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(Neb.)-Events Scheduled To Celebrate Anniversary Of Wilderness Act

By: Chris Fankhauser Posted at: 03/24/2014 08:13 AM



(Chadron)-The Nebraska National Forests & Grasslands is starting the countdown of celebration activities leading to the 50th Anniversary of the Wilderness Act, signed into law in September 1964. Since enactment, more than 110 million acres of pristine wilderness areas have become protected for current and future generations' enjoyment, including Soldier Creek Wilderness located on the Pine Ridge Ranger District of the Nebraska National Forests & Grasslands (NNFG) near Crawford.

Mike Watts, Pine Ridge Recreation Specialist, said they've put together an exciting array of events to honor all wilderness areas, including Soldier Creek and all other Wilderness Areas. According to Watts, they plan to kick things off in April with the always popular

Regional Pack String and just build momentum until our September finale' guest Galaxy Speaker at Chadron State College, Dr. Paul Sutter.

Watts asks that folks please mark their calendars for the following events:

- Ø April 25 & 26: The US Forest Service Regional Specialty Pack Team will be featured at the new Chadron State College Agriculture Pavilion Arena for an exciting, hands-on mule-shoeing workshop and pack string exhibition.
- Ø May 6: The US Forest Service's famous Smokey Bear and Woodsey Owl will be on site for the annual Conservation Day in Chadron at Assumption Arena, hosted by the Upper Niobrara White Natural Resource Conservation District.
- Ø May 22: To kick –off "The Wilderness Shoot-Out" photo contest, Justin Haag, Regional Editor, Public Information Officer, & skilled photographer with the Nebraska Game & Parks Commission will conduct a photography workshop. Participants are asked to pre-register with Dawes County Extension Office and meet Justin and Forest Service personnel at the Soldier Creek Wilderness Area corrals and campground May 22nd at 8:30 am. Concurrent activities include instruction on the seven principles of "Leave No Trace" and introduction to GPS.
- Ø June 7: "Hike for Wilderness:" To celebrate 2014 National Trails Day Mike Watts will

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lead a guided five mile hike near Soldier Creek.

- Ø August 4: Entries for the “The Wilderness Shoot-Out” photo contest must be checked in at the Dawes County Fairgrounds.
- Ø August 5: Winners of “The Wilderness Shoot-Out” photo contest will be announced and special prizes will be awarded to 1st, 2nd and 3rd place for Wilderness entries for both 4-H and adult open classes.
- Ø August 30: “Walk/Run for Wilderness,” Mike Watts and Donna Ritzen, HPER professor at Chadron State College will hold a 5k walk/run for Labor Day Weekend near Soldier Creek Wilderness.
- Ø September 9: Featured Galaxy Series Speaker Dr. Paul Sutter will be at Chadron State College Memorial Hall at 7:00 pm. Dr. Sutter is a nationally recognized wilderness expert and the Director of Graduate Studies in History at University of Colorado, Boulder. He authored the book, Driven Wild and a book signing will follow his talk.


Watts said that besides the photography contest prizes, special 50th Anniversary Wilderness commemorative t-shirts, posters, water bottles and other prizes will be available on a limited basis for each planned activity.

Nebraska’s only other wilderness area is the Fort Niobrara Wilderness administered by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service near Valentine. Wilderness areas in South Dakota include Black Elk Wilderness near Harney Peak on the Black Hills National Forest, Sage Creek Wilderness in the Badlands National Park and proposed wilderness areas of Indian Creek near Wall, and Red Shirt near Fairburn.

Mark your calendars and follow updates on our website www.fs.fed.us/r2/nebraska. Interested persons may also call the Pine Ridge Ranger District for more information at [308-432-0300](tel:308-432-0300).

(Information courtesy Pine Ridge Ranger District)

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