

Poudre Wilderness Volunteers – 2015 Annual Report

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. In 2015 PWV celebrated its twentieth anniversary.

The Results

PWV has grown from 105 founding members in 1996 to **276 active members in 2015**. Poudre Wilderness Volunteers currently patrol 286 miles along 69 system trails in 650,000 acres of wilderness and general National Forest and National Grassland lands.

In 2015 PWV:

1. Conducted a total of 973 trail patrols and had meaningful contacts with 8,869 of the 13,493 wilderness and backcountry users seen
2. Removed or rehabilitated 166 illegal or inappropriate fire rings
3. Reported 1,093 violations and contacted 261 violators using the Authority of the Resource Technique and explaining Leave No Trace or other reasons for the regulations
4. Carried out 256 pounds of trash from trails and campsites
5. Removed 1,354 fallen trees along the trails
6. The PWV Weed Crew pulled noxious weeds on 109 acres of National Forest lands
7. The PWV Restoration Program organized and implemented 20 public trail restoration workdays (2,045 hours) and 16 PWV trail restoration workdays (1,611 hours). Work on the North Fork trail built 1 mile of new trail.
8. The PWV Kids in Nature program held 9 hikes for 81 different kids
9. Additionally, other PWV programs (e.g., Adopt-a-Highway, and Winter Patrolling) contributed environmental stewardship and public outreach via various activities
10. Contributed a total of 26,975 volunteer hours, worth \$622,313 to the USFS

Given that PWV expenditures in 2015 totaled \$33,839 - **every dollar spent by PWV provided \$18.39 of value to the USFS.**

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** recognition (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*).

PWV has no political or hidden agendas. Our single purpose is to protect the region's Wilderness Areas and backcountry through on-trail service and public education. We are not an environmental advocacy group. PWV has the most rigorous and comprehensive training of any volunteer group of its kind. 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.

Committee Reports

Web Team

In addition to the normal support of the PWV communications needs, pwv.org website, PWV Facebook, and PWV Meetup, the Web Team was awarded a major grant from the National Environmental Education Foundation for upgrading and redesigning the pwv.org website. The Team's current major effort is the implementation of that grant.

Affiliation Gatherings

There were seven Affiliation Gatherings for the 2015 PWV season. The topics covered were: Colorado Trail Escapade, Livestock Protection Dogs, Larimer County Search & Rescue, Winter Wildlife Physiology, Learn about Moose, Wyoming's Red Desert, Nutrition. The average attendance was ~ 40 people per Gathering with around 10% of attendees being potential PWV members.

Restoration

In 2015 PWV held 20 public Trail Restoration work days and 16 PWV-only work days to repair the trails that were damaged in the floods of 2013. These days were attended by over 180 different volunteers and there were 475 person days with approximately 3,650 hours spent working on the trails. These volunteers have built over one mile of new trail and started construction on two major bridges. So excellent progress has been made but there is still work left to do in 2016. The plan is to complete the North Fork trail by midsummer and continue on to the other trails.



Restoration

Endowment Fund

2015 was a very successful year for the Endowment Fund. \$8,250 was received in donations, and \$787 from market changes, totaling \$9,037. This brings the total fund principle to \$45,771 (as of 9-15-2015), or \$4,229 away from the goal of \$50,000. At \$50,000, grant applications will be accepted from committees and the membership, and annually awards can be granted of up to 5% of the principle. Most of the income was realized from the Backyard Party/Auction held in late June at the home of Larry and Vicki Stroud. Much thanks to the party hosts as well as the other planning committee members of Judy Christensen, Judy Jacks, Kathy Ayer, and Tom & Carol Dougherty. Thanks to the many other volunteers as well who helped make this event so successful. PWV has partnered with the Northern Colorado Community Foundation, who will be managing the fund principle.



Endowment Backyard Part Fund Raiser

Trail Patrolling

PWV had another good patrol season in 2015. From January through October PWV members completed 973 patrols, some on snowshoes, in mud, on horseback and just hiking boots. With 13,493 people seen and 8,869 folks contacted, PWV volunteers have made a difference and have added a great deal of value by interacting with the public.



