I realize that the trail maintenance was not only vital to the park, but it was a vehicle that helped each student individually find some strength in themselves.”

comfort zone. Another student learned to cope with depression with the help of a group and nature. Another student learned that no matter who you are, each person has a special talent that is a necessity to the group’s cohesion.

Only after the trip was over and I read the students’ reflections did I realize that the trail maintenance was not only vital to the park, but it was a vehicle that helped each student individually find some strength in themselves.

“I learned that everyone is unique in their own way, and when someone is weak in one area they are strong in another. Being surrounded by unique people, you learn that everyone has a special gift that only they have. But what is important about each person’s special gift is that it’s a necessity to someone else. For example, on the trip, Ron had the gift to bring everyone together, while Paige had the gift to support, Chloe had the gift of understanding, and Anthony had to gift to lead. Each gift was a necessity to make this trip worthwhile.”

- Ariana S.

“Since I’m from inner city DC and go to school in Greensboro, I have never seen a clear night sky, so being at James River State Park and experiencing the night sky full of stars was astonishing. I wish I could have gotten a picture, but the memory will forever be ingrained in my mind.

Personally, I learned that I should never let my mind limit my physical capabilities. I talk myself out of physically

challenging things because I don’t see myself as strong or capable, but within a week, I hiked over 20 miles (possibly even more) and that’s something that I never thought I could do, even in a month.

I will also be taking more chances to go out into nature and inform others on how important it is to take care of the world around us, before it’s too late.”

- Asia H.





GIVING BACK TO PUBLIC LANDS THROUGH UNIQUE VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

We LOVE our public lands and what better way to show this love than by participating in a volunteer project to preserve and protect them?! AHS enlisted the help of our federal agency partners at the Bureau of Land Management and the National Park System to uncover some recent unique volunteer opportunities on federally-managed public lands. To find your next volunteer opportunity on federally managed public lands head to [volunteer.gov](https://www.volunteer.gov).

Annually, BLM engages more than 27,000 volunteers (including [Volunteer Vacation](#) participants) in vital land management activities, providing a total of nearly 1,000,000 volunteer hours! Even better, BLM is fostering lifelong stewards with one-third of volunteers being under the age of 25! Across the country, BLM is finding new and innovative ways for the public to give back.

In Nevada, BLM partnered with the [Friends of Nevada Wilderness](#) to plant more than 2,400 sagebrush seedlings to rehabilitate an area affected by wildfire on public land near Mosquito Lake in northwest Nevada.



In Utah, BLM and [Tread Lightly!](#) set-out to protect cultural and heritage sites on public lands from looting and vandalism by launching the [Respect and Protect](#) public awareness campaign. Events were and continue to be held around the state allowing volunteers to learn about and share with others the importance of protecting and preserving archaeological, paleontological, and other natural resources on public lands. [Learn more about getting involved.](#)



In Nevada, to reduce dumping on public lands, BLM was joined by the Forest Service, Waste Management company, county government agencies, and other volunteers from the local Rotary Club for a used-tire take-back event that allowed the public to dispose of tires that could have ended up on our public lands.



The National Park Service enlists the help of more than 400,000 volunteers, who annually provide over 7,000,000 hours of service! The Volunteer In Parks program (VIP) provides a wide array of stewardship opportunities across the country for any interest.

One of our favorite new NPS volunteer opportunities is the [Trail Stewards Program](#) along the [Star-Spangled Banner National Historic Trail](#) in Maryland, Virginia, and Washington, DC. The Trail Stewards Program was developed and implemented through a NPS partnership with the [Friends of Fort McHenry](#), and [Living Classrooms Foundation](#). This project serves communities in the Chesapeake Bay region that are located [along the land and water routes](#) taken by British and American soldiers during the War of 1812. This educational opportunity trains teachers to become Trail Stewards, connects student Trail Ambassadors with the maritime portion of the trail through on-water voyages, and engages communities through student-created Trail Legacy projects.



In these legacy projects, students wrote and acted out plays about the War of 1812, made books for their school library, and explored our maritime heritage by handcrafting historic boats. In January 2018, the program wrapped up its second season working with teachers and students along the trail. Thirty-one teachers and 500 students from Maryland, Virginia, and Washington, DC have participated so far, and almost 4,500 community members have been engaged through Trail Legacy projects. NPS just began its third season of Trail Stewards last month. If you would like to get involved in this program contact Abbi Wicklein-Bayne at Fort McHenry at 410-962-2490.



A MESSAGE FROM THE BOARD CHAIR

As I write this letter, I am attending a conference at the National Conservation Training Center (NCTC) along the Potomac River in Shepherdstown, WV. The Center is crisscrossed with hiking trails through the woods and to the river. Before arriving at the NCTC, I spent two days hiking in Harpers Ferry National Historical Park and along the C&O Canal. Being out in rural West Virginia, I pondered the necessity of introducing young people to nature through hiking and trail stewardship. We must introduce our kids to hiking to develop that love for nature. Then we encourage the next generation (18-40 year olds) to help build and maintain trails while continuing to foster a love for the outdoors. The next generation will help tell our story through social media by sharing their adventures and outdoor experiences.

National Trails Day® (NTD) on 2 June 2018 is the perfect time to get out and help maintain our local, state, regional, and national trails. American Hiking Society has set a goal to improve 2,802 miles of trail during NTD. To do this, we need your help in organizing or attending an NTD event near you. As part of your hike, spend some time improving the trail so that others can continue to enjoy the adventure in the future.

Help us engage the next generation of hikers in trail stewardship and to reach our goal of 2,802 miles of improved trails.

Keep on hiking,




Jack Hess
Board Chair



📷 Kyle Loftus

PROTECTING THE PLACES YOU LOVE TO HIKE

ADVOCACY | STEWARDSHIP & VOLUNTEERISM | EDUCATION & OUTREACH

THANK YOU AHS SPONSORS



Adventure Medical Kits • Astral • FalconGuides • Granite Gear • Icard Merrill • Klean Kanteen • LEKI
Menasha Ridge Press • ThermaRest • Wildland Trekking Company • Your True Nature

AND OUR FEDERAL PARTNERS

