

Gila Chapter

Back Country Horsemen of New Mexico | MINUTES

Meeting date | time 7/12/2017 6:00 PM | Meeting location WNMU Watts Hall

Meeting called by Doug Dexter

Type of meeting Monthly business meeting

Note taker Cindi deCapiteau

Attendees

Chris Allen, Joan Bacon, Cathy Brett, Lee Cosby (guest), Cindi deCapiteau, Joan Dewbre, Doug Dexter, Mike Dowd, Vicki Dowd, Gerry Engel, Richard Felger, Amy Hartell, Jean Hill, Andrea Imler, Dave Imler, Nancy Imler, Russ Imler, Ted Miles, Cheryl Roth, Randy Roth, Silke Schneider, Becky Shumway, Teresa Smergut (guest), Donna Tillmann, Cindy Turner (guest), Nat Williams

AGENDA TOPICS

Agenda topic *Recognize guests and new members* | **Presenter** *Doug Dexter*

Doug acknowledged the presence of several guests this evening. Cindy Turner from Tucson, along with Lee Cosby and Teresa Smergut. Welcome!

Agenda topic *Financial & membership report* | **Presenter** *Jean Hill*

Jean allowed as how the Gila Chapter is financially sound. We have received payment for our duty to the Southwest Horsemen's Association (mustered rodeo attendees and their cars to prevent chaotic parking).

We have paid premiums for various insurances and sent proceeds from the Rendezvous (\$2,135) to help patch the leaking pockets of BCHNM. During the Rendezvous, expenses for the GBCH amounted to around \$1,800.

The Gila Chapter is tickled to accommodate 69 members.

Agenda topic *Publicity* | **Presenter** *Ted Miles*

Ted reported that things are quiet on the publicity front. Doug Dexter asked if we have received a copy of an article—for which he and Gerry Engel were interviewed—that was to be published in a Las Cruces newspaper. Nobody seems to have seen it in *Desert Exposure* or elsewhere. Doug will chase that down.

Action items

Person responsible

Seek out article

Doug Dexter

Agenda topic *Public Service/Communications* | **Presenter** *Gerry Engel*

The indefatigable Imler clan, Gerry reports, has visited Trail 181 (a.k.a. Holt-Apache Trail, a.k.a. Sheridan Corral Trail) area several times and cleared the first five miles. The 2012 Whitewater-Baldy Fire caused significant damage to terrain and trails in the Mogollon mountains; the Forest Service closed some trails altogether, but simply posted signs at the Holt-Apache trailhead that warned, "Trail not maintained." That trail is located off US 180 in Catron County, northwest of Cliff and southeast of Glenwood (see map on page 7). The Imlers report that, although a lot of cover is burned off, the creek bottoms are quite attractive and had water running in June. The Forest Service

appreciates the Imler's work on the trail because an effort is underway to stock White Creek with Gila trout. Having a clear trail makes that effort much easier.

Agenda topic Secretary's Report of Minutes | Presenter Cindi deCapiteau

A murmured vote revealed that minutes from the May meeting (we held no meeting in June) were accepted without modification, probably because nobody's memory is clear enough that far back to dispute the secretary's reported take on things.

Agenda topic USFS Solitude Monitoring Program | Presenter Amy Hartell

Amy Hartell, a GBCH member and a member of the USFS's South Zone Recreation staff, shared information with us about the Forest Service's wilderness solitude monitoring program. The program is mandated by the 1964 Wilderness Act (Public Law 88-577) to provide opportunities for use and enjoyment of wilderness while protecting and preserving the wilderness character of [a wilderness] area. The USDA Forest Service Wilderness Monitoring Committee has developed national protocols to monitor trends in selected conditions and stewardship actions related to wilderness character. An important part of this effort is to monitor "outstanding opportunities for solitude or a primitive and unconfined type of recreation" dimension of wilderness character. The Forest Service is engaging forest visitors to assist in this effort, hence Amy's presence before us this evening. (For extensive—but informative—detail about this program, visit http://www.fs.fed.us/rm/pubs/rmrs_gtr217.pdf.)

