

BUILDING WILDERNESS PARTNERSHIPS THROUGH EMPATHY: RESULTS FROM SURVEYS AND GROUP DISCUSSIONS DURING A SHARED STEWARDSHIP SESSION AT THE 2019 NATIONAL WILDERNESS WORKSHOP

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Shared stewardship for the National Wilderness Preservation System (NWPS), or the creation of partnerships between the land management agencies and non-governmental entities, is integral to the completion of basic and fundamental stewardship tasks within Wilderness (e.g., trail work, Leave-No-Trace education, monitoring). However, successful shared stewardship for Wilderness is impeded by a variety of barriers, which are institutional (e.g., employee turnover), practical (e.g., lack of staff, limited informational resources about how to set up partnerships), and conceptual (e.g., ambiguity surrounding what Wilderness shared stewardship is). While there has been some effort to formally document and understand the challenges, components of success, and solutions within the context of Wilderness shared stewardship, much of that effort was completed over ten years ago. Additionally, there was little focus on how to build a conversation that fostered an empathetic understanding among those within the Wilderness community. The goals of this research, which was based upon data collected during a plenary session on shared stewardship at the 2019 National Wilderness Workshop (NWW), include: (1) updating knowledge surrounding the issues of Wilderness shared stewardship and; (2) fostering empathy among those within the Wilderness community who are focused on developing and maintaining partnerships for the purpose of achieving a variety of goals for the benefit of the NWPS.

During the hour-long session, participants were asked to complete a survey with, among others, a question focused on reasons for why Wilderness shared stewardship was working or not working, and a question focused on potential innovative ideas for improving shared stewardship. Additionally, participants were asked to engage in an ‘empathy exercise’, whereby they confidentially conveyed their primary anxieties and worries about implementing shared stewardship within their respective stewardship roles. Analysis of nearly 100 surveys and notes from group discussions yielded five overarching themes: (1) culture and community (e.g., an engaged (or unengaged) community, a lack of diversity and inclusivity, history of conflict, feelings of inadequacy); (2) communication and coordination (e.g., education and outreach, lack of shared purpose or understanding of shared stewardship as a program or goal); (3) practice (e.g., turnover without succession plan, duplication of work, no central location for helpful information); (4) big, existential issues (e.g., climate change, political division, balancing nature

protection and recreation use) and; (5) capacity issues (e.g., funding concerns, lack of personnel, concerns about capabilities).

This report provides an in-depth discussion of each of these five themes, and discusses the findings within the context of previous work focused on Wilderness shared stewardship. Notable insights such as the recurrence of large issues within Wilderness shared stewardship discussions are outlined, and potential implications of such insights, which include a focus on intermediate outcomes, are explained. Finally, interrelated next steps are proposed. First, we suggest the need to continue Wilderness shared stewardship conversations, particularly if such conversations can foster empathy. We propose that such conversations should start with a clear definition of what Wilderness shared stewardship is, as well as an identification of the appropriate efforts for different roles within the shared stewardship model. Additionally, we suggest the need for adding nuance to discussions surrounding an identified lack of capacity for addressing stewardship needs.

Generally, this report recognizes the need to continue efforts focused on improving SS; incremental changes are particularly important within the context of the large issues identified (e.g., a lack of diversity in the Wilderness community, a general lack of capacity). Additionally, we suggest a need for more opportunities, at future NWWs and other relevant forums, that focus on building empathy through open and honest discussion. Such discussions should be boundless with attention given to even the smallest details (e.g., what exactly are the capacity issues?). Building empathy and SS partnerships will require time, which is a scarce resource for those involved in Wilderness stewardship. However, both our collective Wilderness experience and the persistence of challenges and barriers to Wilderness SS over time suggest that an explicit focus on building relationships will be time well spent. Meeting the intensive demands of stewarding the National Wilderness Preservation System will undoubtedly require continued strengthening of our collective shared stewardship ethic.

1. INTRODUCTION

The early fires of the wilderness movement came from sparks both inside the land management agencies and from advocates who toiled outside the federal government to protect large swaths of land as wilderness. It took finding common ground and common purpose for the whole community to see the Wilderness Act to its completion and passage. The early work of names like Marshall and Broome helped define wilderness, and their ability to create a joint and singular concept resulted in the 111-million-acre National Wilderness Preservation System (NWPS) that we know today. While the NWPS is administered by the federal government land management agencies, partnerships with state and local governments, as well as non-governmental entities have played a critical role in the ongoing stewardship of the NWPS. Indeed, shared stewardship of Wilderness includes public-private collaborations focused on preserving Wilderness character. Specific efforts include maintaining and restoring trails, inventory and monitoring, planning, tourism promotion, research, invasive species treatments, education focused on things like “Leave No Trace” and traditional skills, and youth engagement. This approach to Wilderness stewardship is fundamental to ensuring that the tenets of the Wilderness Act and the system it created are honored.

While many within the Wilderness community agree that developing collaborative partnerships between the public and private entities has been successful, there are still many challenges, barriers, and anxieties that remain within the context of partnering for the betterment of the NWPS. In an attempt to initiate and perpetuate a productive conversation about best practices, opportunities for growth, and innovative ideas related to shared stewardship of Wilderness lands, a structured approach to gathering input on the topic was implemented at the 2019 National Wilderness Workshop (NWW). This workshop took place in Bend, Oregon during the final week of October 2019, and over 100 workshop participants gathered to participate in the plenary session on the topic; this report conveys the results from that session.

We convened a diverse range of participants (e.g., NGOs, government employees, volunteers) at the NWW to discuss shared stewardship (SS) of the NWPS. And we implemented a formal recording and analysis of this discussion for two primary reasons. First, this report aims to update and build upon existing knowledge related to the challenges, successful components, and potential future improvements regarding SS of the NWPS. This is an important task, as it can

provide those within the Wilderness community with an understanding of changes and developments with regard to perspectives of SS; such knowledge may both inform the dynamics of actual, on-the-ground partnerships, and raise awareness about the issues facing the Wilderness community in a way that can help Wilderness leaders (e.g., agency leadership and NGO executives) provide effective leadership.

The second, and perhaps most important, reason for this research is to increase understanding and effectiveness by fostering empathy among those within the Wilderness community who are focused on developing and maintaining partnerships for the purpose of achieving a variety of goals for the benefit of the NWPS. How can empathy facilitate SS of the NWPS? Specifically, as discussed below, it may facilitate understanding of each other in a way that allows for clarity about people's roles, as well as an honest discussion about barriers to success. Generally, the very words "shared" and "stewardship" highlight the fundamental need and desire for trust and empathy among the Wilderness SS community. Our work for wild places is *shared* through common goals and passion about wilderness (the NWPS as a whole and/or a specific Wilderness area). And wilderness *stewardship*, sometimes preferred to the framing of wilderness *management*, implies a guiding approach where trammeling is minimal. Perhaps akin to the shared responsibility of raising a child, those engaged in wilderness shared stewardship are continuously mediating priorities, discussing philosophy, and laying bare insecurities and uncertainties related to the task.

Below we describe part of the methods of this research as an 'empathy exercise', whereby those participating in the session recorded, in a confidential way, their greatest anxieties or worries related to shared stewardship. And subsequently, as a group, these anxieties were discussed. This approach was meant to help the Wilderness community better understand each other by opening up a trusting and vulnerable space. Research has shown that empathy, or the "sensing and sharing of feelings of one person by another" ([Pavlovich & Krahne, 2012:132](#)), is an integral component of collaborative work ([Ansell & Gash, 2008](#); [Hagmann & Chuma, 2002](#); [Hagmann et al., 2002](#); [Wald et al., 2017](#); [Yasmi et al., 2006](#)). Collaboration is at the core of SS of the NWPS, and the two entities that are part of SS, agencies and NGOs, work in very different environments and are tasked with different work and different goals. For instance, an NGO focused on providing stewardship crews to agencies may be performing on a mission of

empowering youth and young adults and maintaining fiscal viability, while an agency lead who engages those crews is focused on meeting the mission and priorities of the land management agency and current administration. A lack of understanding of that difference can lead to miscommunication and upset, which may strain the relationship between the two entities. The focus of this report and future conversations is to create empathy and strengthen relationships to bring people together in a way that can facilitate SS moving forward. We hypothesize that greater understanding among partners can create new levels of success.

In their commonly cited theory of collaborative governance¹, [Ansell and Gash \(2008\)](#) described the collaborative process as consisting of face-to-face dialogue, trust building, commitment to the process, shared understanding, and intermediate outcomes. Trust building is particularly important when there is a prehistory of antagonism ([Ansell & Gash, 2008](#)) and, as documented below in the literature review of Wilderness shared stewardship (and in the results of this report), a history of misunderstanding, which leads to distrust and feelings of lack of engagement and value are cited as common barriers to successful partnerships in the Wilderness context. Within the literature, trust of the Forest Service has also been shown to be critical, both generally (e.g., [Borrie et al., 2002](#)) and within the context of specific issues such as fire management (e.g., [Liljeblad & Borrie, 2006](#); [Liljeblad et al., 2009](#), [2010](#)). Shared understanding is also critical to partnerships for Wilderness stewardship, and finding common goals, purpose, objectives, strategic direction, core values, and/or a common mission are foundational to collaboration ([Ansell & Gash, 2008](#)). As discussed in this report, there is a lack of shared understanding surrounding Wilderness SS.

Trust building and shared understanding are highly relevant to empathy; indeed, one could argue that shared understanding is synonymous with empathy and trust building is a goal of empathy. As [Pavlovich and Krahne \(2012\)](#) suggested, empathy can enhance the connections between people. And as [Hagmann and Chuma \(2002:28\)](#) noted, “often the real problems are the divergent perspectives and understandings which are hidden”, and through empathy and a culture of inquiry, one may be able to better unpack the issues to find solutions. [Schwartz \(2019\)](#), in a

¹ The definition of collaborative governance, as provided by [Ansell and Gash \(2008:544\)](#), appropriately captures the basic elements of shared stewardship of the NWPS: “A governing arrangement where one or more public agencies directly engage non-state stakeholders in a collective decision-making process that is formal, consensus-oriented, and deliberative and that aims to make or implement public policy or manage public programs or assets.”

news article, pointed both to research that has documented a decline in empathy among the American public over the last thirty years, and to research that shows empathetic people as being healthier and more effective at work.

