



OUR
WILD

A Lifeline for Servicemembers

© Justin Wilson, courtesy of Warrior Expeditions

BY SEAN GOBIN

Our nation's parks, forests and refuges are many things to many people—a backdrop for family vacations, a memorable setting for picnics, hikes or camping trips. For me, they are a lifeline. Unfortunately, America's public lands that provide this lifeline for many Americans are at risk of privatization.

After three combat deployments in Iraq and Afghanistan, I eased my way back into civilian life by hiking the Appalachian Trail in 2012. This long walk through America's eastern forests and meadows was a healing experience—one that wouldn't have been possible without access to these incredible open spaces that are our American birthright.

“I started Warrior Expeditions out of my desire to help open other veterans to this same lifeline that helped me come to terms with my wartime experiences.”

Warrior Expeditions encourages men and women returning from combat to embark on long-distance “through-hikes” as a way of transitioning to life at home after their experiences in war. It's not a new idea. In 1948, World War II veteran Earl Shaffer vowed that he would “walk off the war,” and he did. He is known for being the first person to hike the entire length of the Appalachian Trail, from Georgia to Maine.

America is blessed with many scenic and historic trails—the Pacific Crest Trail that stretches from Southern California to the northern edge of Washington, the Ice Age Trail in Wisconsin and others in every corner of the country. Many of these trails traverse public lands that are protected and accessible now and for the future. Unfortunately, access to these lands is threatened by those who wish to turn them over to states and privatize them for sale or lease them to the highest bidder. This well-funded agenda to seize shared public lands has gained a disturbing foothold in western state legislatures and in Congress.

continued on page 2



The Wilderness Society President
Jamie Williams

DEAR WILDERNESS SOCIETY SUPPORTER,

The Wilderness Society's work is built around the principle that our shared national lands belong to all of us.

A few members of Congress are leading a toxic agenda to privatize these lands, putting our basic American rights at risk. The Wilderness Society, with the essential support of our members, is working to ensure

that this short-sighted agenda is thwarted and our lands continue to be here for the benefit of all Americans—not just a few.

Recently, your support helped us win a key battle in Congress by influencing public lands champions to remove language from legislation that would have privatized a significant portion of the Vieques National Wildlife Refuge in Puerto Rico. Not only did this victory keep the island of Puerto Rico from losing a significant wildlife habitat and economic engine, it was also an important victory over those who want to privatize public lands.

While we continue this fight to keep our public lands public, we are also working to bring several landscapes across the country the protection they deserve—as national monuments. In the northeast, the Maine Woods region provides unmatched opportunity for adventure in a beautiful setting. In southeastern Utah, the majestic Bears Ears—one of the most culturally significant landscapes in the country—is victim to looting, vandalism, mining and energy development. On the California Coast, Piedras Blancas provides one of seven breeding habitats in the world for the elephant seal. And in Gold Butte—Nevada's piece of the Grand Canyon—this rich desert landscape is home to world class cultural and historic treasures and spectacular geology. All of these places are irreplaceable and all of them are unprotected. We are working with local and national partners to let President Obama know that these lands deserve protection as national monuments.

We can't thank you enough for your support in helping us protect the places we love.

Sincerely,

Jamie Williams
Jamie Williams
President

More than 2.5 million veterans who served in Iraq and Afghanistan are dealing with the persistent challenge of transitioning from combat to civilian life. The freedom and access to America's public lands helps each veteran get started on a physical and mental journey toward that goal.

To honor our veterans, there can be no greater investment than to protect our natural treasures and the healing they provide.

The Wilderness Society, with the support of our members, is working to ensure that our nation's shared lands can continue to provide these important experiences for all Americans. #OurWild is a movement to keep national parks, forests and recreation areas in the hands of everyone. Visit ourwild.wilderness.org to learn how to join The Wilderness Society in speaking up to protect our wild.

Warrior Expeditions founder Sean Gobin created the "Walk Off The War" program which is designed to support veterans transitioning from military service by thru-hiking America's National Scenic Trails. www.warriorexpeditions.org



Photo courtesy of Sean Gobin

America's Wilderness is published three times a year by The Wilderness Society.

PRESIDENT:
Jamie Williams

DESIGN:
Studio Grafik

Questions or comments?
Please contact
Jamie Clark at
Jamie_Clark@tws.org



bbb.org/charity

The Wilderness Society meets all standards as set forth by the Better Business Bureau/Wise Giving Alliance.