Amy distributed materials—information excerpted from the *U.S. Forest Service National Minimum Protocol for Monitoring Outstanding Opportunities for Solitude*, as well as a data collection form and maps of target areas in the Gila and Aldo Leopold Wildernesses. You can review these excerpted materials beginning on page 8. A complete set of documents relating to solitude monitoring will be available shortly on the Gila BCH web site.

Amy explained the program. As mentioned above, it stems from the 1964 Wilderness Act. To comply with the Act, forest managers must be able to show that the wilderness character includes opportunities for visitors to experience and enjoy solitude, unconfined recreation, and untrammelled nature. The Act also sets standards for these characteristics. Of course, nobody can report adherence to standards without measuring something, and that's where the GBCH fits in. It's our role (should we choose to accept it) to keep an eye and ear out for conditions that interfere with solitude when we're in the wilderness. Such conditions are encounters with other people, campers, grazing stock, noise from aircraft, music, human conversation, barking dogs, mooing cows, and stuff like that.

The program, Amy explained, collaborates with stakeholders and partners and emphasizes the values (solitude, and unconfined recreation) in wilderness areas. The *Forest Service Outdoor Recreation Guidelines* (available at <http://www.fs.fed.us/recreation/programs/accessibility/>) lists 15 elements to measure adherence to standards. Each wilderness picks up to 10 of these elements as maximum stewardship performance measurements. The criteria selected by the Gila and Aldo Leopold wilderness are these:

- invasive species
- natural role for fire
- water
- trails
- agency management actions
- outfitters and guides
- fish and wildlife
- opportunities for solitude

So tonight's task for GBCH members is to understand what solitude monitoring is. Amy explained that it is a wilderness-wide strategy to measure outstanding opportunities for solitude—and one that generates funds for the

region's trail crews through the Wilderness Stewardship Performance (WSP) Grant Program. This program is a suite of activities that the Forest Services uses to measure wilderness stewardship accomplishments. The program is for wilderness stewardship volunteer organizations (that us, folks) to support stewardship activities that contribute to improvement in stewardship scores for individual wilderness areas. The grant establishes a baseline category for solitude monitoring in the Gila wilderness areas. Monitoring activities began several years ago and will continue in 2017; the data they produce will provide input into the ongoing forest plan revision. The information packet Amy distributed contains maps that show the "monitoring units" (targeted wilderness areas where solitude is measured), flow charts to describe the wilderness training workflow, focus areas, and the types of encounters to be measured, and a "solitude monitoring form" (on which encounters are to be recorded).

Amy referred again to the *U.S. Forest Service National Minimum Protocol for Monitoring Outstanding Opportunities for Solitude*, which instructs data gatherers to answer two questions: Who did you see and what did you see? She commented that in 2015, Mike Carr (Gila National Forest Trail Supervisor) developed the focus and monitoring areas, and then added the flow charts to arrive at the minimum number of encounters recorded. These items are based on Mike's corporate knowledge and forest plan information that tells us how to take care of the wilderness. For the Gila wilderness regions, Mike added the characteristics of stock, dogs, grazers, aircraft and flyover.

The wilderness solitude monitoring form Amy distributed has also been provided to other outdoors recreation and education groups.

So for those of us who want to help out as solitude monitors, here's how to use the materials in Amy's packet:

1. Pick a map that shows a wilderness area you plan to visit.
2. Go there.
3. While you're there, refer to the instructions page (begins with the text "To earn 4 points for Element 5 . . ."), which tells you how to measure encounters in relationship to what goes on in the wilderness.
4. Fill out the solitude monitoring form.
5. Turn the completed form over to the Forest Service.

Campsite encounters, for example, would ask "do you see a camper or not?" You might see an active campsite, but there might not be any people present—so you would note only the evidence of human presence.

Joan Bacon asked if the map areas circled in yellow are the only areas to be monitored. Amy responded that if you're in the wilderness, whether in one of the yellow-outlined areas or not, fill out the form anyway if you encounter one of the solitude characteristics—and indicate name of trail you're on. Forest managers look at who is operating in what area and compare their observations to the forest plan, so it's probably wise to collect data outside the polygons on the maps.

Ted Miles asked how you go about counting yourself—and Nat Williams sought confirmation that the encounters to be reported are with others beyond one's own party—to which Amy replied "yes." (In other words, you don't count or report on yourself.)