We recognize that fostering empathy among the Wilderness community within the context of SS of the NWPS is not a cure-all to overcoming the variety of challenges discussed below. However, we assert that it is a critical component to furthering the success and growth of wilderness partnerships in the face of challenges that include limited funding and capacity, and a history of governmental/non-governmental mistrust within the context of public land management. This report proceeds with a brief overview of the shared stewardship concept, which is followed by discussion of the data collection methods used within the plenary session. In Section 4, results are discussed at length. The report concludes with a discussion of the implications of the findings and the potential next steps for the Wilderness community within the context of SS of the NWPS.

2. SHARED STEWARDSHIP: A SHARED IDEAL WITH MULTIPLE APPLICATIONS, AND AN OVERVIEW OF THE WILDERNESS CONTEXT

Generally, and particularly when considered within the context of land management agency efforts such as the ‘This is Who We Are’ initiative by the Forest Service², shared stewardship (SS) can be conceptualized as an ethic, a moral code, and a way of being. It reflects a deeply held belief that public land management requires that all work in service to each other, to the American people, and to the planet. Shared stewardship acknowledges the interdependence of all things - people and nature along with communities, organizations, and colleagues. It is grounded in our collective connection to the past, present, and future of the land and its inhabitants. Rooted in the universal truths that we are in community with each other and nature, are stronger together, and that just as biodiversity leads to resilient ecosystems, SS holds that partnership diversity leads to resilient organizational systems capable of delivering better outcomes and impact for the resource over time.

In practice, SS means sharing empathy, learning, risk, reward, opportunity, failure, and success across organizational divides. It starts from a place of curiosity, humility, and openness. There are fundamental questions inherent to the SS process, including: What do we know about this resource, it’s current condition, the context within which it exists and will exist over time, and the condition we hope to leave it in for the future? What ideas do we have in common; what differences of opinion and position do we represent? What are our hopes and fears? And, if we moved forward together to maximize hope and minimize fear, what good could we effect? Of course, it is recognized that legal frameworks often vest decision making authority with a single entity— usually a federal agency. However, SS realizes that the impact of these decisions is felt over the interrelated whole and seeks to invite that whole to engage in the totality of the decision-making process, including owning the risk and reward of acting and supporting each other as an interrelated community.

Shared stewardship as an ideal is increasingly reflected throughout public land management discussions and actions, as demonstrated by the specific use of the term ‘shared

² This formal effort (outlined here: <https://www.fs.usda.gov/sites/default/files/This-is-Who-We-Are.pdf>) strives to facilitate an environment where the Forest Service mission is realized through a workforce that is values based, purpose driven, and relationship focused.

stewardship’ in a variety of contexts. For instance, the Forest Service has formalized shared stewardship as an explicit strategy (as described at the following URL: <https://www.fs.usda.gov/managing-land/shared-stewardship>). This strategy, according to aforementioned website, “builds on a foundation of collaborative work, such as the Joint Chief’s Landscape Restoration Partnership, the National Cohesive Strategy for Wildland Fire Management, and the Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Program. It also builds on authorities created or expanded in the 2018 Omnibus Bill and the 2018 Farm Bill, such as Good Neighbor Authority.” We suggest that this program, labeled an ‘outcome-based investment strategy’ and fully articulated by the [USDA Forest Service \(2018\)](#), is underpinned by the ideal articulated above, even if the use of the term ‘shared stewardship’ has a relatively specific meaning and goal (i.e., primarily reducing wildfire risk across landscapes through cooperative agreements at the State level).

The influence of shared stewardship as an ideal is also evident in the recently unveiled “10-year trail shared stewardship challenge”, an initiative by the Forest Service (URL: <https://www.fs.usda.gov/managing-land/trails/10YTC>) focused on increasing collective capacity to care for trails and increase on-the-ground results. Of focus in this report is “Wilderness Shared Stewardship” which, as discussed below, has a long history within the context of managing and caring for lands designated as Wilderness. While the term ‘shared stewardship’ may be used in different contexts, we assert that the underpinning ideal articulated above spans all SS contexts. Furthermore, it is likely that these SS initiatives are interrelated (e.g., reducing wildfire risk across landscapes may have implications for caring for trails, and vice versa).

2.1. Wilderness shared stewardship

Shared stewardship of the NWPS has been ongoing since the passage of the Act in 1964, as reflected through long-standing partnership organizations such as the Student Conservation Association. More recently, the effort towards collective stewardship of Wilderness was recognized in 2004 when the “Ten Year Wilderness Stewardship Challenge” was introduced. Part of that challenge encouraged partnerships to accomplish various objectives such as trail work, education, and invasive species treatment ([USDA Forest Service, 2004](#)). This challenge was in response to the determination that only about 20 percent of wilderness areas managed by

the USDA Forest Service were meeting the minimum stewardship level; defined as meeting six of ten ‘key elements’ of stewardship (e.g., successful treatment of invasive plants, meeting of information needs, have a baseline workforce) ([USDA Forest Service, 2004](#)). The need for increased partnerships was both due to perceived lackluster wilderness stewardship performance and, interrelatedly, a decline in resources for addressing wilderness stewardship challenges.

This decline has been documented over time. For instance, in 2006, it was noted that addressing challenges such as concentrated use of sensitive areas, and a “growing disconnect between people and wilderness” increasingly required public-private partnerships, due to a decline and insufficiency related to “staff, skill base, and funding” ([Myers & Hunger, 2006:33](#)). The Chief’s Wilderness Advisory Group (WAG), a group of mostly field-based wilderness managers (with additional members from research and training/education backgrounds), also recognized this lack of resources, and connected it to how it relates to the challenges associated with shared stewardship ([Wilderness Advisory Group, 2009a](#)). Generally, the Wilderness community met the Ten Year Challenge, the success of which has been documented ([Wilderness Advisory Group, 2009b, 2013](#)). The relevance and importance of the effort was made implicit in the continuation of the challenge under the more permanent “Wilderness Stewardship Performance” program ([USDA Forest Service, 2019a, b](#)).

Progress toward effective Wilderness SS is also evident elsewhere, such as the creation of the National Wilderness Stewardship Alliance in 2010, whose mission is to develop a shared stewardship for every wilderness. However, sustaining improvements to wilderness stewardship, as well as improving areas still lagging is, at this stage, inextricably tied to the success of partnerships and *shared* stewardship. Despite the importance of Wilderness shared stewardship, there are many Wilderness areas that do not have a formalized partner focused on wilderness stewardship, and there is limited knowledge available for understanding the effort and the various issues that potentially arise when trying to implement and foster partnerships.

Thus far, shared stewardship has been guided by frequent and ongoing informal conversations, as well as a few instances of formal documentation and empirical study. [Hodge et al. \(2016\)](#) provided an overview of some history, as well as the ethic of Wilderness shared stewardship and partnerships; their account also includes an example of a successful partnership with the Southern Appalachian Wilderness Stewards. With regard to empirical studies, [Myers](#)

[and Hunger \(2006\)](#) identified components and barriers to successful Wilderness shared stewardship through individual and group meetings. Similarly, the [Wilderness Advisory Group \(2009a\)](#) identified barriers to successful partnerships, and recommended ways forward based upon the professional experience of group members, interviews with people outside the group, and (limited) existing publications on the topic. [Day \(2011\)](#) completed thirty qualitative, in-depth interviews with individuals from within and outside the government to better understand wilderness shared stewardship; the interviews focused on fifteen shared stewardship partnerships, with input provided from both the governmental and non-governmental perspective related to each partnership. The main findings of these more formal efforts (i.e., [Day, 2011](#); [Myers & Hunger, 2006](#); [Wilderness Advisory Group, 2009a](#)) generally highlight those basic, and often fundamental, elements that are lacking (e.g., funding, collaboration). Additionally, these efforts highlight resulting barriers (e.g., inflexible funding mechanisms, challenge of building relationships with high turnover) which need to be overcome to develop more successful SS.

Table 1 lists the various elements previously documented in the literature and, as is evident, the components or recommendations regarding successful SS are often a call to correct what is lacking. For instance, a potential solution recommended for issues related to a lack of staff resources is to hire more staff. However, this may not come to fruition and, as will become evident in the results presented below from the session at the 2019 NWW, issues related to staffing and funding resources remain. Indeed, several of the issues, barriers to success, and recommended improvements documented in the last 15 years remain today. This is notable because it reinforces the need to continue the conversation surrounding Wilderness shared stewardship, as documenting issues that remain after more than a decade may help to promote solutions. Additionally, the fact that many of the issues documented in past literature remain may motivate innovative solutions beyond, for instance, requesting additional funds or staffing resources. To provide the reader with an understanding of the current state of the discussion around Wilderness shared stewardship, we now turn to the methods and results from the 2019 NWW.