HOT ISSUES

© Tony Bynum

COAL REFORM

The Wilderness Society is working hard every day to modernize the way energy development is done on public lands. On March 24, an important milestone in this process was reached when the Department of the Interior announced that it will begin a “Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement” to review how coal production on public lands negatively affects climate, communities and wildlands, and to ensure the program provides a fair return to taxpayers. This announcement comes after the January decision to pause all new coal leases on public lands while the administration takes a deeper look at the outdated coal program. This is a welcome development as The Wilderness Society continues to push to modernize energy development on public lands to move us toward a clean energy future that ensures the health of wildlands and future generations of Americans.

BADGER-TWO MEDICINE

On March 17, after 30 years of debate, Secretary of the Interior Sally Jewell announced cancellation of the Solenex oil and gas lease in the Badger-Two Medicine area of Montana’s Rocky Mountain Front. It was discovered that the leases were issued illegally: the Blackfoot Tribe was never consulted and the environmental impacts were not assessed. “This decision is a turning point in the decades-long fight to protect the Badger-Two Medicine area of Montana,” said Jamie Williams, president of The Wilderness Society. “Today the Interior Department recognizes that the Badger is simply too sacred and too wild to drill. The cultural heart of the Blackfoot Nation deserves protection and respect.” Not only does this action send a message that the Badger-Two Medicine area is not an appropriate location for drilling activities, but it sets the stage for cancelling the remaining leases in this culturally significant part of the Northern Rockies.

VICTORY IN VIEQUES

Champions of public lands in Congress, led by Rep. Raul Grijalva, removed language from Puerto Rico’s debt relief legislation that would have given away—potentially for commercial development—approximately 3,100 acres of the Vieques National Wildlife Refuge. This measure endangered one of the most biologically unique wildlife refuges in the nation, which as a protected sanctuary has been a powerful economic engine for the island as a tourist destination. The notion that this popular and irreplaceable wildland could be bought and sold is representative of the increasingly radical tactics of some anti-conservation members of Congress who are leading the ongoing “public lands takeover” agenda. This episode underscores the high stakes of this threat, and shows just how important your voices are. Thanks to our members who supported The Wilderness Society and our partners in winning this battle.



WILD PLACES



BEARS EARS: Irreplaceable. Unprotected.

In the southeast corner of Utah sits a truly irreplaceable landscape referred to as Bears Ears. This 1.9 million acre stretch of vast wildlands is arguably one of the most culturally-significant places in the country, and one of the least protected. The rock art etched and painted into the steep-walled canyons and the ruins, kivas, and other artifacts—that still exist in their original context—not only tell a story of the ancient world, they also contribute to what makes Bears Ears a sacred place for Native American tribes to this day. Despite this significance, this magnificent place is threatened and needs protection. The Wilderness Society is working alongside local and national partners in supporting the Bears Ears Inter-Tribal Coalition’s historic proposal to urge President Obama to give Bears Ears the protection it needs and deserves, once and for all.

© Mason Cummings

“The amount of scientific resources is outstanding. We have geology here, we have paleontology, we have archaeology ... we have an almost unbroken chain of stories to tell from this place dating back 320 million years almost to the present day.”

— Rob Gay, paleontologist with The Museums of Western Colorado, *Dinosaur Journey*.



© Mason Cummings



© Mason Cummings

“It provides a link to our ancestors from long ago ... that is why tribes have set aside any differences and come together. If this information is lost, it’s lost forever. We must protect Bears Ears.”

— Octavius Seowtewa, Zuni Elder

A CONNECTION TO THE ANCIENT WORLD

Bears Ears is known to contain more than 100,000 cultural and archaeological sites, making it the most significant unprotected archaeological area in the United States. Perhaps nowhere in the United States are so many well-preserved cultural resources found within such a striking and relatively undeveloped natural landscape. The movement to protect Bears Ears has been spearheaded by a coalition of Native American tribes—many of whom trace their heritage back to the area.

ADVENTURE WITH A TOUCH OF WONDER, FOR ALL FOR ALL TIME

Protecting Bears Ears as a national monument will ensure this incredible place will continue to be accessible to all, for all time. With better management, the outdoor adventure experience will be enhanced while the region’s monumental resources will be protected.

