I first heard of the Bob Marshall Wilderness in the mid-1960s as a graduate student at the University of Minnesota. My major professor, Larry Merriam, had just completed his dissertation research concerning the costs and benefits of managing the Bob Marshall Wilderness—one of the first social science studies of wilderness stewardship in the country. Nearly 20 years later, I began my direct association with the “Bob”—the complex including the Bob Marshall, Great Bear, and Scapegoat wildernesses juxtaposed into one massive roadless area encompassing more than 1.5 million acres (600,000 ha) of stunning rivers, forests, mountains, and valleys.

This association came on two fronts beginning in the early 1980s. First, Rocky Mountain Research Station wilderness scientist Bob Lucas and I collaborated on replicating his 1970 study of visitor use patterns, attitudes, and motivations in the year 1982. Second, the extant wilderness staff officer for the Flathead National Forest, Jerry Stokes, asked me to join him in designing and facilitating a new planning process for management of the wilderness complex. This new planning process would combine the pioneering Limits of Acceptable Change (LAC) planning system being designed by my colleagues George Stankey, David Cole, Bob Lucas, Margaret Peterson, and Sid Frissell, with the notion of transactive planning, a theoretically radical approach (for the times) to planning put forth by urban planner John Friedmann. The combination of the research on visitors (in both the social domain and the biophysical domain—led by David Cole), the use of transactive planning (which had translated itself in our application to a “task force” made up of citizens, managers and scientists), and LAC ultimately led to the development of a new recreation management direction for the complex.

This was a large and continuing collaborative effort involving wilderness managers, members of the public representing a variety of interests—backpackers, outfitters, backcountry horse people, pilots, activists—and scientists. This group met two or three times a year for about five years, applying research, suggesting solutions, collaborating and negotiating on management, suggesting monitoring protocols, and so on. It still meets once a year to discuss management issues, review research, and provide feedback on proposed management actions.

The plan was innovative in a number of ways, including its broad citizen involvement (which continues today and...
and physical exercise. These dimensions strengthen family and friendship ties, enjoying scenery, solitude and stress release, adventure, learning about and appreciating experiences that visitors seek: achievement and protection of wilderness values and conditions, about integrating different forms of knowledge into planning, about the practical realities of monitoring and adaptive management, and about how scientists, managers, and the public can work together to achieve a common vision. It’s been an honor that I have been able to participate in this process—as scientist, facilitator, educator, wilderness visitor—for nearly 25 years.

The Bob Marshall Wilderness Complex is a spectacular setting, the “flagship” of the National Wilderness Preservation System in many people’s minds. From my perspective, it has served as an ideal scientific laboratory—science has contributed to its continuing stewardship, while the stewardship has contributed to the science of wilderness visitors and planning. The research experience and the planning process there has laid a foundation for many other similar efforts in other wildernesses, backcountry areas, and reserves, not only here in the United States but elsewhere as well. **IJW**

**STEPHEN F. MCCOOL** is a professor in the Department of Society and Conservation at The University of Montana, Missoula, MT 59812, USA. E-mail: steve.mccool@cfc.umt.edu.

---

**Chief’s Excellence in Wilderness Stewardship Research Award**

Dr. Stephen F. McCool has been selected as the 2004 recipient of the research award to recognize his long-term development of and accomplishment with studying wilderness visitors and using the Limits of Acceptable Change (LAC) planning framework in the Bob Marshall Wilderness Area and elsewhere. Dr. McCool is a professor in the Department of Society and Conservation at The University of Montana in Missoula. He has been a leading researcher, author, and educator on the use of wilderness planning processes that originally focused on the Bob Marshall Wilderness Area in Montana and then were extended for use in many wilderness areas within the National Wilderness Preservation System. One colleague noted his appreciation for Dr. McCool’s willingness to stay engaged in the Bob Marshall project over many decades and to use that research and insight to further develop the application of planning for sound wilderness stewardship management in numerous areas. Another colleague expressed admiration for Dr. McCool’s career-long commitment to wilderness research and his excellence in conducting managerially useful research. The *IJW* editorial board is pleased to jointly recognize Dr. Stephen McCool for this award and a lifetime of achievement for wilderness stewardship.