Nat then asked about element selections. Amy responded that they will be available electronically and that she will send links to wilderness sites related to this effort.

Gerry Engel inquired about the rationale for wilderness areas picked for monitoring. Amy said the areas were selected based on where trails exist in primitive areas, whether "official" USFS trails or user-created ones.

Amy elaborated that for the monitoring units, the best reference will be the minimum *U.S. Forest Service National Minimum Protocol for Monitoring Outstanding Opportunities for Solitude* document.

Joan Bacon raised a question about the definitions of wilderness areas—"primitive," "semi-primitive," and "transitional." Amy replied that "primitive" represents areas in which recreational opportunities are the most confined. "Transitional" is least confined. "Semi-primitive" lies somewhere in between. These definitions will be added to the electronic documents.

Doug Dexter asked, "What's the takeaway? Do we take the form with us when we go on the trail?" Amy responded, "Yes." We are to take the form and fill it out Amy will collect the reports and summarize them in a report at the end of the fiscal year.

She added that the element guidebook gives definitions for how to gain points and how you're working with other shops—such as fish and wildlife.

In response to a question from Vicki Dowd, Amy instructed that completed forms should be delivered to the USFS Supervisor's Office (off the 32nd St. Bypass).

The data will be used to inform the forest plan revision. For example, it might indicate that too many outfitter and guide operations are trashing a particular area, so the Forest Service might need to issue permits accordingly. The data could also answer questions about areas that are no longer primitive and what needs to be fixed in the wilderness.

Ted Miles asked an observational question, "So solitude is defined?" Amy advised that solitude is defined in the guide to monitoring encounters document, which will be available electronically. It is also (theoretically) defined in the 1964 Wilderness Act.

Gerry Engel sought confirmation about the notion that encounters can be reported for any wilderness area, not just those outlined in yellow on the maps. Amy affirmed. Gerry then asked if they could be backdated, which Amy also confirmed.

She closed by noting that the reporting period begins in September 2017 and runs until September 2018. She urged us to call or email her with our questions.

Agenda topic *Hiking and cycling trail lopping report* | **Presenter** *Doug Dexter*

GBCH has been invited to put on a crosscut saw demo (like we did for Trail Days a couple of months ago) at WNMU's new-student orientation. Gerry and Doug will do that on July 25 at Gila Hot Springs around 4:00 p.m. Employees of the bike shops and other folks have been invited to interact with kids. These kids, by the way, will be available in 2018 to perform trail work with us, so any GBCH members who attend the July 25 event must sign a waiver promising not to act like dorky old people (ha ha—not really).

Agenda topic *Equine evacuation call tree* | **Presenter** *Doug Dexter*

Doug tested the text-message-version of the evacuation call tree several weeks ago. A couple of tonight's meeting attendees noted they didn't receive the message. Doug will conduct another test.

Action items

Person responsible

Conduct call tree text-message test

Doug Dexter

Agenda topic *GCSAR* | **Presenter** *Russ Imler*

Russ noted that there's nothing new to report from the Grant County Search and Rescue organization, other than a training session scheduled for October 2017.

Agenda topic *NATRC Clinic* | **Presenter** *Vicki Dowd*

Vicki reminded us that a clinic to orient riders to the protocols of the North American Trail Ride Conference (NATRC) will be held at Ft. Bayard's Servis Corral on Friday, September 1. Sign in is at 9:30. The clinic starts at 10:00. The clinic is limited to 20 riders and a horse for each rider. Auditors are welcome for the morning (lecture)

session. A trial trail ride will occur in the afternoon. The cost to ride in the clinic is \$25. Non-riding auditors will pay \$15.

Vicki has received seven registrations so far. If you or somebody you know wants to register for the clinic, provide the relevant email address to Vicki and she will send an entry form to you.

The clinician for this event is Jerry Sims, a judge for the 2016 ride at NAN Ranch. Jerry will go over obstacles that are normally present at a competitive trail ride. He'll provide demonstrations and will observe participants as they negotiate the obstacles on the trail, offering comments along the way.

The clinic will break for lunch (bring your own) and personal matters. Be forewarned—there are no personal facilities at the Servis Corral, but transportation will be provided to the Big Tree trailhead, which has a vault toilet.

