



# NATIONAL WILDERNESS STEWARDSHIP ALLIANCE

*Building a Wilderness Stewardship Community*

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**NWSA**

PO Box 752  
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3.3.2021

Vicki Christiansen, Chief  
USDA Forest Service

Dear Chief Christiansen,

The undersigned groups of the Wilderness and Wild and Scenic Rivers community wish to express our strong opposition to not filling the Wilderness and Wild and Scenic River Director position among your National Forest System Staff Directors. We feel this leadership position fills a critical role in connection to our community, in meeting agency legal requirements for Wilderness and Wild and Scenic Rivers and providing agency leadership for these programs.

We have attached a set of talking points for you to consider as strong rationale for filling this position, and even considering expanding the portfolio of this staff to include other Congressionally Designated Areas and special areas within the Forest Service.

The role of special areas will only continue to grow in value and prominence as the country struggles to deal with climate change, habitat resilience, restorations efforts, and ever-increasing recreation demands on the National Forests. Strong leadership is needed to meet Congressional intent for these special lands and designations. De-emphasizing these areas by eliminating a leadership position sends the wrong message about the importance of these areas for shared stewardship, addressing the future needs of America's public, and management of over 20% of the National Forest System.

Please reconsider moving forward with this consolidation and instead begin outreach efforts to fill this critical leadership position as soon as possible.

Sincerely,

*Randy Welsh*

Randy Welsh  
Executive Director  
National Wilderness Stewardship Alliance

And the Organizations Listed Below.

Cc: Chris French, Deputy Chief, NFS; Secretary Vilsack, USDA



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*Building a Wilderness Stewardship Community*

National/Regional Organizations Opposed to the Consolidation of Wilderness/WSR into the Recreation Staff

The Wilderness Society  
The River Management Society  
The Southern Environmental Law Center  
Pew Charitable Trusts  
American Rivers  
American Whitewater  
Appalachian Trail Conservancy  
Pacific Crest Trail Association  
Wilderness Land Trust  
Wilderness Watch  
Bob Marshall Wilderness Foundation  
American Hiking Society  
Back Country Horsemen of America  
Southern Appalachian Wilderness Stewards