

EAGLE POST 58

The newsletter of **ESWA - EAGLE SUMMIT WILDERNESS ALLIANCE** apprises you of important activities in and around Eagles Nest, Holy Cross, and Ptarmigan Peak Wilderness Areas.

www.EagleSummitWilderness.org



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BEFORE WE BEGIN:

First some good news on our efforts to get the CORE Act passed: Thanks to your letters and phone calls, the amazing work of Congressman Joe Neguse, and support from Senators Bennet and Hickenlooper, the House voted on February 26 to send on to the Senate a package of Wilderness



bill (HR 803) that includes the CORE Act! Keep your eyes out for an Eaglet soon, with guidance on how you can help get the CORE Act become law. Meanwhile, if you live in CD3, please reach out to Congresswoman Boebert [here](#) and tell her you support the CORE Act, which is essential to ensuring we invest in the outdoor economy that fuels our state.

Also, as we grow our programs in the forest, we need increasing help in the office, and some new faces have stepped up to volunteer - **Cindy Levin** has taken over management of our brand new website and **Merry Lynne Hamilton** will take over management of our main database. A huge thanks to both!

Check out the new website [HERE](#). **Yonah Cohen** of [Indian Peaks Wilderness Alliance](#) provided generous assistance to **Bill Betz & Chris Turner** in getting it up and running. The new site is cleaner, easier to navigate, and much simpler to administer and update, so we hope that Cindy finds it a fun and interesting job.

Merry Lynne has agreed to help maintain our main database, which houses important information about our members and others.

Thanks to both Cindy and Merry Lynne. And our heartfelt thanks to **Bill Betz** for handling these tasks for the past 5 years.

Finally, ESWA is pleased to announce that the Walking Mountain Science Center

has generously agreed to give ESWA the opportunity to author some of their regular hike/snowshoe-of-the-week and Curious Nature columns in the Vail Daily. The Daily published [our recent article](#) entitled "*10 tips for enjoying the winter wilderness with minimal environmental impact*"

March 2021

Dear *|FNAME|*
Greetings! Our topic this month:
Meet Leanne Veldhuis, USFS District Ranger,
Eagle-Holy Cross Ranger District



INTRODUCTION

ESWA is delighted to welcome Leanne Veldhuis as the new Eagle-Holy Cross District Ranger. Arriving last July in the middle of a pandemic, unprecedented visitor numbers, and an epic fire season, Leanne has redefined "hitting the ground running." As District Ranger, she oversees management of more than 60 employees and 652,000 acres of some of the most popular U.S. national forest lands, including three Wilderness Areas and two major ski resorts. As you can see from Leanne's piece below, she comes to the position with stellar qualifications, including career steps ranging from the Pacific Crest Trail to Forest Service headquarters in D.C., and an MS in environmental science from UCSB and a BS in material science from MIT. Thanks to Leanne for taking the time to tell us a little more about herself.

Meet Leanne Veldhuis Eagle-Holy Cross District Ranger

Hello and thank you for the opportunity to introduce myself to the ESWA community! I'll share some of my background that led me to my new position in July 2020 as the Eagle-Holy Cross District Ranger. I grew up in a suburb of Detroit, Michigan with my mom, dad, and younger sister. My sister and I would constantly play outside in the backyard – everything from building what I considered giant snow forts to pretending to be pioneers (you can survive just by gathering pine cones, right?) to climbing my favorite tree. One of my favorite books growing up was "50 Simple Things Kids Can Do to Save the Earth" (with a close runner-up of the same book about recycling). The woods near my grandma's house were always a special place to explore whenever we would visit. My parents also instilled in me a love of adventure. We did lots of family road trips (and some flights) that led us to visit all 50 states by my senior year of high school – although I spent a fair bit of

time reading books in the backseat of the minivan and might have missed some sights along the way! In general, I loved school and gravitated towards math and science, which led me to pursue an engineering degree and a masters in environmental science.

In grad school, I applied for the Presidential Management Fellowship, a 2-year opportunity to get hired into the federal government. One of the positions was to work for the Pacific Crest National Scenic Trail program. I didn't know exactly what the trail was, and barely even knew what a National Forest was (let alone really understanding what the Forest Service did), but something about the position, basically a gut instinct, told me it was unique and would be something special. I got the job - and my PCT supervisor, Beth Boyst, had previously worked on the Eagle-Holy Cross Ranger



On the Pacific Crest Trail

District for over 15 years of her career. It truly is a small world. Though I considered myself "outdoorsy" from growing up playing soccer and tennis and running track, my time with the PCT showed me I could take it to a whole new level. It dawned on me after a month of working for the PCT program that I should get some hiking boots, so I bought my first pair and went on my first backpacking trip with trail partners from the Pacific Crest Trail Association – a former thru hiker named "Nitro," to be exact. One year later some friends and I climbed Mt. Whitney, the tallest 14er in the lower US, which I realize might be a sore topic to read about in a newsletter based out of Colorado! Nevertheless, I was well on my way to embracing the full public lands experience in my life.