Gerry Engel will announce the clinic to all GBCH members by email and Cindi has announced the event on [the chapter's Facebook page](#).

Vicki has ensured that the clinic will be advertised in [Horse Around New Mexico](#) magazine.

Doug mentioned that we recently held a brief meeting to discuss the feasibility of a NATRC ride in 2018. The folks who attended agreed to postpone a decision until after the [August 19 fun ride at NAN Ranch](#), where chapter members can get a feel for Vicki's new trail plan by actually riding it.

Action items

Person responsible

Send email to chapter members about the clinic

Gerry Engel

Agenda topic *Suggestions for fun rides* | Presenter [Name]

GBCH is holding a fun ride at NAN Ranch on August 19 (see link above). You can come out for the day at no charge or camp for \$30 a night. We have no plans for food or entertainment at the moment, but if you want to put something together, let's talk about it at the August chapter meeting.

Agenda topic *Suggestions for future education segments* | Presenter Cheryl Roth

Cheryl noted that she is considering for August to present information about evacuation and equine rescue, with input from the fire department, Russ Imler, and Pat Buls.

The NATRC clinic will serve as the education segment for September.

Other potential future topics include a trailer class, inReach, a presentation from Grant County central dispatch, and to hold a chapter meeting at End of the Road Ranch (EOTRR). (We did that one year and had a good time, in spite of a monsoon deluge that chased us all into the hay barn.) It's possible that the August meeting could be held at EOTRR.

Action items

Person responsible

Investigate possibility of holding August meeting at EOTRR

Cheryl Roth

Agenda topic *BCHNM Website* | Presenter Cindi deCapiteau

Cindi deCapiteau, the BCH-New Mexico's volunteer webmaster, noted that the much-needed redevelopment of the state's web site is proceeding, but isn't ready for prime time.

Agenda topic GBCH Christmas Party | Presenter Doug Dexter

Doug probed the group's opinions about the 2017 Christmas Party. The consensus was to hold the event at the Buckhorn Saloon, using the same layout we had in 2016.

Agenda topic Education Segment: inReach 101 | Presenter Cindi deCapiteau

Cindi deCapiteau gave an overview of the inReach satellite communication device, which she considers to be an essential piece of equipment for travelers in the backcountry. Several GBCH members own one of the devices and have found it to be useful and reliable.

Cindi's presentation described:

- the three inReach models
- the satellite technology on which they operate
- the devices' capabilities, including pairing with tablets and smartphones
- the inReach website
- the cost of the devices
- the cost of the data plans

Two future inReach classes are planned, although dates have not been established. One class will provide hands-on work with the inReach web site to set up contacts, canned messages, viewing of tracks, etc. Another class will provide hands-on experience with the inReach itself, including testing, messaging, pairing, and such.

To earn 4 points for Element 5, data must be complete (collected and summarized) for each selected **monitoring area**¹:

- A minimum of 5 weekday and 5 weekend (or holiday) **monitoring sessions** need to be conducted for each monitoring area in each wilderness
- A minimum of 4 hours per monitoring session must be spent collecting data within a specified monitoring area. Data collection for traveling encounters must be done during high-use, daytime hours, generally between 8:00 a.m. and 6:00 p.m., although data for camp encounters may be collected at any time of day.
- **In this protocol, data are collected for "monitoring areas." Monitoring areas should be large enough to make sense for 4 hours of data collection (e.g., a 1-mile stretch of trail between two junctions is probably too small, while a 15-mile stretch of trail may be too long) and should match as closely as possible the dominant use patterns.**
- **Therefore, spatial boundaries for each monitoring area need to be clearly defined.** It is less important exactly where the boundaries are than to have them be consistently applied by each data collector.
- Attention should be paid to **scheduling patrols** in ways that can optimize collecting usable encounter data. For instance, the protocol requires that 4 hours be spent collecting data in a monitoring area, so if rangers are planning to visit a monitoring area for other purposes, they should be asked to spend at least 4 hours there, either in one consecutive period or total throughout a single day (e.g., 2 hours in the morning and 2 hours in the afternoon).
- Procedures for selecting monitoring areas
- In this protocol, data are collected for "**monitoring areas.**" Monitoring areas should be large enough to make sense for 4 hours of data collection (e.g., a 1-mile stretch of trail between two junctions is probably too small, while a 15-mile stretch of trail may be too long) and should match as closely as possible the dominant use patterns (e.g., for a 2-mile trail to a popular lake, it would probably make sense to include the access trail and lake all as one "monitoring area"). There may be exceptions that justify different decisions; for instance, if a popular waterfall is located at the end of a 1-mile trail, you may choose to consider this a use zone. It is important to do what makes sense according to the way people use your wilderness, and then document those decisions.
- The first step is to verify the classification of each wilderness. If there is reason to reclassify a wilderness, document the decision process. For **Type 1 wildernesses**, identify **two locations** (e.g., trail corridors, trail + destination, or destination area) **within each opportunity class except the low-use class** that will be your monitoring areas. Depending on the number of opportunity classes, this will result in between 2 and 6 monitoring areas per wilderness; in most Type 1 wildernesses, there will be 6 monitoring areas (resulting in 60 monitoring sessions). For **Type 2 wildernesses**, identify **one location**² **within each opportunity class except the low-use class.** Depending on the number of opportunity classes, this will result in between 1 and 3 monitoring areas (i.e., between 10 and 30 monitoring sessions).

