

Project Summary

Rocky Mountains Cooperative Ecosystem Studies Unit

Project Title: Citizen Science Inventory of BLM Wilderness Study Areas in Montana

Type of Project: Technical Assistance/Education

Project Discipline: Interdisciplinary

Funding Agency: Bureau of Land Management

Other Partners/Cooperators: University of Montana

Student Participation: Yes

Effective Dates: 8/1/2014 - 7/31/2019

Funding Amount: \$121,289

Investigators and Agency Representative:

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Project Abstract: The Wilderness Institute's (WI) Citizen Science Program will enlist citizen volunteers to implement monitoring and restoration work in the Wilderness Study Areas (WSAs) in Montana managed by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM). The BLM is required to manage WSAs as to not impair the areas' wilderness character. Decreasing agency resources limits BLM's ability to monitor and evaluate resource conditions. The proposed project builds on nine years of citizen-based monitoring and restoration work in designated Forest Service Wilderness and Wilderness Study Areas in Montana and Idaho. Community volunteers help trained field staff monitor invasive plant species, document recreation use and impacts, assess elements of wilderness character, and restore native plant communities. Community involvement increases awareness of and participation in the stewardship of public lands, and increases both agency and community capacity for citizen stewardship. Project reports provide detailed inventories of invasive plants and recreation use to land managers, and inform decisions about how to mitigate user-created impacts, maintain quality recreational opportunities for visitors, and improve or restore wildlife habitat on these unique BLM lands.

Keywords: Wilderness Study Areas, wilderness character monitoring, citizen science, BLM, University of Montana, Wilderness Institute