NEAR MT. HOOD SUMMIT

After my two years with the PCT, I converted into a permanent position within the Forest Service on Mt. Hood National Forest's Zigzag Ranger District in Oregon. There, I was the permit administrator for Timberline Lodge National Historic Landmark, managed the interpretive education program – and learned how to ski! I loved working for such a beautiful forest. I also joined a Type I wildland fire Incident Management Team and have gone on fire assignments nearly every year since. After about 4 years in Oregon, an opportunity to work for the National Partnership Office in our D.C. headquarters opened up, and it resonated with the part of me that enjoys working with partners to accomplish goals and pursue new ideas together. During my time in Washington, D.C., I was able to further explore different aspects of the Forest Service, through short-term details to our wildland fire budget shop, the Chief's Office as Deputy Chief of Staff, and to El Yunque National Forest in Puerto Rico after Hurricane Maria. I have really appreciated gaining a perspective of public lands work from the district level to the national level – it's fascinating everywhere. After over 4 years in D.C., I started to feel the pull to return to "the field" and be near mountains again, as

well as challenge myself with a new step in my career. The highly complex nature of the work at Eagle-Holy Cross, the outstanding reputation of the partners and staff here, and of course the world-class beauty of the place made it an amazing opportunity to pursue.



Mount of the Holy Cross from Notch Mountain

I showed up to Eagle-Holy Cross on July 20, and on the Monday of my 4th week here, I got a phone call about “a fire in the canyon.” That was the start of the Grizzly Creek fire for me. I could certainly make a pun about how my first month here was like drinking from a firehose. For a while, Grizzly Creek was the #1 priority fire in the country. I got to meet many key entities and partners in Eagle County very quickly.

And, I realized how thankful I was for some

early Flat Tops and Glenwood Canyon field visits with my staff – because once the fire started, I was relieved to at least have a basic understanding of key areas the incident management team was talking about.

Meanwhile, the district was experiencing its heaviest visitation summer in recent memory, due in large part to mass demand from the public wanting to get outside because of COVID. I was out there with them, hiking the Missouri-Fancy Lake loop, Notch Mountain, Mt. Powell, a particularly exhausting day up to Deluge Lake, and a wonderful outing to Gore Lake with Mike and Frances from ESWA! Heavy use is certainly one of

the key management challenges we are facing. It’s been a very memorable start and I look forward to the years ahead. So glad to be here!



Hanging Lake recon hike during Grizzly Creek Fire

Follow us



Join us! Next **Planning Meeting**

Thursday, March 11 at 5:30 PM via [Zoom](#). Questions? Send us an [email](#).

CITY MARKET COMMUNITY REWARDS PROGRAM

Please [register](#) your City Market Value Card, linking it to ESWA, which will send rebates to us without compromising your earned fuel points. Please note that each card holder may only sign up for one tax exempt organization. **THANKS!**

Become an ESWA Member today or donate...



... and help ESWA "Keep Wilderness Wild!"!

THANKS TO OUR BUSINESS AND FOUNDATION SPONSORS



A huge thanks to [ARAPAHOE BASIN SKI AREA](#). For more than two decades, A-Basin staff have donated generously to their **Employee Environmental Fund**, of which ESWA has been a steady beneficiary. Last year, more than 150 employees donated, led by A-Basin Director **Alan Henceroth**. Our enduring THANKS to them.

And our sincere thanks to these foundations for their generous financial support of ESWA's work:

- **The National Forest Foundation** for their continuing support of our Noxious Weed Program, awarding ESWA funds to help ESWA hire contractors in coordination with the USFS to treat noxious weed outbreaks in our Wilderness Area.
- The **Schuetze Family** and **The Summit Foundation** for donations and grants that helped turn the Beau Schutte boardwalk into a reality.
- **The National Wilderness Steward Foundation** for their continuing support of our trail projects and other on-the-ground efforts.

AND LAST BUT NOT LEAST, thanks to the 132 incredible individuals who became members and donated almost \$15,000 in 2020, including on Colorado Gives Day! Check out other [monthly eNewsletters](#)



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