

CINDY EBBERT is the 2020 recipient of the TRADITIONAL SKILLS AND MINIMUM TOOLS LEADERSHIP AWARD from the US Forest Service.

From the nomination letter:



Cindy Ebbert, Wilderness and Trails Manager for the Dillon Ranger District has been a strong wilderness professional and advocate since 2007. Her career on the White River started in 1999 as a wilderness seasonal, but her passion for wilderness started much earlier as she explored the John Muir and Ansel Adams Wilderness areas with her family. Cindy’s wilderness passion and leadership qualities were solidified as a young adult when she obtained her degree in Outdoor Recreation Management, worked as wilderness instructor in the Ansel Adams Wilderness and a later worked as an environmental education instructor in the Colorado Rockies.

Since arriving on the White River National Forest, Cindy’s professionalism and leadership skills have helped shape an outstanding example of stewardship and collaboration in managing the Eagles Nest and Ptarmigan Peak Wilderness Areas. Her planning, teaching, and extensive on the ground experiences have been key in shaping USFS and partnership wilderness programs, traditional skills training and certification programs, endless trails and wilderness projects, and long term stewardship partners in Summit County, Colorado. Summit County is one of the most visited resort communities in the nation. It is home to 4 ski resorts, several small resort towns, summer homes, spectacular Rocky Mountain scenery, endless developed and dispersed recreation opportunities, Wilderness Areas, and sought after Colorado Fourteeners ... all within 2 hours of Denver.



Both local and tourism related visits to Summit County and local Wilderness areas have led to ever-increasing high use recreation “hot spots”. Urban interface issues continue to arise near the Eagles Nest Wilderness area as ever-increasing numbers of day use visitors are drawn to it. Consequently, many of these high use trails within the Eagles Nest Wilderness are highly valued and have become high priority trails within the local communities of Dillon, Silverthorne, Frisco and Breckenridge. In addition to high use issues on Cindy’s District, the Forest experienced a severe Mountain Pine Beetle epidemic starting in 2010 which killed hundreds of thousands of acres of trees within the Central Rockies including the Eagles Nest and Ptarmigan Wilderness areas. Thousands of red and dead pine trees still fill the landscape today.

In summary, Cindy has quietly and professionally addressed many complex wilderness management issues and demands over the years all of which have included and perpetuated the use and training of traditional skills and primitive tools.

Cindy has been a leader and worked extensively with long time partners “Eagle Summit Wilderness Alliance” ((ESWA)-previously “Friends of the Eagles Nest Wilderness”), to grow their crosscut skills

and certification programs as well as their volunteer ranger and weeds programs. Her commitment, passion and oversight have included work with Rocky Mountain Youth Corps crews and projects (25 weeks annually), Wildland Restoration Volunteers, and Volunteers for Outdoor Colorado, including training and use of traditional skills and minimal tool concepts.



Cindy's leadership and experience in the use of traditional skills has resulted in professional and successful wilderness trail clearing, resulting in hundreds and some year thousands of trees cleared with cut cross saws and other primitive tools. In 2019, Cindy's wilderness crew cleared 958 trees, hiked 350 miles of trail, contacted 587 visitors, naturalized 83 fire rings and removed endless amounts of trash utilizing wilderness rangers and their backs and two rented Llamas! The wilderness crew's use of traditional skills continues to garner support and appreciation from visitors, local and regional interest groups as well as our adjacent communities.

Another outstanding example of Cindy's leadership in the use of traditional skills and the minimum tool, is a project in 2015 that involved the removal the Rock Creek Cabin and its associated features within the Eagles Nest Wilderness. It required the removal of the cabin, a concrete slab, buried water line, assorted trash/garbage, two storage tanks and restoration of a historic wetland. A Minimum Tool Analysis process was used to determine wilderness-compatible methods for undertaking the project. Cindy's creative and collaborative planning led to the building being demolished and removed by hand in partnership with Colorado Corrections Industry (CCI). The project utilized traditional skills and primitive human powered tools to get the job done. It served as another unique and outstanding example of how the job can be done without motorized or mechanical tools or transport that likely could have been approved without her demonstrated knowledge and leadership.



Cindy is one of the most outstanding wilderness leaders that I have worked with in my 28 years of federal service. Her humble yet confident and steady leadership style makes her not only an outstanding teacher and facilitator of all things wilderness, it also demonstrates her passion and commitment to the "why". She continues to set examples of why the use of primitive skills and the minimum tool is so important in that future generations can then better understand our nation's history and our legacy of wilderness. She has mentored countless youth, volunteers and USFS seasonal employees in the successful and safe application of traditional skills and primitive tools in challenging situations such as the bark beetle epidemic. She continues to oversee and operate a very complex and high profile wilderness and trails program with remarkable outcomes and grace. Her ability to obtain grants and sustain long term partnerships to accomplish ongoing challenges is noteworthy. In summary, the White River National Forest is honored to have such an outstanding wilderness professional working on the Forest. Thank you for considering Cindy Ebbert for the Traditional Skills and Minimum Tool Leadership Award. We feel Cindy is truly deserving of this national recognition.