Table 1. A summary of findings previously reported on Wilderness shared stewardship

<i>Foundational elements for shared stewardship that are lacking</i>
- o Collaboration and coordination perhaps due to limited and declining funding, staff, time, and knowledge. - o Communication and clarity about shared goals, partnership expectations, and wilderness stewardship priorities. - o Training and support, such as crosscut saw training. - o Time or commitment to build and maintain individual people-to-people relationships. - o Established partnership protocols – ‘reinventing the wheel’ with each partnership.
<i>Barriers of current partnership model for achieving greater shared stewardship success</i>
- o Using funds in a discretionary way (i.e., inflexible money). - o Treating volunteers and partners with basic niceties such as gas reimbursement, or tokens of appreciation. - o Embracing the partnership model, such as an agency disincentive to demonstrate the ability to get work done with less. - o Building long-term people-to-people relationships such as turnover and the nature of federal hiring and career advancement. - o A ‘true’ partnership relationship where trust is full and mutual – derived, perhaps, from a history of litigation and a leery view of advocacy groups, and/or from the feeling that since agencies have the final decision-making power, then the partnership is more ‘cooperative’ than ‘collaborative’. - o Creating partnerships, perhaps due to a lack of belief in the volunteer culture, or from confusing and/or onerous federal regulations, guidelines, and timelines. - o A holistic approach to wilderness stewardship, perhaps due to a focus of partners and associated grant funding on trail maintenance, as opposed to wilderness stewardship needs more broadly.
<i>Components that, or recommendations to, improve shared stewardship</i>
- o Agency and non-governmental ‘champions’ (i.e., people with commitment and investment in the partnership model and all that it requires, including field presence, volunteer recruitment ability, and training capacity). - o Academic and scientific support - o A volunteer experience that is meaningful and rewarding (e.g., those that foster a connection to wilderness, and offer recognition of efforts). - o Explore and develop non-federal funding sources for partnership programs and associated needs such as staff focused on coordination. - o Identify that which motivates all involved, and define accountability. - o Fund positions at both local and national level that provide leadership and coordination; fund, especially, a designated partnership liaison. - o Demonstrate support for partnership programs by investing in Forest and District wilderness staff. - o Build consensus around mutual goals and expectations for partnership programs. - o Spend time together socially and during projects to build trust. - o Enhance education on agency and NGO processes, policies, and regulations.

Sources: ([Day, 2011](#); [Myers & Hunger, 2006](#); [Wilderness Advisory Group, 2009a](#))

3. METHODS

As participants began convening in the session room, data collection materials were distributed to all participants. The materials consisted of two separate 8x5 index cards: a survey card and an empathy exercise card. Five to ten minutes were given to complete both cards.

The survey card had five questions:

1. *What is your role within the context of shared wilderness stewardship (for example – agency employee, volunteer, non-governmental organization (please list organization type or name))?*
2. *Which state(s) is/are your shared wilderness stewardship work focused on? (or geographic area for international work).*
3. *In my experience, the model of shared stewardship is working for the National Wilderness Preservation System (circle one).*

<i>Strongly</i>	<i>Somewhat</i>	<i>Neutral</i>	<i>Somewhat</i>	<i>Strongly</i>
<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Disagree</i>		<i>Agree</i>	<i>Agree</i>
4. *Why (or why not) do you think shared stewardship is working?*
5. *Do you have ideas that would benefit our stewardship work into the future – how can we share stewardship of the National Wilderness Preservation System in new and innovative ways?*

The second card focused on an ‘empathy exercise’, and the card consisted of the following:

Empathy Leadership Exercise

Purpose: *Encourage participants to share specifics about their job where they feel vulnerability, with an outcome of realizing others share these same vulnerabilities and that they are not alone – in fact, we are stronger together, which circles back to shared stewardships and advancing with common purpose. This exercise will help participants develop empathy for each other as they become leaders of the shared stewardship movement.*

Below, please write down one thing that causes you worry or anxiety about your job as it relates to shared stewardship.

The cards were numbered prior to distribution, and everybody in the room was asked to self-organize based on their number (1-10 in a group, 11-20 in a group, etc.). People were then asked to fill in their cards, and then place the cards in two separate piles (survey-card pile, and empathy-card pile). All survey cards were collected, and the groups were asked to rotate so that they arrived to a pile of empathy cards (which were not written by anyone in the arriving group). The pile of empathy cards were then read aloud, and each group discussed what was written on the card within the context of shared stewardship of Wilderness lands. Groups were asked to take notes.

Below, the results of analysis of the survey cards, empathy cards, and group notes is presented. The group notes and answers written on both the survey and empathy cards were recorded and coded in terms of common categories and themes. Prior to presentation of the results, it is worth noting that both cards given to each participant had the same number, which allowed us to connect the answers on the survey card with those on the empathy-exercise card, while also maintaining confidentiality in the room. The empathy exercise asked people to make their vulnerabilities explicit. And in order to mitigate the potential stress of such a request, we wanted to ensure that peoples' answers were not connected to them specifically. Our intent is to honor this confidentiality moving forward, as reflected in this report out on the results. While specific quotes are provided, and specific organizations and geographic locations are identified, we do not connect quotes with organizations, which is an implicit recognition that the Wilderness community is relatively small.

4. RESULTS: WHO PARTICIPATED, AND WHAT WAS SAID

This section presents the results of the analysis of what was said by the 98 people who participated. This section includes a brief discussion of who participated, as defined by peoples' listed organizations and geographic focus. Then, common themes as it pertains to peoples' beliefs related to the efficacy of shared stewardship, innovative ideas for advancing shared stewardship, and listed workplace anxieties are presented.

4.1. Organizations and geographic scope listed

The first question on the survey card asked: *What is your role within the context of shared wilderness stewardship (for example – agency employee, volunteer, non-governmental organization (please list organization type or name))?*

Given this question, people responded with varying levels of specificity, but generally the sample of participants can be thought of in terms of federal government land management agency employees, NGO employees, volunteers (often the result of agency/NGO partnership), and those who did not quite fit into these categories (i.e., 'other'). Table 2 provides an overview of who participated in this shared stewardship discussion, with a focus on how many of the 98 participants fit into each category, the specific organizations or institutions mentioned, and the specific roles identified. The main point to be gleaned from Table 2 is that participation in this activity was diverse, with a mixture of agency workers, NGO representatives, volunteers, university employees, and interested citizens. Within those different categories, there is also a diverse range of roles. For instance, within the agency category, there were seasonal workers, program managers, regional and district representation, and a Wilderness scientist.

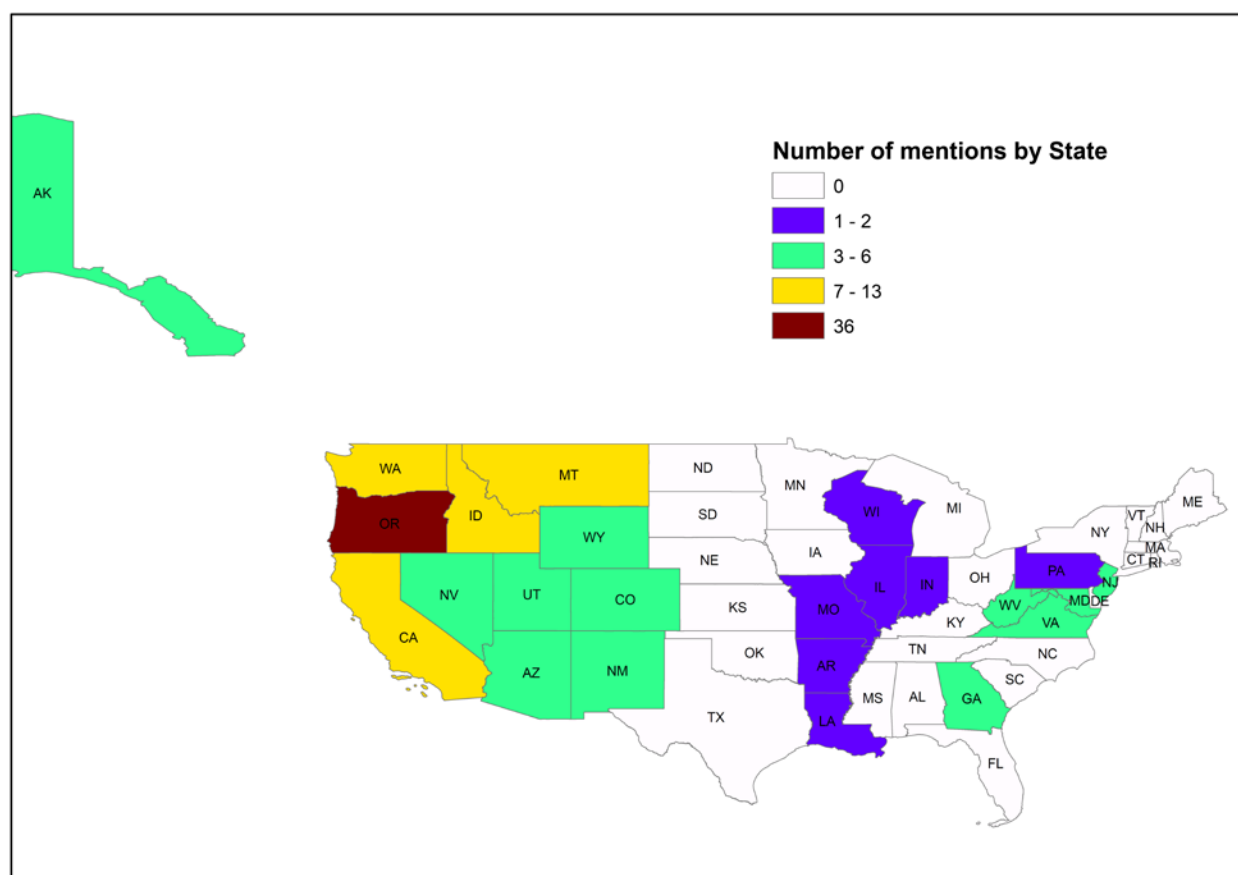
Table 2. Overview of who participated in the shared stewardship discussion

General category (number of people in each category)	Specific organizations, institutions, or agencies mentioned	Specific roles mentioned
Federal government land management agency (41 people)	Bureau of Land Management; United States Forest Service; National Park Service; Aldo Leopold Wilderness Research Institute; Willamette National Forest; Gila National Forest; Deschutes National Forest; Washington Office	Seasonal wilderness ranger; Seasonal Wilderness Fellow; Climbing Ranger; Wilderness Monitoring Lead; Wilderness Manager; Regional WWS (Wilderness and Wild and Scenic River) Program Leader
Non-governmental organizations (39 people)	Pacific Northwest Trails Association; Selway Bitterroot Frank Church Foundation; Leave No Trace; Wilderness Need Association; Oregon Natural Desert Association; Friends of the Allegheny Wilderness; Backcountry Horsemen of Oregon; Wild Foundation; Continental Divide Trail Coalition; Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance; Pacific Crest Trail Association; Southern Appalachian Wilderness Stewards; National Wilderness Stewardship Alliance; Backcountry Horsemen of America; Society for Wilderness Stewardship; Friends of Nevada Wilderness; Friends of the Scotchman Peaks Wilderness; VWA (Ventana Wilderness Alliance); Wyoming Wilderness Association; Friends of Central Cascades Wilderness	Stewardship Program Manager; NGO manager; Volunteer programs employee; Board member; Fellow who writes Wilderness Character Monitoring assessments; Wilderness advocacy – stewardship partner; Stewardship coordinating for wilderness therapy
Volunteers (11 people)	MT Hood Wilderness Stewards; Sierra Club	Volunteer; Trail professional; Wilderness monitoring with Forest Service;
Other (6 people)	Sierra Club; University of Montana; City Parks District	Teacher, artist, environmentalist; journalist/filmmaker; retired agency worker; starting a friends group; graduate student; University professor; Wilderness Institute; park maintenance worker

Note: The total number of participants within the four categories is 96; the two remaining people did not provide an answer to question 1.