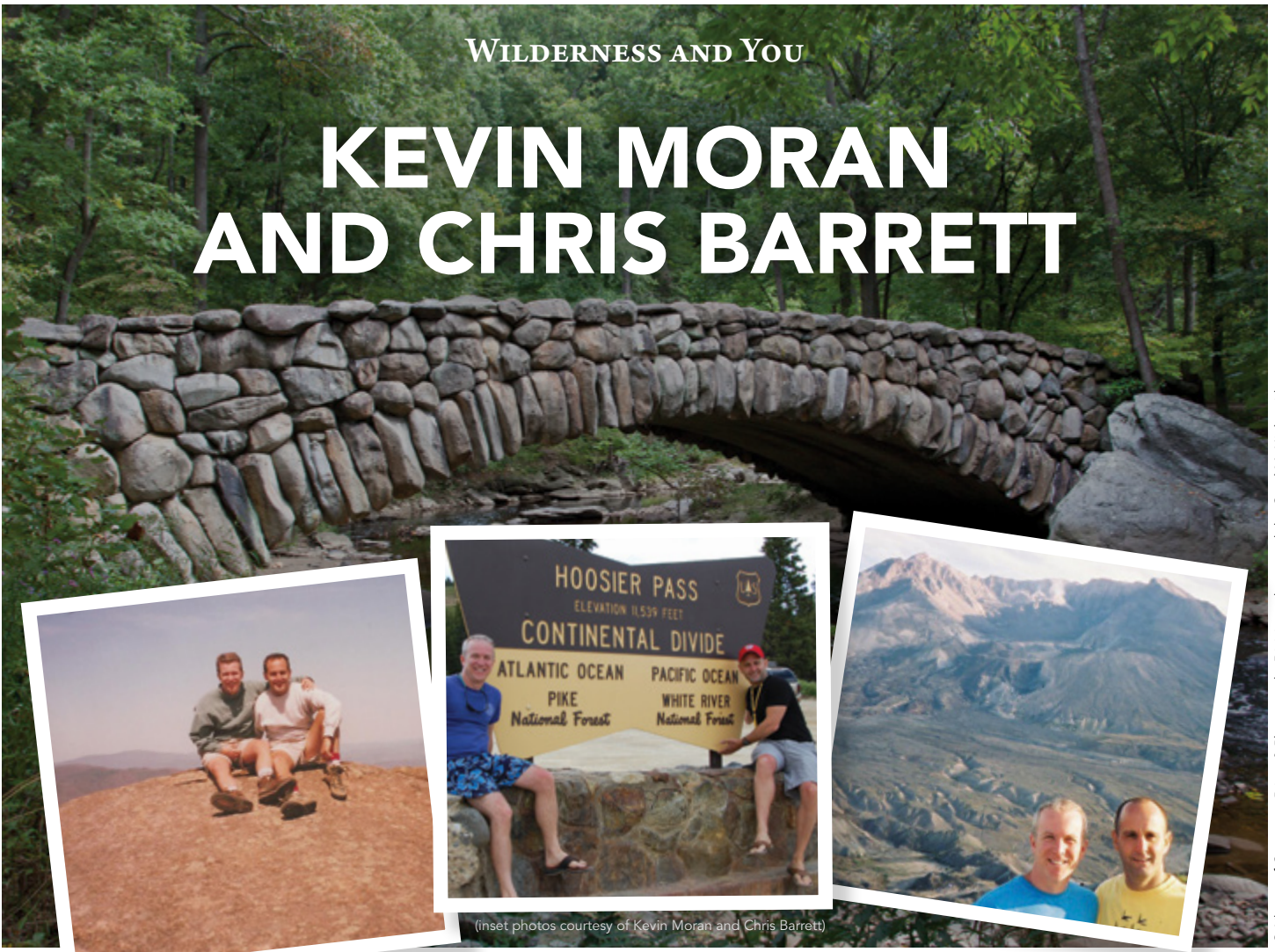
DON’T LET THIS SPECIAL PLACE BE ERASED

Looting and vandalism, irresponsible off-road vehicle use, mining and energy development continually threaten this landscape. The Antiquities Act exists to protect our nation’s natural wonders and cultural history. If there is a place that encompasses all of these values, Bears Ears is it. Protect Bears Ears now: visit wilderness.org/bears ears.