¹ Although this protocol requires monitoring on only one location in Type 2 wildernesses, some wildernesses may choose to monitor more than one area for some use zones.

Filling out data forms

Traveling Encounters Instructions:

1. At the beginning of each monitoring session, **record initial information** at the top of the form (Figure 1), including:
 - The opportunity class and monitoring area name
 - The observer's name
 - The date
 - The time when data collection started
 - Whether data are being collected on a weekday, weekend, or holiday
2. Tally the **number of people encountered** within the monitoring area. Count all people seen or heard, no matter how close or far you are from them. If you hike past a camping group, include the number of people you see as traveling encounters (this includes administrative or outfitted camps – the idea is to document the impacts to visitors' experiences).
 - a. If you can't get an exact count of the number of people, make your best estimate.
 - b. If you see the same group more than once during a monitoring session, record the number of people as another (new) encounter if more than 15 minutes have passed since the first time you saw the group.
3. At the end of the monitoring session, fill out the **final information** on the form:
 - Record the time when data collection for this monitoring session stopped
 - Calculate the total amount of time during which data were collected
 - Record the total number of people encountered

Camp Encounters Instructions:

1. Every time you see a **campsite occupied by recreational visitors**, at any time of day or night, complete one line on the "Camp Encounters" form. From the vicinity of each occupied camp, count the number of other occupied camps within sight or continuous sound. (Continuous sound refers to sounds like conversation or routine camp activities that can be regularly heard from one campsite to the next.) Under "campsite" on the form, record the location or site number (if your wilderness has that information); otherwise simply number each observed camp consecutively for each monitoring day.
2. If you are working in the same area for several days, complete the survey each day. Thus, if a group camped on more than one day, there will be data recorded for that camp once per day.
3. It is essential that all occupied campsites be recorded – **regardless of whether or not there are other groups camping within sight or continuous sound** – so that data will be accurate. If no other occupied camps are within sight or continuous sound of an occupied site, enter a "0" in the "Number of occupied sites seen or heard" field. [Note: if the number of occupied sites within sight/sound changes over the course of the observation period, record the largest number observed at any given time.]
4. Do not record other camps within sight or sound of assigned or reserved outfitter camps, administrative sites and long-term Forest Service camps such as a trail construction camp, because the goal is to understand the visitors' experience (not the agency staff experience). However, when assessing the number of other camps within sight or sound of an occupied visitor camp, outfitter and USFS camps *should* be documented under the "number of occupied sites seen or heard" field. Also, if such camps are seen while traveling through a monitoring area, they should be included on the traveling encounters form.

Appendix 1: Outstanding Opportunities FAQs

Definitions:

What is an “encounter”?

