

Wilderness Institute to receive National Forest Foundation Grant to support Citizen Science in the Absaroka-Beartooth Wilderness

Stewardship of wilderness areas is increasingly jeopardized by declining federal dollars available to wilderness managers. Since 2005, the Wilderness Institute (WI) has worked closely with agency and community partners to address this short-fall by recruiting citizens to help trained field staff assess on-the-ground conditions, perform basic stewardship activities, and monitor wilderness character. Thanks to a **National Forest Foundation** (<http://www.nationalforests.org/>) 2015 Matching Grant award, the Wilderness Institute will continue the effort this summer in the Absaroka-Beartooth (AB) Wilderness in Montana. In collaboration with Forest Service wilderness managers, and working with local NGOs, WI will recruit citizen volunteers to help trained field staff inventory trail conditions and monitor weed sites, campsites and social trails. Between June and October 2015, we anticipate at least 7 Absaroka-Beartooth volunteer field trips. Resulting data and reports will help managers assess and uphold wilderness character while maintaining public access to wilderness and facilitating quality wilderness recreational opportunities for visitors. Consistent with our work over the past decade, this project is driven by immediate on-the-ground agency needs, depends on community participation throughout, and builds the local and regional capacity for collaborative community-agency wilderness stewardship.

To learn more about the WI's Citizen Science Program, please visit <http://www.cfc.umt.edu/wi/education/citizen-science/default.php>. To find out more about 2015 volunteer opportunities, please email CitizenScience@cfc.umt.edu.