The diversity of those who participated is also represented in the geographic extent of Wilderness focus. Question two on the survey card asked: *Which state(s) is/are your shared wilderness stewardship work focused on? (or geographic area for international work)*. Figure 1 highlights those States that were mentioned by participants and, as reflected, about half of the States were mentioned at least once.

Figure 1. Map of States mentioned by participants in relation to their shared stewardship work



with only two people out of 98 indicating this level of disagreement. The most common answer was ‘somewhat agree’, with 55 people taking this choice (this level of agreement is also the median value). The mean value is 3.68 or, on average, the 98 people participating in this discussion were somewhere between ‘neutral’ and ‘somewhat agree’ with regard to the question as to whether shared stewardship is working for the NWPS. Around two-thirds of people agreed, either ‘somewhat’ or ‘strongly’, and only 11 people disagreed, either ‘somewhat’ or ‘strongly’. This summary of the level of agreement highlights that most do agree that shared stewardship is working, and relatively few believe that it is not working; however, this agreement does not capture the reasons for agreement or the concerns related to shared stewardship.

The remainder of this report will discuss the findings of analysis related to: opinions about why (or why not) shared stewardship is working (questions 4), innovative ideas about how to improve shared stewardship (question 5), individual major worries and anxieties associated with engaging in shared stewardship in their jobs, and the group notes about peoples’ worries and anxieties. The findings are discussed in terms of five major themes with corresponding sub themes, which in aggregate capture the responses to all of these data collection components. The major themes, to be discussed in turn, are:

- **Culture and community** (e.g., an engaged (or unengaged) community, a lack of diversity and inclusivity, history of conflict, feelings of inadequacy)
- **Communication and coordination** (e.g., education and outreach, lack of shared purpose or understanding of shared stewardship as a program or goal)
- **Practice** (e.g., turnover without succession plan, duplication of work, no central location for helpful information)
- **Big, existential issues** (e.g., climate change, political division, balancing nature protection and recreation use).
- **Capacity issues** (e.g., funding concerns, lack of personnel, concerns about capabilities)

Table 3 provides an overview of how many times each theme is present within each individual question. Table 3 provides the number of times each question was answered (i.e., the ‘n’). It should be noted that the number of times a theme appears, when aggregated across the themes for an individual question, can exceed the *n*. This is because a person’s single response may have been coded under two different themes. For example, one respondent answered question five by

noting: “continue to engage groups as we did at the workshop (outdoor Asian, outdoor Afro, etc.). Messaging near wilderness areas – engage those who use them.” This was coded under the ‘culture and community’ theme, due to the idea to engage with a broad range of communities. Additionally, this comment was coded under the ‘communication and coordination’ theme, which captures ideas related to education and outreach. As a final note of interpretation in relation to Table 3, an individual’s response was never coded twice under the *same* major theme, even if their response captured two facets of the theme. For instance, a volunteer answered the empathy card with the following: “funding for projects. Lack of time.”

While both of these sentiments relate to capacity issues, it may be worthwhile to distinguish between issues of funding for on-the-ground work and issues of a lack of time that likely results from a lack of personnel. Nonetheless, for Table 3, this response is coded as a single mention of the ‘capacity issues’ theme. Therefore, it is possible to calculate the proportion of respondents (for a particular question) who provided a comment relevant to each theme. For instance, 33 people (out of 87 responses) made comments that can be categorized under ‘capacity issues’ for question four; or, in other words, about 38% of people noted issues related to capacity in response to the question about the reasons related to why shared stewardship is working (or not working). As is clear, Table 3 does not capture the group notes; however, the sentiments in the group notes will be discussed further below, and it is also worth noting that each set of group notes, for the most part, included elements from each of the five major themes.

Prior to discussing each theme in detail, there are a couple of points worth making in relation to Table 3. First, concerns about the capacity to execute shared stewardship, or manage wilderness more generally, was a common theme among participants across all questions. Second, issues related to communication and coordination, such as a lack of unified understanding or purpose with regard to shared stewardship as a concept or idea, are not necessarily the most common theme in question 4 (14% of answers). However, when respondents expressed their ‘innovative’ ideas for improving shared stewardship in question five, 39% of answers could be categorized under the theme of ‘communication and coordination’.

Table 3. Presence of themes within different data collection components

<u>Question 4 of the survey card</u> (n=87*) “Why (or why not) do you think shared stewardship is working?”		
Theme	Number of times a theme appeared**	Percent of people categorized by theme
Culture and community	32	37%
Inefficiency, institutional knowledge, and practical tools	6	7%
Communication and coordination	12	14%
Big, existential issues	11	13%
Capacity issues	33	38%
<u>Question 5 of the survey card</u> (n=71*) “Do you have ideas that would benefit our stewardship work into the future – how can we share stewardship of the National Wilderness Preservation System in new and innovative ways?”		
Theme	Number of times theme appeared**	Percent of people categorized by theme
Culture and community	20	28%
Inefficiency, institutional knowledge, and practical tools	10	14%
Communication and coordination	28	39%
Big, existential issues	2	3%
Capacity issues	18	25%
<u>Empathy Card</u> (n=95*) “Please write down one thing that causes you worry or anxiety about your job as it relates to shared stewardship.”		
Theme	Number of times theme appeared**	Percent of people categorized by theme
Culture and community	33	35%
Inefficiency, institutional knowledge, and practical tools	13	14%
Communication and coordination	10	11%
Big, existential issues	25	26%
Capacity issues	29	31%

Notes: **n* is equal to the number of people who provided responses to a question which could be analyzed. That is, 98 people participated in the exercise, and *n* is the number of people after accounting for those who either did not answer or felt too uninformed to answer.

**It is possible that the total ‘number of times a theme appeared’ exceeds the *n* for a question. This is because a person’s single response may have been coded under two different themes.

The reader may want to return to Table 3 once each major theme is discussed in more detail, which is where we now turn. When possible, direct quotes from participants are used; in order to highlight the different people providing the quotes, each quote is accompanied with a participant ID number, their general ‘role’ category (e.g., agency, NGO), and the level of agreement they selected for the question about whether shared stewardship was working or not).

4.2.1. *Culture and community*

Participants in this discussion on SS clearly considered culture and community to be highly relevant. Fifty-eight people, across all questions, made a comment related to the culture and community surrounding wilderness. The comments within this theme typically underscored both sides of the issue. For instance, the intense passion of the wilderness community, which has served it well for many decades, was commonly mentioned; on the other hand, many also noted that lack of inclusivity related to the wilderness community that may cause issues. This overarching theme is broken into two, interrelated sub-themes: culture and community.

Distinguishing ‘culture’ from ‘community’ is a bit challenging, as they are interrelated concepts, but in the context of this report we can perhaps think of culture as the ways in which people operate and interact, whereas community is those who are included in the group sharing a particular culture. Changing the culture, as well as expanding the wilderness community, were discussed throughout the 2019 workshop, and many of these issues were raised in the shared stewardship session.

4.2.1.1. Culture

Perhaps one of the larger assets existing within the context of Wilderness management and SS is the passion that those stewarding Wilderness lands typically have. Eleven people made comments that underscore the passionate and committed culture within the Wilderness community. Six people used the term ‘passionate’ explicitly, such as the two word response by Participant 11 (no affiliation listed, somewhat agree) in response to why shared stewardship is working: “passionate people.” Participant 33 (NGO, somewhat agree) said essentially the same

thing (“people are passionate about this work”), as did Participant 44 (volunteer, somewhat agree) and Participant 84 (agency, strongly agree). Those who did not use the specific term ‘passionate’, used other terms such as ‘enthusiastic’ and ‘engaged’. One person seemed to suggest that passionate and committed culture within the wilderness community was contagious: “More people are engaged. They *inspire* each other” Participant 48 (volunteer, strongly agree).

While it is clear that passion about wilderness management and SS is part of the culture in the community, it is unclear if this passion and commitment is related to elements of the wilderness culture that appear to be impeding stewardship progress. Specifically, issues related to a lack of gratitude, feelings of inadequacy, an ‘elitist’ agency culture, and general trust and relationship issues were also expressed by several (24 people). The comments made by these 24 people vary, from the idea that “history of conflict endangers future connections” (Participant 36, NGO, somewhat agree) to the specific point about the “reluctance to contribute ideas and provide feedback because it will be disregarded, or others won’t respect my knowledge” (Participant 56, NGO, somewhat agree). Feelings of inadequacy were often mentioned by people outside of the agencies, such as the NGO representative who noted that “working with experts in the field gives me imposter syndrome. I don’t know the lingo, acronyms, or really what they’re talking about half the time” (Participant 35, neutral). However, feelings of inadequacy were also present in agency employees, such as the high-level person who noted: “I fear that I am not qualified enough/educated enough to train, supervise interns” (Participant 49, agency, strongly agree).

