Greetings and welcome to the first WILD Alumni and Friends newsletter! WILD Alumni and Friends is a growing group of people who are graduates of, or otherwise close affiliates with, the Department of Wildland Resources (WILD) at Utah State University. The group has the following goals:

- **To provide a mentoring resource for current WILD students (graduate and undergraduate).** Students will be encouraged to contact WILD Alumni and Friends to ask about career advice, job application tips, graduate school and continuing education tips, and which skills are important in today’s market.

- **To provide a networking resource for alumni and current students.** A newsletter published twice per year will update the list and provide highlights about various alumni. We welcome your stories and photos!

- **To provide a loose advisory network for WILD.** As a new Department Head, I will be soliciting your opinions about emerging trends and skills required in the job market in order to keep our degree programs current.

Direct contact with WILD Alumni and Friends members will be mediated by the WILD Department so that member contact information (emails, phones, addresses) does not become public. The list of current members, along with their WILD degrees and current positions, will be widely distributed and can be found [HERE](https://qcnr.usu.edu/wild/about/alumni_and_friends). Currently, we have over 80 members (!), so have a look to see who you can catch up with! If you want to invite someone else to join the group, please direct them to this website: [https://qcnr.usu.edu/wild/about/alumni_and_friends](https://qcnr.usu.edu/wild/about/alumni_and_friends)

If you want to update or correct your information, please do so at the sign-up website [HERE](https://qcnr.usu.edu/wild/about/alumni_and_friends), or feel free to contact the WILD Department (allison.cochley@usu.edu).

This very first newsletter will feature two WILD Alumni and Friends members at different stages in their careers; one in wildlife law enforcement and one in forestry.

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**Bill Woody**

Bill Woody’s career will be inspirational to those Wildlife Ecology and Management students who have an interest in law enforcement. Bill started his natural resources trajectory back in 1978, when he worked as a seasonal Forestry and Range Technician for the USFS Wasatch-Cache National Forest in the Uinta Mountains. He earned his BS degree in Outdoor Recreation from the USU College of Natural Resources in 1981. Bill initially followed a law enforcement career pathway, earning another BS in Criminal Justice from Weber State University, graduating from the Utah State and Phoenix Regional Law Enforcement Academies, and serving as a Deputy Sheriff in Rich County. But that pull back to natural resources led him to be an investigator and game warden and investigator for the Utah Division of Wildlife Resources for 14 years, during which he also graduated from the Federal Bureau of Investigation National Academy.

Bill went on to be the Director of Law Enforcement for the Utah Department of Natural Resources for two years, and then became the Chief of Law Enforcement for the US Fish and Wildlife Service for 6 years. From there Bill became the Director of Law Enforcement for the US Bureau of Land Management for 8 years, then the Chief of Law Enforcement for the US Fish & Wildlife Service for 6 years, and returned to his position with the BLM for
two years before becoming a wildlife law enforcement consultant in 2020. Over his career, Bill has made impressive contributions to combating wildlife trafficking around the globe, while helping to make improvements in a variety of national policies and law enforcement training programs.

Bill’s advice to students: “Educate yourselves on all the opportunities available out there now, including state, federal, NGOs (both in the U.S. and internationally), Indigenous agencies, and private industry. Diversify your curriculum vitae as much as possible and start while at the University (seasonal and volunteer work). You need to look at a variety of opportunities to help get you started… don’t limit yourself. Email me (wcwoody-at-comcast.net) and I’ll give you some ideas to consider looking at.”

With Iain Douglas-Hamilton (right), founder of “Save the Elephants” at an Ivory Burn in Nairobi, Kenya.

Visiting Mount Kenya National Park and Reserve.

With retired Congressman Jason Chaffetz (left) at the USFWS Federal Repository in Denver, Colorado

Leatherback sea turtle tagging (Carlos DIEZ, Programa de Especies Protegidas) Puerto Rico.
Jennifer Bakken

Jennifer Bakken is another inspiring example of a person working her way up through the ranks from seasonal work to a professional position. She attended school while working for the USFS, and her extensive field experience, which is interspersed with office-based work, enhances her work as a GIS analyst. Jennifer earned her BS and MS degrees in Forestry from WILD in 1996 and 2018. She has enjoyed a 20-year career with the USFS, starting as a forestry technician, cruising timber and doing stand exams for the Idaho Panhandle National Forests (NF) and the Beaverhead-Deerlodge NF in Montana. She began working seasonally for the FIA program in 1997 as part of an inspection crew, and has conducted fieldwork throughout the Rocky Mountain states, Nevada, Idaho, and South Dakota. Her seasonal work became full-time work as her skills grew, and in 2005 she joined the pre-field staff in the USFS Rocky Mountain Research Station, Forest Inventory and Analysis (FIA) Program, in Ogden, Utah, producing maps and compiling spatial data along with continued fieldwork.

Jennifer is now an Analyst for the USFS FIA program. FIA is known as the Nation’s Forest Census, and is tasked with measuring, assessing, and reporting on the extent, condition, and health of U.S. forests across all land ownership types to record forest status and trends through time. As Jim Long (WILD Emeritus Faculty) says, “FIA is a national treasure!” To learn more about FIA and their data visit their website, (https://www.fia.fs.fed.us/).

Jennifer earned her MS degree while working full-time for the FIA program, and her thesis compared FIA field-based and image-based land use and cover data to the Geospatial Technology and Applications Center’s Image-based Change Estimation program land use and cover data also collected on FIA plot locations. Her current research involves consolidating and analyzing FIA data to produce 5-year State reports on how much forest there is, where it is located, and its composition as well as how well the trees are growing, what trees have died or been removed, and why. Jennifer is also exploring different avenues for enhancing FIA data estimation by using remote sensing products (e.g., LANDFIRE’s Existing Vegetation Type (EVT) raster and the National Land Cover Database’s (NLCD) Tree Canopy Cover (TCC) raster) to reduce variance and non-response bias within the estimation.

Jennifer’s advice to current WILD students who would like to find a job with the US Forest Service is: “Take advantage of existing tools that are available to you: 1) Find out about jobs and improve your resume or job application through USAJobs.gov and by checking for the FS Jobs website (https://www.fs.usda.gov/working-with-us/jobs) for jobs and hiring events; 2) Get active in clubs and associations that will build communication and provide opportunity including WILD Alumni and Friends, USU Forestry Club, Society of American Foresters, etc.”

WILD News

WILD has added 7 new faculty members in the past few years, which will be of interest to those of you have not been in touch with our Department for a while. These are:

Larissa Yocom – Fire Ecology and Management
Eric LaMalfa (2019) – Teaching Assistant Professor
David Stoner (2019) – Research Assistant Professor
Sunshine Brosi (2020) – Teaching Associate Professor (USU Eastern)
For other WILD news, you can check out the WILD website and the 2019-2020 QCNR Annual Report.

Karen Mock
WILD Department Head
Quinney College of Natural Resources
Utah State University