

Wilderness Research Institute Named For Aldo Leopold

By Alan E. Watson

Aldo Leopold was an important participant in pioneering the concepts of ecological integrity and preserving wild places in America. Though the beginnings were modest, the current size of the National Wilderness Preservation System exceeds 95 million acres. The attention of federal land management agencies must now turn energetically to managing the values related to those areas.

Aldo Leopold, second from the right in this photo, posed with fellow foresters in this "Arizona foresters at work" photo taken July 25, 1910.

Aldo Leopold and his creative management vision were honored recently, when the USFS Chief announced establishment of the Aldo Leopold Wilderness Research Institute in Missoula, MT.

The Institute's mission will be to obtain and provide information necessary to sustain wilderness resources in an ecologically and socially sound manner for present and future generations. This mission will be accomplished through research, publication, and training, using partnerships among agencies with wilderness responsibilities, non-governmental organizations, and universities.

To reflect the research needs of the entire National Wilderness Preservation System, representatives from the USFS, the NPS, the USFWS, and the BLM will serve on the Institute's Steering Committee. This Committee will participate in defining short- and long-term work objectives for the research program supported by the Institute.

Currently it is anticipated that Institute scientists will lead research in five broad topic areas: (1) to protect the wilderness resource from both internal and external threats; (2) to facilitate provision of the beneficial uses of wilderness; (3) to allow comparison of relatively pristine wilderness with more intensively managed lands; (4) to understand global changes in resource conditions; and (5) to determine trends in use and condition of the System.

The core team of Institute scientists will come from the Forest Service's current wilderness management research project at the Intermountain Research Station in Missoula. These scientists will work with scientists around the world at universities or wilderness management agencies. The Institute will be located on campus at the University of Montana. Dedication of the Institute is scheduled for Aug. 21, 1993. Questions can be addressed to Director, Aldo Leopold Wilderness Research Institute, USDA Forest Service, Box 8089, Missoula, MT 59807.

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