While several people suggested that building relationships and trust would help to improve this culture, one specific way that the agency may be able to improve the situation is by showing gratitude for the work done by partners and engaging partners in SS planning processes. Three people (2 NGO and 1 volunteer) specifically noted that a major concern is that they do not feel ‘valued’. As Participant 68 (volunteer, neutral) suggested, “the agency we are trying to help does not place a high value on what we do.” Some of these proposed needs, such as building trust and relationships, may be facilitated by addressing some of the issues related to community. Indeed, a major impetus of this report is to develop momentum for opportunities for all staff and partners to build empathy for each other, with a goal to break down communication barriers.

4.2.1.2. Community

Thirty-one people made comments that could be categorized under this ‘community’ sub-theme, with issues including a lack of inclusivity, uneven community interest (e.g., rural and less popular wilderness areas lacking support), and the need to intentionally broaden how the Wilderness community is defined. Sixteen people specifically mentioned the lack of diversity and/or the need for a more representative Wilderness community. One person noted that there is a need to “help the old white male agency reach all the other demographics, especially online where people are” (Participant 23, agency, somewhat agree), and another suggested: “adopt a more inclusive narrative. Share quotes and stories of non-white, non-male heroes” (Participant 89, agency, somewhat disagree). More generally, Participant 45 (NGO, somewhat agree) stated that “a more representative group of stewards should be worked toward.” Stated another way, Participant 13 (agency, somewhat agree) highlighted the need to “be intentional about building equity into new policies and ensuring underserved and underrepresented groups are heard.” Additionally, there were suggestions to engage specific groups, such as Native American Tribal groups, and younger people.

In addition to the many comments related to expanding the demographics of the Wilderness community, some focused on greater inclusion across the wilderness areas and federal land management agencies. Three people mentioned the need for greater support in rural areas or less popular wilderness areas, and one person mentioned the need to improve the relationship with the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), as “BLM wilderness areas are often overlooked and underfunded” (Participant 52, NGO, somewhat agree). While there were few ideas of how to specifically address issues related to Wilderness community and culture, the theme that emerged related to communication and coordination constitutes an overarching approach that may be helpful.

4.2.2. *Communication and coordination*

Perhaps Participant 90 (NGO, somewhat agree) captures this theme best with the concise answer to question 4: “we need to share and collaborate more.” Overall, 43 people made

comments that could be categorized under this major theme, which implies a need for close working relationships and, potentially, an improvement to culture and community.

4.2.2.1. Communication

Twenty-seven people made comments that could be categorized under the ‘communication’ sub-theme. Eight of those comments mentioned the need for greater communication in general, whether that be for the purpose of successful shared stewardship or for the purpose of enhanced transparency in decision-making. Communication was also mentioned in the context of it being extremely difficult and potentially impeding SS and, as noted by Participant 35 (NGO, neutral), “communication leads it one way or another.” This seems to suggest, at least to this participant, that communication is the keystone to successful SS. Communication about the challenges facing both the agencies and outside partners may facilitate the building of relationships. For instance, Participant 46 (agency, somewhat agree) stated their main worry or anxiety as: “time commitment required, and lack of understanding/patience from shared stewardship partnerships/volunteers.” This worry suggests that, from their perspective, partners are not aware about the challenges they face as an agency employee trying to engage in shared stewardship. Communication about one’s situation, with an eye toward growing empathy on both sides of the conversation, may help to mitigate this worry.

Nineteen people, mostly within their comments on ‘innovative ideas’ to improve SS, made note of the need for better education and outreach, which is a bit more specific than the broad suggestion for ‘communication’. Some stated the need for ‘education and outreach’ explicitly, while other suggested specific approaches to education and outreach, such as “short videos, webinars, social media, [and] podcasts” (Participant 50, University, somewhat agree). Education and outreach was sometimes mentioned within specific contexts, such as building partnerships, as highlighted by Participant 88 (agency, strongly agree), who suggested teaching “Brian O’Neil’s partnership principles.” Other times, education and outreach was suggested as a more general way to educate users, build stronger connections with Wilderness, and foster empathy among a Wilderness community that can, at times, include strained relationships. While clearly interrelated, participants did appear to distinguish between needs for

communication and needs for greater coordination as it relates to SS and Wilderness management.

4.2.2.2. Coordination

Seventeen people provided input that could generally be thought of under the subtheme of ‘coordination’, or the need to better consolidate and organize efforts related to SS and wilderness management. Eleven people focused on coordination and consolidated leadership. For instance, one short ‘innovative idea’ was “united leadership” (Participant 94, agency, neutral), while a more specific, though similar, idea was a “new wilderness entity overall to coordinate all (e.g., the four agencies need wilderness leadership)” (Participant 82, NGO, strongly agree). Similar, differently framed, comments included: “inconsistent nationally” (Participant 61, agency, somewhat agree) and “too many groups, too decentralized” (Participant 68, volunteer, neutral).

Comments under this sub-theme were not only in reference to on-the-ground coordination, but they also related to coordination of our understanding of shared stewardship as a concept. Six people suggested a lack of understanding about what shared stewardship is generally, and/or what its purpose is specifically. As Participant 98 (volunteer, neutral) explained: “I am unsure, as a volunteer in a small wilderness group, what shared stewardship means and how to encourage it.” Another volunteer indicated they did not understand what ‘working’ meant in terms of SS, and yet another said: “I just don’t feel like I have a thorough grasp of its goals/mission and the effectiveness of our efforts to answer the question [about whether SS is working]” (Participant 40, NGO, neutral). This lack of understanding may not be specific to non-agency partners, as one agency participant was unsure what the role of science would be in supporting or informing shared stewardship.

Improving communication and coordination may be a challenge, given the broad nature of these tasks; however, participants did provide some input on inefficiencies and practical tools that may help to address these issues.

4.2.3. *Practice*

Twenty-two people, across all the questions, provided input that could fit into this theme on practice. By practice, we mean those facets of shared stewardship (and Wilderness management more generally) that may impede or facilitate its success. Three sub-themes are briefly discussed.

4.2.3.1. Inefficiency

Four people referenced potential inefficiencies of SS, all of which were fairly broad. For instance, Participant 50 (University, somewhat agree) noted that responsibility and “work is not always shared by everyone”, which suggests that there may be better ways to divide the SS workload. There were other similar comments, including “duplication of work” (Participant 78, agency, somewhat agree), the need for respecting “roles and strengths” (Participant 35, NGO, neutral), and a lack of understanding of what the “costs” of SS are (Participant 76, agency, neutral).

4.2.3.2. Practical tools

Ten people mentioned the need for practical tools such as databases and central locations of information, as well as guides or protocols for improving transparency. Four people focused on protocols, or the “creation of best practices” (Participant 66, agency, strongly disagree). Because, as Participant 67 (NGO, somewhat agree) noted: “the public, and often partners, don’t understand why/how things happen – breeding mistrust.” Six focused on central locations for information, such as an “online system” for sharing resources (Participant 30, agency, strongly agree), a “portal for info dissemination” (participant 8, NGO, somewhat agree), or any place to make “data collection public info” (Participant 49, agency, strongly agree). Public and easily accessible information and data, particularly if it is secured online in perpetuity, could help to address the third subtheme related to turnover.

4.2.3.3. Agency turnover: losing relationship continuity and institutional knowledge

Eleven people, most of them responding to the empathy card, highlighted the issues related to turnover. Four comments were fairly broad, such as “no succession plan” – the main worry of Participant 29 (NGO, somewhat agree); or slightly more detailed, turnover *and* the challenge of “maintaining consistency and communication” (Participant 54, agency, somewhat agree). Two people mentioned the loss of relationships and trust over time. As Participant 65 (blank survey card) noted: “We are dependent on heroes. Good stewardship performance is dependent upon relationships. When people move on, relationships are broken and trust and performance declines.”

The remaining five comments were related to losing institutional knowledge, or an understanding of both the SS arrangements and the specific location. Participant 22 (agency, strongly agree) lamented: “I worry about the future of my wilderness areas, who will carry the torch?” Participant 64 (NGO, somewhat disagree) felt too much turnover was problematic for keeping methods and reporting consistent for Wilderness Character Monitoring, and Participant 77 (NGO, neutral) was concerned about “loss of data that was collected.” With the concluding quote for this subtheme, Participant 15 (NGO, somewhat agree) captured the anxiety that comes with the hard work put forth during an internship, as well as the existential question related to whether an internship has value beyond individual training:

My position is an internship and while the funding is promising to have had the position at all, the lack of a full time position is leaving my work abandoned at the end of my time. Where does my investment go? Will there be passion, funding, investment beyond me? Or am I a checked box?

Turnover is a suitable sub-theme to precede the theme of ‘big, existential issues’, because turnover within federal employment is, like climate change, the probable reality for the foreseeable future. While career government workers are common, the system incentivizes changes in position and location, and current hiring practices do not ensure positions are filled or kept.

4.2.4. *Big, existential issues*

Within the context of at least one question, 31 people made comments about large (some might say existential) issues facing shared stewardship and Wilderness management. While all the above themes, such as capacity and the perceived need for greater communication and coordination are, indeed, large issues, this theme references those comments that capture the broad range of concerns facing the Wilderness community on a day-to-day basis. For example, two people commented that their main concern or anxiety was, in essence, balancing nature protection and recreation use. As Participant 47 (agency, somewhat agree) noted, their main anxiety was “making the ‘right’ decision’ about wilderness management actions that meets multiple goals (visitor access), but primarily protecting wilderness character for future.” This quote nicely captures what we mean by ‘existential’ issues, as it seems this person, by placing quotes around the word ‘right’ is acknowledging that there is no perfect, correct answer for the day-to-day (and inherent) challenge to balance nature protection and recreation use. Another reason this theme is entitled ‘big, existential issues’ is that many of the problems, including balancing nature protection and recreation use, are bigger than Wilderness. That is, these problems are not only facing the Wilderness community, but generally the conservation and natural resource community at large. This theme is captured by two sub-themes: external issues and internal issues.

