

TRAIL AMBASSADORS

Why your group should get involved!



ABWF'S 2024 TRAIL AMBASSADOR PROGRAM

Contact Lauren Swett,
Program Director
lswett@abwilderness.org



absaroka | beartooth
WILDERNESS FOUNDATION

WHY ARE TRAIL AMBASSADORS IMPORTANT?

Wilderness visitor use on the Custer-Gallatin National Forest more than doubled between 2009 and 2014, and that trend has likely accelerated in recent years. Hiker numbers on The Beaten Path alone **doubled in the past 5 years, and increased by 40% between 2019 and 2020**. With that increasing visitor use comes increasing visitor impacts, which can be detrimental to wilderness character, fish and wildlife habitat, and the wilderness experience of other recreationalists. The U.S. Forest Service looks to partner groups like ABWF to help shoulder the load educating visitors on wilderness ethics and local regulations, helping mitigate detrimental impacts before they happen. That's where our Trail Ambassadors program comes in, providing the education and outreach that is in high demand by our U.S. Forest Service partners, not to mention the wilderness areas we all work to protect.



Get your group involved and "Sponsor" a Trailhead in the A-B!

WHY IS THE ABWF SEEKING GROUPS TO "SPONSOR" A TRAILHEAD?

Trail Ambassador outreach may provide the greatest benefit to wilderness conservation of all our programs. Yet we've found recruiting Trail Ambassador volunteers to be the most difficult, while training those volunteers also draws a lot of ABWF resources. Partnering with other groups might be the best way we can address those issues. When a group "sponsors" a trail, it will:

- make recruitment more effective, as we involve the group's existing membership
- make training more effective, as we can present material during one of the group's regular meetings, and
- spread the workload over a wider pool of volunteers, as individuals will just need to sign up for one or two days, while as a whole the group can cover the entire summer season.

It's also just a great way to achieve the part of our mission where we promote wilderness stewardship and wildlands appreciation through community collaboration.



WHAT'S IN IT FOR YOUR GROUP?

In addition to involving your group's members in a high-demand, high-impact conservation project, sponsoring a trailhead with our TA Program is a great way to gain exposure for your organization. We will do our part to promote our partners, with regular social media shout outs, acknowledgement in our reports to members, donors, and US Forest Service partners, and inclusion in our online A-B Wilderness Gateway Community Visitor Guide.

By partnering with other groups to sponsor trailheads for our Trail Ambassador programs, we are seeking win-win-win-win results:

- individual volunteers will get to work on a meaningful project with direct benefits to wilderness and fish and wildlife habitat
- your organization will gain positive public exposure, including to potential new members and donors
- ABWF will be able to maximize the efficacy of our training, volunteer recruitment, and education/outreach delivery, helping us respond to one of wilderness conservation's greatest needs
- the wilderness we all care about will see fewer negative impacts from visitor use, while visitors (new and old) will continue to enjoy a world class wilderness experience