

# POUDRE WILDERNESS VOLUNTEERS

## 2017 FACT SHEET



*Poudre Wilderness Volunteers (PWV) is a Larimer County, Colorado nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization founded in 1996 to assist the Canyon Lakes Ranger District of the United States Forest Service in managing and protecting the wilderness and backcountry areas within its jurisdiction. To achieve this mission, PWV recruits, trains, equips, and fields citizen volunteers to serve as wilderness rangers and hosts for the purpose of educating the public, and provides other appropriate support to these wild areas.*

PWV has grown substantially and diversified since its founding and is considered to be one of the largest, most effective organizations of its kind in the nation.

### The Need

- Federal appropriations for the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) are not sufficient to cover the costs of forest management and conservation. Furthermore, the USFS doesn't have enough staff to adequately patrol and monitor the Wilderness and backcountry trails in our area.
- Backcountry use continues to rise, reflecting population growth and demographic changes along the Front Range and elsewhere in the nation. A recent National Survey on Recreation and the Environment (2000 – 2007) indicates that participation in outdoor recreation activities increased by 25 - 31% and that Americans' interest in nature and nature-based recreation is changing. While activities such as hiking, backpacking, horse riding, mountain climbing, and snow skiing have recently shown declines in popularity, viewing or photographing birds, wildlife, and flowers and trees have increased by 19 to 26%, and kayaking has increased by 63%. In 2010, the Arapaho & Roosevelt National Forests were visited by 6 million people, the second highest number of visits to a National Forest in the nation.
- Many backcountry users have no idea what a designated Wilderness is or why it must be left "untrammelled" by man. A majority of them know very little about low-impact camping. If there is nobody to inform visitors about appropriate Wilderness use, some of our Wilderness areas could become so heavily impacted that additional restrictions on public use will be imposed.

### The Concept

- Most duties of a USFS ranger can be accomplished by carefully chosen, well-trained citizen volunteers. PWV recruits local citizens who care about and use the region's outdoor resources. Members commit to a minimum of six days of service each year "hiking or riding with a purpose."
- PWV members have no law enforcement authority but use education and diplomacy to promote compliance with Wilderness and backcountry regulations and Leave No Trace principles
- PWV members wear uniform shirts with identifying patches and name badges that make them a highly visible non-official U.S. Forest Service presence on the trails. They typically carry two-way radios and/or satellite communicators, and are trained to handle various emergency situations that might be encountered in the backcountry.
- **PWV is an all-volunteer organization with no paid staff.**

### The Results

PWV has grown from 105 founding members in 1996 to **258 active members in 2017**. Poudre Wilderness Volunteers patrol about 286 miles along 69 system trails in 650,000 acres of Wilderness and general National Forest and National Grassland lands. Due in part to PWV's efforts:

- When there were insufficient USFS funds or personnel to clear trails in early summer, PWV established a **Trail Crew**
- When the U.S. Forest Service was unable to meet its goals for locating, controlling, and eradicating noxious weeds, PWV established a **Weed Crew**
- When the USFS added a Kids in the Woods emphasis, PWV established a **Kids in Nature Program**
- When wildfires and floods ravaged the Canyon Lakes Ranger District, PWV established a **Restoration Program**
- Lost hikers have been found and potential forest fires have been averted by the prompt actions of our volunteers

- PWV members make an effort to talk about leash benefits and regulations with every dog owner they encounter in the Wilderness, addressing a most difficult educational task
- PWV provides the most informative statistics on trail and Wilderness use that the Canyon Lakes Ranger District has

**Since 2005, PWV has donated a total of 256,024 volunteer hours, worth \$6,009,908 to the USFS.**

#### **In 2017 PWV:**

1. Conducted a total of **973 trail patrols (6,387 on-trail hours)** and had **meaningful contacts with 9,825** of the **17,302** backcountry trail users seen (= 56.8%)
2. Reported **102 illegal fire rings** and **removed or downsized 177 illegal or oversized fire rings**
3. Reported **834 violations** and contacted **295 violators** using the *Authority of the Resource Technique* and explaining *Leave No Trace* or other reasons for the regulations
4. PWV members removed **2,658 fallen trees** along more than 150 miles of trail
5. The PWV Weed Crew pulled **noxious weeds on 114 acres** of National Forest lands
6. The PWV **Restoration Program** conducted **10 PWV-only workdays (460 hours)**, organized and implemented **6 public trail restoration workdays (142 hours)**, paid and supervised the Larimer County Youth Conservation Corps to do an additional **4 days of trail restoration on PWV projects (292 hours)**, and supervised The Rocky Mountain Conservancy trail crew when it worked with PWV for two days
7. The PWV **Kids in Nature** program held **7 hikes for 43 different kids**
8. Additionally, other PWV programs (e.g., **Adopt-a-Trail** and **Adopt-a-Highway**) contributed environmental stewardship and public outreach via various activities
9. PWV contributed a total of **24,132 volunteer hours** worth **\$582,541** to the USFS

Given that PWV expenditures in 2017 totaled \$26,032 and the value of PWV volunteer hours to the USFS was \$582,541 - **every dollar spent by PWV provided \$22.38 of value to the USFS.**

## **The Future**

As population growth along the Front Range results in more and more backcountry use by the public, PWV needs to keep pace by recruiting and training new volunteers each year to assure adequate coverage of the District's many popular trails throughout the summer.

We continue to seek public and corporate support to meet our modest operating costs and to provide volunteers with appropriate training, essential equipment and emergency gear, and uniforms (to make members easily identified while on patrol, even in rainy or cold weather).

## **A Successful and Different Organization**

PWV and its members have gained **regional** (1997, 2009, 2012, & 2013 *Larimer County Environmental Stewardship Award*; 2008 *Colorado Weed Management Association Outstanding Volunteer Efforts Award*, 2011 *United Way of Larimer County Senior Volunteer Excellence Award*) and **national** (2010 *Take Pride in America Award for Non-profit Organizations*, 2010 *University of Phoenix National Points of Light Volunteer Leader Award*, and 2013 *USFS Volunteer Group Award*) recognition for their contributions.

PWV has no political or hidden agendas. Our single purpose is to protect the region's Wilderness and backcountry areas through on-trail service and public education. We are not an environmental advocacy group. PWV has a rigorous and comprehensive training program for its recruits and veteran members. No other organization providing volunteer rangers for the U.S. Forest Service has as many members, provides as many hours on the trail, or does so much without any paid staff.

[PWV federal tax ID and Colorado State Tax Exempt # available on request]