4.2.4.1. External issues

Largely within the context of their stated worry or anxiety, thirteen people made comments that could be categorized as external issues or threats. By ‘external’, we mean those things that complicate SS and Wilderness management, and originate largely outside of the sphere of the Wilderness community. The most common external threat mentioned by participants was political in nature. Nine people were concerned about political influence, or larger issues related to politics. These comments were generally about “politics influencing policy” (Participant 59, agency, neutral), and the influence politics could have on funding or day-to-day decisions. For instance, Participant 5 (agency, neutral) stated that they were “concerned that the present administration may cause long term damage to the agency (BLM), and its ability to protect and manage lands.” Similarly, Participant 20 (volunteer, somewhat agree) worried

about “an administration that does not seem to share our values”, and Participant 10 (NGO, somewhat disagree) was concerned about the “division of the country”, as well as the “threat to democratic system and separation of power.” This latter point seems to shift from a concern about division and day-to-day politics to a concern about our democratic institutions. A concern about larger institutions was mentioned by others as well, including Participant 44 (NGO, somewhat agree), who stated: “I’m constantly worried that large institutional change can happen in legislation that is not inclusive of steward principles.”

Six people highlighted large issues that extend beyond (though perhaps subsume) politics. For instance, there were concerns about climate change, such that it is “hard to cope with the effect of climate change” (Participant 70, NGO, somewhat agree). One person mentioned the threat of motorized use:

Motorized and mechanized user groups are very ready to organize members to build or improve trails that allow themselves to move further faster deeper. Then they claim they are stewards of the land but in reality they are only acting as stewards of their use. They then use their work to elevate their right on public wildlands and oppose protections. That stresses me out! (Participant 93, NGO, somewhat agree).

Lastly, there was also a mention of the “overpowering force to privatize public lands, thus losing the pool for new wilderness and possibly losing ground on existing wilderness” (Participant 95, NGO, neutral). In addition to large external issues, several mentioned existential threats that exist more specifically within the Wilderness community.

4.2.4.2. Internal issues

Twenty people mentioned internal issues, which ranged from concerns about the loss of wilderness values or a lack of understanding of wilderness to resistance to the SS model. Nine people mentioned the importance of ‘connecting with nature’ and/or ‘wilderness values’. One person was optimistic in this regard, as they stated that SS is working because “more people than ever are going outdoors and connecting with nature” (Participant 44, NGO, somewhat agree). However, most comments conveying a sentiment about values toward nature were less optimistic, such as Participant 10 (NGO, somewhat disagree) who was concerned about the “loss of shared experience and perhaps values.”

Within this context on values, there were a couple of specific concerns. The first, mentioned by three people, was the idea that restricting use or charging fees would erode Wilderness stewardship. For instance, Participant 63 (volunteer, somewhat disagree) stated that “restrictions and use limits will not create wilderness stewards or advocates. In fact, it will do the opposite.” Within the specific context of *partnering* for the benefit of SS, Participant 92 (agency, strongly agree) stated: “The use fees charged by agencies and the rec.gov transaction fees will hurt agencies ability to be seen as true partners.” The second specific concern regarding wilderness management as it relates to values and understanding of wilderness was around traditional pack and saddle use. Participant 116 (NGO, somewhat disagree) suggested the following concern or anxiety: “the loss of knowledge (first-hand) and the history of the role that stock-supported work parties has/can play in the preservation of wilderness character.”

Another common ‘internal’ issue raised by participants was the idea that the shared stewardship model, however that is defined, is not supported by everyone. These comments were sometimes general, such as the comment: “Some people have bought into [SS] and others haven’t” (Participant 100, NGO, somewhat agree). However, usually, the lack of internal support for SS was leveled at the agencies or, more specifically, agency leaders. For instance, Participant 1 (agency, somewhat agree) was concerned that “support for WSP [Wilderness Stewardship Performance, a USFS success tracking and funding mechanism to complete wilderness stewardship work] from the top will decline or stop.” Participant 24 (agency, somewhat agree) similarly stated their main worry as the “inability to persuade agency leaders of importance of wilderness stewardship – gain their commitment.” Another person suggested that “agency partners don’t equally embrace partnerships” (Participant 115, NGO, somewhat agree), and yet another cited a “resistance to a shared stewardship model” (Participant 73, agency, somewhat agree). Finally, a few participants were concerned about their own economic well-being, or the loss of their job should the Wilderness stewardship program be cut or defunded. Another internal issue mentioned was the potential impact of agency related activities, which is perhaps referencing administrative use.

4.2.5. *Capacity to address wilderness needs and performed shared stewardship duties*

Comments related to a lack of capacity to perform and continue the necessary Wilderness management or shared stewardship duties were common among respondents but, as a reminder, people still generally agreed that shared stewardship was working. As discussed above with regard to question 2 on whether SS is working, the average level of agreement of the entire group of participants was 3.68 on a scale from 1-5. When calculating this average for those 51 participants who made at least one capacity-related comment across all questions, there is a slight increase (3.74). However, six respondents noted that SS was working out of necessity, which underscores some level of pessimism. For example, Participant 10 (agency, somewhat disagree) noted, “[we] can’t do our work without partnerships”, and another stated: “most wilderness areas simply cannot be managed without partners” (Participant 86, agency, somewhat agree). Generally, as highlighted in the ensuing discussion of three capacity sub-themes, the comments related to capacity issues reflected both optimism and general unease.

4.2.5.1. Capacity in regard to funding, time, personnel, experience, and training

The sub-theme related to capacity that was most commonly present in comments is related to the resources available (or not available) for both Wilderness management and shared stewardship. Three people, all identified as agency workers, made general capacity comments in a positive sense. For instance, Participant 80 (agency, neutral) noted that SS “is working, [with] infrastructure that allows for project proposals, priority setting, raising funds.” Participant 30 (agency, strongly agree) thought that shared stewardship is working because there are “multiple stakeholders at play, [and] more individual stewards working for a common goal.” Interestingly, the same respondent stated their single worry or anxiety as “lack of support; lack of funding; lack of involvement”, perhaps a reference to SS success overly relying on volunteer capacity or the previously discussed “champions” of wilderness.

Aside from the few comments related to the resources that were available or actively being used to achieve shared stewardship goals, the vast majority of comments mentioned a lack of resources, or the need for more resources within the context of wilderness management and shared stewardship. Thirty-three people from all backgrounds (e.g., volunteers, NGOs)

mentioned a lack of resources, with comments ranging from terse to more detailed. Short comments such as “lack of funding”, “lack of time”, and/or “more funding for trails”, “not enough volunteers/training”, and “lack of wilderness management experience” were common, as were more detailed comments that connected a lack of resources to potential consequences. For instance, Participant 83 (agency, strongly agree) stated the following reason for why shared stewardship may not work: “lack funding, therefore time to communicate and collaborate.” In this context, it seems that lacking one resource results in a lack of capacity to accomplish other SS needs, such as communication and collaboration. Another person was worried about the “inability to fully support partners, loss of professionalism. Loss of consistency/lack of follow through” (Participant 55, agency, neutral). Several commented on the lack of personnel, and the consequence of workers being overworked. For instance, Participant 2 (agency, somewhat disagree) noted the following workplace anxiety: “staff stretched too thin, wearing too many hats, not having the resources to accomplish everything.”

In response to the problem of limited resources, people from all backgrounds suggested the ‘innovative idea’ that NGOs specifically advocate for funding. Five people mentioned NGOs should advocate for greater appropriations for wilderness stewardship. For example, Participant 28 (volunteer, neutral) stated: “all our NGOs need to lobby hard for good appropriation for stewardship of our lands”; Participant 91 (University, somewhat agree) stated: “better NGO advocacy for wildland appropriations” and; Participant 4 (NGO, somewhat agree) stated: “NGOs should all advocate for bringing back agency capacity and funding as part of their partnership role.” Other innovative ideas included the single mention for a “designated volunteer coordinator at [the] agency” (Participant 32, University, somewhat agree). The concern that a lack of resources will impede successful shared stewardship and wilderness management extends beyond day-to-day activities, as discussed next.

4.2.5.2. Concern that over-reliance on partnerships will lead to less stable agency funding for wilderness

Ten people, responding to question four or the empathy card, reported a concern or worry that successful SS would, in the words of Participant 37 (NGO, somewhat agree), give “the illusion that more funding and resources aren’t needed for land management agencies.” Another

person made the point that the issue already exists: “In some ways, partnership contributions are being over-emphasized and relied on, [and] used as justification not to invest in agency efforts to maintain Wilderness” (Participant 55, agency, neutral). This concern was expressed by agency employees, NGO representatives, and University affiliates. According to Participant 61 (agency, somewhat agree), a potential consequence of this will be a “100% loss of stewardship” if organizations fail. That is, if the capacity to manage wilderness continues to shift to a partnership model, then inadequacies on the part of NGOs will have serious consequences for wilderness stewardship. This concern about partner capacity and ability specifically is further reflected in the final capacity sub-theme.

4.2.5.3. Partner capacity (or lack thereof)

A third sub-theme related to capacity was not as prevalent in the comments as the previous sub-themes, but two agency employees did specifically mention the lack of partnership capacity. Participant 34 (agency, somewhat agree) noted, “not all areas have willing, competent, capable, and engaged partners”, and Participant 79 (agency, neutral) focused specifically on deficiencies associated with ‘advocacy’ NGOs by stating: “lacking an organized stewardship group to work with that is not focused on advocacy” and “focus of NGOs on advocacy is not stewardship.” Somewhat related to the lack of partner capacity, two people noted the need for more realistic partnership goals: “require all wilderness advocacy orgs to commit organizing as many volunteer hours as there are acres in their proposal” (Participant 14, agency, somewhat agree) and; “recruit advocacy groups to steward at least 50% of their mission” (Participant 61, agency, somewhat agree).

The perspective that a single side of the partnership is an impediment to success was also held by one NGO employee; Participant 52 (NGO, somewhat agree) suggested: “Would be much more effective if agency partners had more interest in, or capacity to help make the partnerships work. Coordinating projects with agencies is our #1 problem stopping us from accomplishing more.” These perspectives foreshadow the lack of trust, and sometimes strained relationship between agencies and NGO partners that is discussed further below in the theme on culture and community. In relation to how partner capacity could be improved, four people

mentioned ideas such as the creation of more friends groups or user group coalitions, and the creation of better incentives for getting people engaged and keeping them engaged.

