



March 2026

Greetings and welcome to the inaugural quarterly newsletter from the Aldo Leopold Wilderness Research Institute. As we wrap up a busy first half of the year, we're excited to share what's been taking shape across our research and partnerships. Much of this work has been years in the making—new publications, data tools, and collaborative projects that build directly on the questions and needs shared across the wilderness community. We're grateful for your continued support and engagement, and we hope these updates give you a sense of the progress we're making together to conduct wilderness science that is relevant, connected, and useful on the ground.

[Evaluating a RAD decision-making framework to address climate change in wilderness](#)



1. Photo: Clark's Nutcracker. Glacier National Park. NPS. 09/2021

Disturbances associated with a changing climate are accelerating the trajectory and magnitude of changes in wilderness environments. The resist, accept, direct (RAD) framework provides a decision-making space for managers, partners, and researchers to respond to and prepare for future environmental conditions. ALWRI social scientist Jaclyn Rushing led this institute-wide, co-produced project, through which we evaluated a RAD decision-making framework in a selection of wilderness areas across the National Wilderness Preservation System.

ALWRI was honored to receive the 2025 US Forest Service Wilderness Award in the category of "Excellence in

Research Application" for the RAD project.

Check out the final reports for the [FS](#), [FWS](#), and [BLM](#) case studies. We expect the NPS report will be released by April 2026. Stay tuned! Take a look at [this peer-reviewed publication](#) on future climatically suitable habitat for whitebark pine, which describes one of the case studies we focused on in the American West. [Stay tuned](#) for upcoming peer-reviewed manuscripts, now in review, and an upcoming General Technical Report that will share key findings across the four case studies.

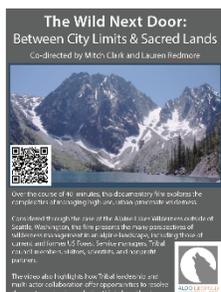
To learn more about the RAD framework, how RAD decisions are made, and the challenge of planning for change in wilderness, check out this [webinar](#).

[The Conversation- "How protecting wilderness could mean purposefully tending it, not just leaving it alone"](#)

In a [recent article](#) published in the online news source The Conversation, ALWRI's ORISE research fellow Clare Boerigter examines some of the challenges of stewarding wilderness in the twenty-first century. As Boerigter considers, in a time of climate change and renewed recognition of many wilderness landscapes as the ancestral homelands of indigenous people, might careful tending of these diverse and unique

wilderness ecosystems help sustain them into the future? Learn more about Clare and her current work in the [ALWRI news highlights](#).

ALWRI documentary film features management challenges and opportunities in the Alpine Lakes Wilderness



[The Wild Next Door](#) is a 40-minute documentary film co-directed by ALWRI Research Social Scientist Lauren Redmore and Society for Wilderness Stewardship Wilderness Fellow Mitch Clark. The film explores complexities of managing high-use, urban-proximate wilderness. Considered through the case of the Alpine Lakes Wilderness outside of Seattle, Washington, the film presents the many perspectives of wilderness management in an alpine landscape, including those of current and former US Forest Service managers, Tribal council members, visitors, scientists, and nonprofit partners. The video also highlights how Tribal leadership and multi-actor collaboration offer opportunities to resolve the most pressing issues facing this beloved landscape.

The Society for Wilderness Stewardship will host a panel discussion at the National Wilderness Skills Institute this June, featuring ALWRI Research Social Scientist Chris Armatas and other participants who graciously shared their perspectives in this film.

The role of interventions to conserve aquatic biodiversity in protected areas

Protected areas are considered a critical antidote to global biodiversity loss. Yet, protected areas have not effectively preserved freshwater biodiversity, in part because they are not designed or managed with freshwater ecosystems in mind. Additionally, human activities have degraded freshwater biodiversity, and climate change constrains the ability of protected areas to preserve freshwater biodiversity into the future. Management intervention is an important tool to support ecological, socio-cultural, and economic values surrounding freshwater biodiversity in protected areas. Yet applying interventions is challenging because many protected areas limit human manipulation and control.



2. Photo: Flathead NF. USDA Forest Service. 10/2018

Research ecologist Kellie Carim worked with faculty and graduate students at the University of Montana to explore this topic. They reviewed literature on factors leading to freshwater biodiversity decline and explored how the application of the Resist-Accept-Direct framework may assist managers in making challenging decisions around socio-cultural, ecological, and economic values to support freshwater biodiversity in protected areas. Check out [this article](#), recently published in Environmental Management, which summarizes the group's findings.

Check out the [ALWRI website](#) for more news and updates.

See you out there!

Jaclyn, Kellie, Lauren, Chris, and Olga (The ALWRI Team)