**Tell President Obama it’s time to
#ProtectBearsEarsNow**

WILDERNESS AND YOU

KEVIN MORAN AND CHRIS BARRETT



(inset photos courtesy of Kevin Moran and Chris Barrett)

© Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, photograph by Carol M. Highsmith

If you are in Washington, D.C.'s Rock Creek Park on a Saturday, you might bump into Kevin Moran and Chris Barrett running along the trails with rescue dogs they've brought back from one of their frequent trips to Puerto Rico. Kevin and Chris take advantage of this "natural gem" in their own backyard while also making sure they get to incredible wild places all across the country. One memorable trip, which took them to Arches National Park, Telluride, Colo., and the Grand Canyon, reminded them of the breathtaking, "almost otherworldly" diversity of ecosystems in the United States. "We visited Joshua Tree before it received its designation, and were struck by the rawness of the space," recalled Kevin. "We thought, 'If someone comes in and changes it, it's changed forever,' and it was a profound realization that some spaces have to be saved."

This same thought echoed for them when they first visited the pristine National Wildlife Refuge in Vieques, Puerto Rico, where they witnessed first-hand the importance of preserving healthy ecosystems. "Some places are special simply because they exist," explained Chris. "Supporting organizations like The Wilderness Society is about protecting places we may never go, but which are important just because they are there."

Kevin and Chris generously support a wide variety of organizations, but gravitate toward those that speak for populations or places that cannot speak for themselves—including public lands, which rely on dedicated supporters to ensure they are protected well into the future. They realized years ago that public lands need advocates to protect them from those who would sell or develop precious resources for short-term gains.

continued on page 7

MONTHLY GIVING

The easiest and most effective way to
Protect The Places You Love.

Friends of the Wilderness is a special group of passionate and forward-thinking supporters. Through their monthly gifts, they make sure The Wilderness Society has the dependable and ongoing resources needed to protect our nation's wild places. To join today please visit wilderness.org/monthly



© Bob Wick, flickr

In response to increasing threats to public lands, Kevin and Chris became *Friends of the Wilderness* in 2012 because they could easily provide consistent support by making regular monthly donations. As gridlock in Congress made land protections a daunting task, Kevin and Chris responded by becoming Advocates for Wilderness, providing The Wilderness Society resources to move critical efforts at the local and national levels. We are so grateful for their continued commitment to our work.

Next up for Kevin and Christopher is a trip to California to revisit redwoods and rugged coasts. Big Sky, the Grand Tetons and Yellowstone are on the long list of future places they plan to visit. Still, if they don't make it to half the places on their list, "we know our support to The Wilderness Society is critical, even if we don't always get to see the places we are saving."

EVERY KID IN A PARK

America is celebrating the National Park Service's 100th anniversary in 2016 by trying to get more kids playing and learning outdoors. In that effort, we're proud to support President Obama's "Every Kid in a Park" initiative that provides fourth-grade students, and their families, free admission to all national parks and other federal lands and waters for a full year, plus educational resources for students and teachers. The Wilderness Society is proud

to be a part of the Every Kid in a Park initiative through the Outdoors Alliance for Kids, which is helping to break down barriers and connect more young Americans with their wild places. OAK is helping its member organizations host Every Kid in a Park events in communities across the country, and working with its partners in the federal agencies to ensure that the Every Kid initiative continues and grows in 2017 and beyond.



© Zach Behrens, courtesy of the National Park Service



The Wilderness Society
1615 M St., N.W.
Washington, DC 20036
www.wilderness.org
1-800-THE-WILD

NONPROFIT
U.S. POSTAGE

PAID
THE
WILDERNESS
SOCIETY

OUR WILD

What if magnificent spaces were no longer ours to roam? Join the movement to save #OurWild from privatization at ourwild.wilderness.org.



© Bob Wick

Individuals like you make our work to protect the lands we love possible. When you stand with The Wilderness Society, you help to ensure our natural legacy for generations to come. **Want to do even more?**

Advocates for Wilderness make generous annual gifts of \$1,000 or more to The Wilderness Society and receive regular insider updates on the work of The Wilderness Society.

President's Circle members make contributions of \$25,000 or more each year and will have personal access to The Wilderness Society's brightest conservation leaders as well as opportunities to travel with The Wilderness Society.

To learn more about our **Advocates for Wilderness** or the **President's Circle**, please contact Andrea O'Brien at **202-429-2626** or andrea_obrien@tws.org.

SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENT

Thanks to the extraordinary support of the Robert W. Wilson Charitable Trust, anyone who joins our **President's Circle** with their first gift of \$25,000 will have their incredible generosity matched dollar for dollar!