All of the above results were in relation to how people individually answered the survey card and the empathy card; next we provide a very brief overview of our analysis of the group notes.

4.2.6. Group notes: mostly reinforcement with some new insights

Analysis of the group notes yielded, primarily, a reinforcement of that which was found through analysis of the individual responses. This is perhaps unsurprising, as the group activity consisted of reading the individual responses to the empathy card, and then discussing those comments as a group. Since those group discussions were not recorded, we are left with the notes taken by participants in the group discussion. In some instances, the note taker may have summarized the individual responses on the empathy cards.

While the group notes did not provide a significant amount of new insights into the SS discussion, there were several ideas within the notes that added some depth to what was provided by individual participants. New insights are provided in bullet points below.

- Analysis of the individual comments provides an impression that employee turnover and loss of institutional knowledge is primarily an issue for the agencies; however, it was made clear in the group notes that this is an issue for NGOs as well.
- Regarding the big issue of politics and SS, one set of group notes highlighted that “politics suppress open dialogue”. This point is important considering the stress on a need for better communication, which could be impeded by politics.
- When considering the sub-theme on the lack of partner capacity, it was challenging to understand exactly what the individuals were suggesting. In the group notes, it was stated that “advocacy does not equal stewardship, agency need people [to] help manage the land, not just increase acres.” This point further clarifies that additional Wilderness designation does not help with stewarding the current acres, and it may actually complicate those efforts.

- The individual responses only mentioned science twice, but one set of group notes stressed the importance of science: “citizen science can play a role, and university science. Advocacy needs to get funding to the science community.”
- While it was clear in the individual responses that partners did not always feel valued, a potential way to address this issue was provided in the group notes: “volunteer appreciation.”
- There were several mentions of engaging youth in SS, and several separate mentions related to the concern that human-nature relationships and wilderness values may be degraded. The group notes explicitly connected the need to carry the relevance of Wilderness across generations: “lack of connectivity between generations” and “inspiring intergenerational ownership.”

When considering the five major themes together, it is evident that there are major issues facing the Wilderness management community and the ongoing shared stewardship efforts; however, the passion and commitment of the community provides some level of optimism going forward. The major question remains, where to next?

5. DISCUSSION: NOTABLE INSIGHTS AND NEXT STEPS

Given the detailed results presented above, this section aims to briefly address two main questions. First, what can be added, or perhaps reiterated, within the context of the ongoing discussion surrounding Wilderness shared stewardship which, up to this point, includes a limited amount of literature (as outlined in Section 2)? Second, where does the Wilderness community go from here, or what are potential next steps? We address these two questions in the following subsections.

5.1. Insights: Prioritizing issues, shifting strategy, and acknowledging big-picture problems

When considering the above results within the context of the previous discussions on Wilderness shared stewardship, we make four main observations and briefly discuss them in turn.

1. Many of the same issues raised in previous formal discussions of wilderness shared stewardship (i.e., [Day, 2011](#); [Myers & Hunger, 2006](#); [Wilderness Advisory Group, 2009a](#)) were evident in the results from this research.
2. While issues related to a lack of capacity was the most prevalent within the context of the question on why shared stewardship is not working, the most prevalent theme within the context of the innovative ideas question was communication and coordination (as shown in Table 3).
3. Some volunteers and partners do not feel valued, and some agency personnel feel misunderstood.
4. Issues related to agency culture and inclusiveness are noted by both agency and non-agency people.

If one compares Table 1 (i.e., summary of previous literature on Wilderness shared stewardship) to the results presented in Section 4, there are several areas of overlap. In other words, many of the same issues raised in the earliest discussions surrounding Wilderness SS are still being raised today. These recurring issues include not only foundational issues, such as a lack of funding, staff resources, and time for developing and maintaining productive

partnerships, but also specific issues such as a lack of a standard protocol for initiating partnerships. This is notable as it can provide clear documentation that, over time, many of the same issues are impeding progress, which can provide leaders within the Wilderness community with rationale for prioritizing particular issues. For instance, [Myers and Hunger \(2006\)](#) stressed the importance of agency champions of partnerships, the [Wilderness Advisory Group \(2009a:1\)](#) recommended that positions be funded at the “local or regional level that focus on partnership creation”, and [Day \(2011:25\)](#) concluded that the “importance of a dedicated agency liaison to the success of a stewardship partnership must not be underestimated.” Participants in the 2019 workshop also indicated the potential value of a designated coordinator focused on partnerships and volunteers. This is one example of a recurring issue that may be more tractable than, say, a significant increase in general funding. That is, perhaps increasing capacity in the form of a few key staff that focus on partnerships and shared stewardship is a manageable improvement for leadership within the Wilderness community.

This shifting in priorities toward tractable goals within the Wilderness community may be taking place; as reflected by the most commonly stated problem being capacity, while the most commonly stated ‘innovative idea’ was improved communication and coordination. In other words, perhaps those within the Wilderness community participating in this session, who are both diverse and experienced in terms of Wilderness-related issues, may be somewhat resigned to a status quo whereby a significant, recurring increase in general appropriations for Wilderness shared stewardship is unlikely to come to fruition. Therefore, a focus on better communication, through means such as education and outreach, as well as better coordination in the form of united leadership and consistency in practice, are seen as potentially viable. To this end, several also mentioned specific tools, many of which are seemingly attainable (e.g., a central data base, creation of best practices). This potential shifting in perceived solutions to long-standing problems is evident in the literature as well. For instance, in 2014, a National Wilderness Manager Survey was completed by [Ghimire et al. \(2015\)](#), and managers identified ‘lack of political and financial support for wilderness protection and management’ as the highest threat to their accomplishing stewardship duties. However, in a detailed analysis of the survey question on the top five needs for Wilderness science, [Watson and Armatas \(2018\)](#) found needs that, for the most part, moved beyond addressing the capacity issue. For instance, under the research theme on ‘stewardship effectiveness’, [Watson and Armatas \(2018:11-12\)](#) stated:

With decreasing budgets and increased reliance on partnerships, volunteers, outside funding and in-kind donations to accomplish workloads, managers are trying to determine how to measure success. A balance between gaining benefits from outside partners and protecting the professionalism of employees is needed. Clear communication with partners about the purpose of wilderness, methods of operation to protect both wilderness and naturalness, and dealing with safety and health are important. Research to document the successes, failures and both resource and social benefits of partnerships could be helpful in decision-making by managers.

Coupling this conclusion in the literature with the input provided in this report is encouraging, as it perhaps demonstrates some convergence among the Wilderness community as to how long-standing issues such as capacity may be addressed.

Finally, another insight from the above results is that perceived negative characteristics of federal land management agencies, namely a lack of demographic diversity within the Wilderness community and the feeling by some that there is agency elitism, are issues acknowledged both by agency and non-agency people. The perceived issue of ‘agency elitism’ is discussed above in Section 4.2.1.1., which is exemplified, in part, by peoples’ lack of motivation to contribute ideas based on the assumption that such ideas will be disregarded, as well as a manifestation of ‘imposter syndrome’ stemming from not understanding agency lingo and acronyms. This report and the discussion at the NWW does not provide a full understanding of this potentially important barrier to successful SS, which underscores the need for further discussion on the issue of perceived ‘agency elitism’. Nonetheless, the recognition of these issues both from within and outside the agency is an important step towards improvements.

There are three points worth mentioning as we consider these issues. First, there is a history of literature focused on collaborative governance and relationships between federal land management agencies and their partners that has broadly focused on issues of trust and barriers to successful collaboration. For instance, [Davis et al. \(2017\)](#) compare USDA Forest Service and stakeholder motivations and experiences in collaborative federal forest governance in the Western United States. Among their findings are that agency respondents and non-agency stakeholders differ demographically; specifically, they found that agency respondents have higher incomes and suggested the need to further explore the impact of this difference on collaborative efforts. Additionally, they posit that:

agency participants are focused on building social trust as an outcome in lieu of a lack of perceived dispositional trust (lack of a trusting tendency from the public) or rational trust (lack of perceived predictability or reliability of performance by agencies). Meanwhile, non-agency participants may emphasize the importance of procedural trust (transparent processes) as a mechanism to enhance public influence on agency decisions and outcomes.

These empirical findings, which exist in a robust body of literature, may help us better understand the issues of trust and perceived elitism. Of course, continuing conversations between SS entities can provide the benefit of both building empathy through the process of conversation and adding detail to the specific context of Wilderness SS.

The second point worth making is that targeted improvement efforts are already underway within the context of agency-culture issues. For instance, the ‘This is Who We Are’ initiative by the Forest Service ([USDA Forest Service, 2019c](#)) strives for greater inclusiveness, and the 2020 Vision for Wilderness stewardship ([USDOJ Bureau of Land Management et al., 2014](#)) explicitly focuses on increasing the relevance of designated Wilderness to a broader group of the American citizenry. Furthermore, it may also be worth noting that the 2020 National Wilderness Workshop is set to address issues related to diversity and inclusivity in the Wilderness community. While these efforts are unlikely to fully address the problem voiced by several participants related to agency culture and a lack of diversity, they do represent both an acknowledgement and active effort toward mitigating an issue that is, perhaps, bigger than Wilderness. In addition, some land management agencies and NGOs have been highly successful at increasing representation and diversity in public land issues outside of wilderness. Some of these success stories were shared at the 2018 National Wilderness Workshop, such as the Fish and Wildlife Service’s Urban Wildlife Conservation Program focused on inspiring the next generation of outdoor enthusiasts, in part, by establishing a refuge presence in demographically and geographically varied cities across the United States. We recommend wilderness entities studying these examples more closely to adapt to wilderness-specific approaches for success.