PWV Member Assisting Members of the Public

Kids In Nature

“Look at all the butterflies! I didn’t know butterflies liked poop!” -- 9-year-old participant. Kids in Nature held 9 hikes with 6 different agencies or groups, adding The GrandFamily Coalition in 2015. PWV educated 81 kids plus 29 agency staff, volunteers and family members. 27 PWV members contributed to these hikes. The kids’ interests guided us as we explored the natural world. PWV taught the basics of wilderness safety, Leave No Trace and stewardship for public lands. Plus, each hike had a short interactive lesson about trees, aquatic macro-invertebrates or mammal tracks and signs. PWV again partnered with the City of Fort Collins Education Staff, who led activities and trained PWV members in aquatic invertebrates and clean water education. Sarah Flick, of the USFS, assisted with tree lessons, and a mammals curriculum was added. Every kid who attended expressed interest in going on a hike again. The vast majority of these kids have never been on a trail nor in the mountains before. *“Thanks for doing everything... I needed this!”* -- 8-year-old participant.



Kids in Nature Hike

Patrol Mentoring

The 2015 PWV Mentoring Program was a great success, providing the necessary support to new PWV members. 59 mentor patrols were reported over the patrol season. There were 23 hike, 1 hike and stock and 7 stock veteran members who were trained and shared their skills on the trails with the new members.

Stock Members

Three new stock volunteers were successfully trained last spring. The Stock Evaluation utilized the help of 15 returning stock volunteers and one hiker (Bob Hansen) to put on the half day event. Two of the stock volunteers were able to assist the PWV Trail Crew haul some of their gear part way up the North Rawah trail, stock members helped haul lumber for the North Fork Restoration project and packed out weeds on a weed pull. 115 stock patrols were completed during the 2015 season. Eight overnight stock patrols were conducted using llamas to haul in gear of hikers.

This is the first season the PWV packing equipment was put to use. Plans to help the Weed Crew haul out weeds from various trails is in the works for the 2016 season. A strategic plan was developed by the stock committee to be implemented starting with the 2016 season.



Stock Patrol

Weed Crew

Accomplishments: 48 new PWV recruits were trained to identify, report, and treat five target noxious weed species. PWV held 17 weed pulls to treat noxious weeds at 29 locations in 10 different areas. Musk thistle, Houndstongue, and Bull thistle were treated on a total of 109 acres. Twenty different PWVs participated; donating a total of 440 volunteer hours (and 1 member of the public donated another 15 volunteer hours). Four USFS-CLRD staff and five Larimer County Weed Crew members participated in one or more of PWV's weed pulls.

Spring Training

2015 Spring Training was very successful and a lot of fun. Gathering around for a few meetings before "The Big Weekend" is always a blast. There are people returning with new ideas on what worked and what didn't, and there are those who have fresh ideas right out of the gate. With all of the discussion, decision making and agreeing on everything (or not), it's very exciting to see the end result. In 2015 PWV trained 48 new members at Spring Training, they all seemed to have a good time and learned a great deal.

Meeting new recruits and making new contacts, reminiscing with the longer term volunteers, and hearing amazing stories about the hiking/riding experiences from everyone, sends a common passion we all have for our National Forests and Wilderness. PWV looks forward to another successful Spring Training in 2016. Hope to see you there!



Spring Training

Year-End Celebration

The 2015 year-end event was special – because it was also a celebration of Poudre Wilderness Volunteers 20th Anniversary. To mark the occasion, all nine hundred-plus past and current members were invited to attend (usually we just invite currently active members).

Everyone seemed to have a great time at our 20th Anniversary Celebration. The event was attended by 176 of our members and guests. The food was excellent and the company was great. Both our founders Chuck Bell and Art Bunn were in attendance along with 9 other original PWV members from 1996.

What Have We Accomplished in our 20 Years?

- 20 years of supporting the Forest Service
- Over 900 people have served in PWV
- Over 11,000 patrols
- Over 200,000 people encountered
- Over 8,000 trees removed from the trail
- Over 325,000 hours of FUN