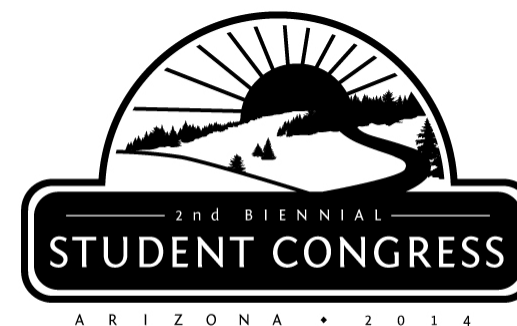


2. Streamline agency hiring processes to make them more equitable and accessible.

When BLM does hire new employees--whether on a seasonal or permanent basis--another issue arises: the need for the most qualified applicants to be hired. The current hiring system saves BLM employee time through an initial screening process designed to remove unqualified applicants from consideration. The initial screen includes an automated survey of applicants' knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSAs); naturally, the applicants indicating the most KSAs are referred to the Human Resources officials. Unfortunately, applicants familiar with the hiring process tend to exaggerate their KSAs in order to reach the next level in hiring, while those unfamiliar with the process may answer more realistically and are outcompeted by less honest applicants. As a result, less honest, and perhaps less technically qualified, applicants reach the interview stage of the hiring process, with many equally-able people being eliminated early on.

To ensure the inclusion of qualified applicants, we recommend the BLM and its partners adopt the following actions:

- Hold frequent trainings in universities, high schools and community education centers about the OPM/USAJobs system
- Create a mechanism within the initial screening process that gives advantages to individuals who have volunteered for the agency
- Edit USAJobs position descriptions to accurately reflect job duties
- Review efficacy of online multiple-choice questionnaires



Developing a National Land Ethic

Recommendations from the 2nd Biennial Student Congress

We, the members of the Second Biennial Student Congress on Public Policy for Land Management, in commemoration of the 50th anniversary of the Wilderness Act, have come to together to discuss wilderness and public land management to support the development of a national land ethic.

Wilderness and public lands are important for many reasons unique to each person and place. They exist as areas for inspiration, improving physical and mental health and well-being, and sustaining natural processes. It is important to protect the opportunity for wilderness and outdoor experience for future generations in the midst of changing ecological and social conditions.

As our nation celebrates the 50th anniversary of the Wilderness Act, we examine its relevance for current and future land management. As described in the 1964 Act, wilderness is an area where the earth and its community of life are untrammelled by humans, where people are visitors and do not remain. While perspectives on wilderness may have shifted since the passage of the Act, the need for and relevance of wilderness remains.

We also recognize there is a spectrum of wilderness characteristics. In the management of wilderness, and public lands in general, a national framework should be maintained that emphasizes regional and local concerns. It is important to provide urban populations with a form of wilderness experience. This will allow for a more resilient application of wilderness policy and management.

Building upon the recommendations for multiple use of public lands by the first Student Congress, and seeking to promote and protect public lands and wilderness, we suggest a focus on three areas: resource management, education and engagement, and employment.

EARLY NOTICE: THIRD STUDENT CONGRESS COMING IN SEPTEMBER 2016

Resource Management

1. Increase Designation of Wilderness Areas

To encourage both wilderness advocacy and a national land ethic, we believe it is appropriate to increase Wilderness and other open-space designations that preserve naturalness, provide opportunities for solitude, and engage with landscapes of scientific, educational, scenic, or historical value.

We encourage Federal agencies to actively preserve additional open spaces which exhibit natural characteristics in regions that currently have limited or no Wilderness Areas, such as the prairies of the Midwest. This will require collaboration and negotiation with private, state, and federal landowners. Any compromises necessary to create additional Wilderness will not establish precedent nor will it affect any current wilderness management.

2. Track Landscape and Biodiversity Trends

In order to understand changes in landscape and biodiversity, we believe it is important to establish baseline conditions, systematically monitor public lands using qualitative and quantitative data, and track ecological changes. Agencies should collaborate on data collection and analysis to best use their limited resources. With these goals in mind, we encourage Federal agencies to:

- Establish a baseline for Wilderness areas that considers historical and paleo-ecological data for the local environment.
- Utilize baseline data to inform management practices.
- Integrate qualitative and quantitative field monitoring techniques in order to track changes in landscape composition and inform management technique.
- Incorporate Traditional Ecological Knowledge and acknowledgement of Native American traditional uses should be considered when developing management approaches and plans.
- Provide national mandate and guidance on addressing climate in wilderness management plans.

Education and Engagement

1. Create a public relations campaign promoting awareness of wilderness and wilderness ethics.

As suggested by the first student congress: The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) should utilize new and current social media and technology to connect with the general public and interested parties. The BLM should use these outlets to increase public awareness of the BLM's contributions to public health, safety and sustainability; build community and stronger bonds between people and public land to support cooperative stewardship; foster public discourse; and enhance training and collaboration opportunities within the BLM and other federal agencies.

2. Create and strengthen existing partnerships with local Non-governmental Organizations (NGO), community members, academic and outreach programs and promote awareness of these organizations.

Continue to build on and promote existing partnerships, and establish new connections with organizations not already working with Federal agencies. Focus on collaborating with academic and outreach programs to further promote the development of and education on a national land ethic. Facilitate engagement with current projects and programs implemented on public lands.

3. Increase outreach and collaboration with Native American and other indigenous cultures for the creation of a national land ethic.

Initiate a dialogue with tribal and BLM/Public Land Foundation representatives that will focus on and bring to light the values of Traditional Ecological Knowledge to create a moral compass for current land management. Create a document from this dialogue that will be pursued with tribal stakeholders who will work with communities to increase ecological knowledge. Using the wisdom gained from this initiative, agencies and interested parties can create an American national land ethic.

Employment

1. Prioritize recruitment of qualified full-time staff; when budgets prevent new hires, collaborate with partnerships to fulfill duties.

BLM staff are responsible for implementing wilderness management plans and acting as interpreters for wilderness visitors. Budgetary constraints pose difficulties in BLM staffing, namely lack of rangers in the field and outreach coordination personnel. Issues have arisen regarding the insufficient number of staff to fulfill BLM's Wilderness duties, as well as the high rate of staff turnover. BLM employees have voiced concerns about the financial and functional inconsistencies of being hired on a seasonal basis, and the public has complained about having to keep up with changing BLM points of contact, as well as the local knowledge lost when one employee leaves and another arrives. Both BLM employees and the public have emphasized that a greater number of full-time staff is needed.

Unfortunately, hiring full-time staff is contingent upon budgets that are often out of agency control. If supporting full-time employees is impossible, the BLM should partner with other organizations to support staff responsibilities. BLM staff and/or partners should be responsible for the following tasks:

- Inventory and monitoring of wilderness characteristics, ecosystems, and human use in accordance with management plans as suggested in Resource Management Recommendation
- Enforcement of laws, rules, and regulations
- Education/Interpretation, acting as an interface between Wilderness and the public
- Maintenance of land in accordance with the Wilderness Act
- Coordination of relationships with partners (e.g. NGOs, community stewards, schools, industry).