The third, and perhaps most important point, is that the process of sharing stewardship, experiences in wild places, and a love for such places may bring us together, as opposed to generating feelings of inadequacy or disrespect. To this end, we see increased empathy as critical, which can be facilitated by sharing, for instance, feelings of inadequacy that span volunteers, non-agency partners and, as highlighted above, even Wilderness leaders within the

agency. It is also recognized, however, that the passion of the wilderness community, as discussed in Section 4.2.1.1., is both an asset and potential liability, as emotions related to the task of Wilderness stewardship may heighten both camaraderie and disagreement. We assert that these insights and large issues reinforce the need for continuing discussion and contextual understanding of *Wilderness* shared stewardship, as discussed with regards to the ‘next steps.’

5.2. Next steps: Keep talking, define Wilderness shared stewardship and appropriate roles, and add nuance to the capacity discussion

In light of the results presented above, we make four observations about the results that support the next steps focused on continued dialogue, an effort to better define shared stewardship and appropriate roles within the Wilderness context, and adding nuance to the capacity discussion.

1. There is support for continuing engagement on a variety of issues (e.g., workshops, webinars).
2. There is a lack of understanding between SS entities (agencies and NGOs) about the pressures, and indicators of success within the context of SS on the ground.
3. There is a lack of clarity about the meaning of Wilderness shared stewardship and the appropriate efforts for different roles.
4. The observation that the capacity to fully meet stewardship needs is lacking is long-standing, but the discussion has room for more nuance.

As noted in the introduction, a major part of this effort within the plenary session at the 2019 National Wilderness Workshop was to provide a space for people within the Wilderness community to voice personal thoughts and perceived barriers as it relates to implementing shared stewardship on the ground. This empathy exercise is focused on building a productive and candid conversation about not only barriers to success, but also potential solutions.

We view a continuation of this conversation, and the creation of opportunities for practicing and enhancing empathy, as another potentially tractable solution to the challenges facing SS. Through such candid conversation, it may be possible to address basic, seemingly avoidable problems facing the SS community. For instance, several non-agency partners noted a

feeling of not being valued (something also noted by [Myers and Hunger \(2006\)](#)), and several agency participants noted that they felt misunderstood. This suggests, primarily, a need for increasing awareness among the Wilderness community about peoples' lived experiences; such awareness may highlight fairly simple solutions or, at the very least, fairly simple first steps. For example, changing the perception of a non-agency partner, who might view an agency employee as aloof or unengaged within the context of a partnership, may be as simple as conveying the current workload of tasks that is leading to a lack of ability to contribute time to a partnership. While this will take time on the part of both parties, if it is known that such effort may preserve a potentially productive relationship for the future, then it could be viewed as time well spent. On the other hand, an agency partner leading volunteers may follow their verbal gratitude for a volunteer's time with an acknowledgement that, were it possible, additional steps would be taken to show more tangible gratitude in the form of food or fuel.

Of course, continuing the conversation is critical to understand how volunteers are specifically feeling underappreciated, or in what ways agency personnel feel that their jobs are not clearly understood by the general public. Within this conversation, we suggest a need to discuss the differing pressures and indicators of success facing agencies and non-agency partners. For instance, agencies are often facing pressure to increase the scope of completed projects in Wilderness, which can lead to requests for partners to contribute staff time. However, budgetary restrictions may make agency funding of partner staff time challenging. Additionally, the respective missions of partner organizations may influence perspectives of what successful stewardship looks like (e.g., miles of trail maintained may be secondary to teaching youth life skills). Another area where goals may not align, as reflected in the results above (as well as more informal conversations), is with regard to increasing the number of acres designated as Wilderness. While the Wilderness community may generally view increased designation as positive, concerns about the ability to steward the NWPS highlights the need for discussion surrounding designation and future stewardship of such lands. For instance, what are the implications of additional designation for SS of new and existing Wilderness? These differences between agency goals and partner goals, if well understood, may clarify expectations among SS entities, and highlight components of SS programs that facilitate or impede success.

Through such conversations, it may also be possible to better understand the exact meaning of SS within the Wilderness context, as well as how different roles within that context may be most effective. A lack of clear understanding as to the role of the SS program, as well as a lack of understanding that particular roles play within this effort was reflected in the results above. For instance, several mentioned a lack of clarity about the meaning of SS, or how to encourage it among volunteers. Additionally, it was noted that, for instance, the role of science within the context of SS was unclear. Therefore, one goal of a continued discussion surrounding SS would be to develop a basic primer about the effort, such as that available within the context of the ‘shared stewardship strategy’ discussed above ([USDA Forest Service, 2018](#)). Through this process, the appropriate roles of different people may become clear. Will researchable questions emerge, for instance, which could drive future science and research on the issue? Will a clarity about who could, perhaps, drive basic changes to rules and regulations, such as those that prevent employees coordinating volunteers from providing tokens of appreciation?

It may be possible to coordinate and develop basic knowledge, like a guide to SS from the agency perspective and the non-agency perspective. Such basic documents were explicitly mentioned by participants in this research, and fundamental knowledge, such as the funding models and lack of capacity issues facing both the partner and government side, will likely be critical for overcoming some of the issues facing the Wilderness SS community. This communication and clear definition of shared stewardship should aim to create a better understanding of fundamentals related to the partnership model. For instance, [Day \(2011\)](#) highlighted the point made by an agency partner, who stated that Wilderness SS constitutes a cooperative partnership rather than a collaborative partnership, as the decision-making power remains with the agency. While distinguishing between cooperative and collaborative may be challenging, the point that the agency side of the partnership generally has final say is important.

Perhaps a better distinction would be between collaborative governance, as described above (which does require an assessment of power differences), and co-governance, which implies a level of equal decision-making power. Co-governance relationships may be developed through legal authorities, as noted in the mandate that federal agencies formally consult with Native American Tribes when policies or management actions have implications for Tribal interests ([Obama, 2009](#)). Collaborative governance relationships, as defined herein, may have

unequal distribution of decision-making power, which likely better represents Wilderness SS arrangements. Indeed, Federal land management agencies, in many cases, may be legally restricted from transferring the decision-making power to non-federal entities. However, with the recognition that ownership in the shared stewardship process is both critical and tied to decision-making power, as Wilderness SS evolves, there may be opportunities to increase a sense of ownership on the part of agency partners. For instance, while agencies will always be the ultimate decision-makers with regard to the type or scope of projects being completed, can the shared stewardship program be formalized in a way that provides partners with the final decision-making power with regard to *how* a program or project is implemented within SS contexts?

While power disparity can complicate relationships, mitigating potential complications likely comes with a better understanding of what is possible (and not possible) within Wilderness SS contexts. Clear communication about roles and expectations may facilitate a feeling of shared ownership over the stewardship process. A belief that such roles are not well defined was evident in the following comment by Participant 4 (NGO, somewhat agree): “I’m concerned that our partner group has been forced to take on too many decisions which should be agency-driven.” This highlights a need to ensure that non-agency partners within the SS model are recognized not as a cheaper, less than ideal option, but as entities who can provide a unique set of skills and, therefore, are an important supplement to agency work. In other words, even if funds for Wilderness stewardship were limitless, partnerships with non-agency entities would still be integral to the future of the NWPS. For instance, given the high turnover and career incentives that result in frequent relocations within the federal agencies, non-federal partners may represent a more stable, place-based source of Wilderness knowledge.

The final proposed ‘next step’, which is interrelated with continued conversations and a clear definition of the various facets of Wilderness shared stewardship, is to add nuance to the capacity discussion. That is, as the conversation surrounding Wilderness shared stewardship continues, we recommend clear and concise documentation of capacity-issue specifics. For instance, if funding capacity issues are related to both amounts of funding and flexibility of how funds are allocated, then additional information about exact issues may be beneficial. Such an

approach may allow for incremental improvements to the capacity issue through increased understanding of specific needs.

While these potential next steps are both general and incremental, we suggest that they are necessary initial steps in the face of both major and minor issues that continue to challenge those focused on Wilderness SS. As [Ansell and Gash \(2008\)](#) noted, the collaborative process requires intermediate outcomes in the form of ‘small wins’, which may be reflected in steps such as strategic plans and joint fact-finding. If those within the Wilderness community step away from wholesale elimination of persistent problems such as what is viewed as inadequate general appropriations, then perhaps intermediate outcomes will emerge in a way that unifies and motivates both sides of the partnership focused on the betterment of the NWPS. Finally, if recognition and understanding of insecurities (e.g., feelings of inadequate Wilderness knowledge, lagging stewardship metrics, concerns about abilities) become more widespread through honest and free conversation, then stronger SS partnerships can result.

6. CONCLUSION

At the 2019 National Wilderness Workshop (NWW), over 100 people in the Wilderness community answered surveys and discussed barriers and successes, innovative ideas, and general concerns related to shared stewardship (SS). Formal analysis of this input highlighted diverse perspectives related to wilderness culture and community, a need for increased focus on communication and coordination, practical challenges (e.g., employee turnover) and needs (e.g., central database for SS information), existential issues (e.g., political division, climate change), and a lack of capacity to meet the enormous task of stewarding the 111-million-acre National Wilderness Preservation System (NWPS). The purpose of this research was both to understand how the conversation around Wilderness SS has evolved or changed over time, and to initiate a productive discussion around salient issues to facilitate empathy among those in the Wilderness community. We expect that such empathy can lead to stronger SS partnerships over time.

Generally, this report recognizes the need to continue efforts focused on improving SS; incremental changes are particularly important within the context of the large issues identified (e.g., a lack of diversity in the Wilderness community, a general lack of capacity). Additionally, we suggest a need for more opportunities, at future NWWs and other relevant forums, that focus on building empathy through open and honest discussion. Such discussions should be boundless with attention given to even the smallest details (e.g., what exactly are the capacity issues?). Building empathy and SS partnerships will require time, which is a scarce resource for those involved in Wilderness stewardship. However, both our collective Wilderness experience and the persistence of challenges and barriers to Wilderness SS over time suggest that an explicit focus on building relationships will be time well spent. Meeting the intensive demands of stewarding the NWPS will undoubtedly require continued strengthening of our collective SS ethic.

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