



POUDRE WILDERNESS VOLUNTEERS 2023 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.



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. Meanwhile, backcountry use within the Canyon Lakes Ranger district continues to rise, reflecting population growth and demographic changes along the front range.

The Concept

Many 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 as well as Leave No Trace principles.

PWV members wear uniform shirts with identifying patches and name badges that make them a highly visible non-official USFS presence on the trails. They 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 approximately 270 members in 2023. Poudre Wilderness Volunteers patrol approximately 290 miles along 70 trails in 650,000 acres of Wilderness, general National Forest and National Grassland lands. PWV's efforts include establishing a:

- **Trail Crew** to address insufficient USFS funds and personnel to clear fallen trees and other damage to trails.
- **Weed Crew** to help the USFS in locating, controlling, and eradicating noxious weeds.
- **Kids in Nature Program** to support the USFS Kids in the Woods program.
- **Restoration Program** when wildfires and floods ravaged the Canyon Lakes Ranger District.
- **Trails for ALL Program** to foster safe, fun, and education connections to the outdoors for people of all abilities.
- Environmental stewardship and public outreach via the activities of other PWV programs such as **Adopt-a-Trail** and **Adopt-a-Highway**



Since 2005, PWV has donated a total of 505,096 volunteer hours worth over \$16 million to the USFS.

PWV In 2023

PWV continued to pursue its mission of assisting the Canyon Lakes Ranger District programs managing and protecting the wilderness and backcountry areas in 2023. In support of our core effort of patrolling trails and engaging the public, we contacted more than 10,200 trail users while completing over 1700 patrols.

These contacts allow us the opportunity to support backcountry users with advice, information and education on Leave No Trace practices and for USFS regulations. We continued our efforts to maintain trails last year at a high level, removing over 1800 trees from trails and clearing brush and limbs from over 66,500 feet of trails.

Furthermore, in 2023 restoration efforts focused on building bridges, constructing rock walls and steps, erosion control on the trails, installing grade dips and drains. PWV worked 7 days to improve drainage on our trails. We also worked 6 days with the Rocky Mountain Conservancy's Youth Conservation Corps, building 2 bridges. This amounted to 1600 hours of trail work to restore the trails.

In 2023 PWV contacted more than 10,200 backcountry users while completing over 1700 patrols.

The Future

As population growth along the Colorado's Front Range results in more backcountry use by the public, PWV needs to keep pace by recruiting and training new volunteers each year to ensure 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 provide volunteers with appropriate training, essential equipment and emergency gear, and uniforms, which identify members while on patrol. In the near future assisting the Forest Service in recovering from the Cameron Peak fire will be a major effort on the part of PWV. PWV plans to hold multiple public work days where we invite members of the public to come out and work with us on the trails.

A Successful and Different Organization

PWV has gained regional and national recognition for its contributions, including the Larimer County Environmental Stewardship Award, Take Pride in America Award for Non-profit Organizations, and the USFS Volunteer Group Award. 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.

2023 PWV Activity

Total volunteer hours	29,821
Total number of patrols/reports	1729
Meaningful contacts w/ trail users	10,254
Fallen trees removed from trails	1877
Feet of trail cleared of brush/limbs	66,554
Pounds of trash removed	425
Illegal fire rings removed	69
Violations addressed or reported	567
Patrols identifying or pulling weeds	116
Constructed	2 bridges, 145 feet of rock wall, 51 steps, 47 drains, 26 grade dips