- In this protocol, a “**traveling encounter**” is defined as occurring when an observer sees at least one other person, regardless of the duration or proximity of the contact. Encounters are recorded as the number of people seen or heard.
- Special circumstances, such as seeing cruise ships or people who are outside of the wilderness, can be accommodated. You simply need to decide, and document, your decision rules.
- “Traveling encounters” are people you see and/or hear while traveling on or off trail, but not from a camp. This includes, for instance:
 - Someone seen across a lake
 - A camping party you pass while hiking
 - People who hike past you on the trail
- “**Camp encounters**” are other groups camped within sight or sound of any campsite occupied by visitors. This determination should be made by visiting each occupied site.

What is an “occupied camp”?

- A campsite is considered occupied if there is evidence that recreational visitors are currently camping there, even if no people are present at the time the camp is observed.

What is a “monitoring area”?

- A monitoring area is a defined geographical location within which encounter data are collected. It can be a trail corridor, a destination, an off-trail area, or a combination of these. It should make sense from a managerial visitor use perspective and accommodate 4 hours of data collection per monitoring session.

What is a monitoring “day”?

- A day can be any length of time, though most monitoring programs consider a day to be 8 to 12 hours. Because it is recommended to convert encounter data into the number of encounters per hour for analysis, the length of the day does not matter.

What is a “monitoring session”?

- A monitoring session must include at least four hours of traveling encounter data collection on any given day, within a specified monitoring area. This can be either one continuous block of time, or total during a given day (for instance, if two hours are spent in the area in the morning, and two hours are spent in the area later in the day).

What is an “opportunity class” or “use zone”?

- Many wildernesses have established formal opportunity classes (WROS classes) as part of their forest plan. These map and identify management objectives for the wilderness.
- If opportunity classes have not previously been established, for this monitoring protocol you will need to establish and map “use zones.” These are not a formal part of planning documents, but will guide data collection. The appropriate number of categories will depend on the use patterns in your wildernesses. Very lightly used wildernesses will have only two zones (“low” and “moderate”), while heavily used wildernesses may

have up to four zones (“low,” “moderate,” “high,” and “extremely high”). These zones reflect current conditions, not desired future conditions.

Questions related to the general approach:

Why not use trail counters or wilderness permits?

- Research has found that data on visitation from trail counters or wilderness permits often do not provide a good indication of the number of encounters visitors have with others. Even if there is a strong relationship between visitation and encounters, the specific relationship must be established for each travel area, which requires considerable staff time and statistical analysis. Therefore, this protocol requires data for actual encounters.
- However, it is strongly recommended that trail counters be used on trails where encounter data are collected. If this is done, the relationship between use and encounters can be determined, and the trail counters could be used for continued, more comprehensive monitoring over time.

Why are the sample minimums set at 5 weekdays and 5 weekend days?

- Use tends to be higher on weekends in most wildernesses, so having a sample of both weekdays and weekend days will give a more valid indication of the overall status of opportunities for solitude.
- 10 days of data, during the high use season, should give a reasonable indication of overall opportunities for solitude in a given monitoring area. As noted in the protocol, however, this intensity is not sufficient to make firm conclusions or to document trends over time.

Why not collect data from low use areas?

- According to the definition used in this protocol, low use areas – in total – receive less than about 10% of the use to a wilderness. Therefore it is assumed that encounter rates in these areas will be extremely low. It is not efficient to monitor encounters in such areas, and therefore the protocol does not require it.
- However, managers may choose to monitor in low use areas if they have reasons to do so.

Can I collect other data besides the fields included on the minimum protocol data form?

- Yes. The protocol can easily be tailored to add additional information, such as length of stay (day or overnight), whether visitors have a wilderness permit, whether campers have fires, etc. Different forms would be needed, and many examples are available on wilderness.net.
- You may have additional local needs, for instance tracking overflights or encounters with cattle. If so, these data should be collected as well, though this is not required for credit in the 10YWSC.

Questions related to specific data collection instructions:

Why do you count people instead of groups?

- Counting people avoids the common problem in busy locations of not being able to determine which people are in which groups.
- However, if you have a reason to count groups, rather than people, that will qualify as conforming to this minimum protocol.

Why count everyone seen, instead of only people passed on the trail?

- Counting everyone seen or heard avoids problems of having to decide whether to count someone as an encounter based on a subjective estimate of how far away they are. Additionally, in the wildest zones, seeing people in the distance may diminish the sense of solitude, even if they don't come very close to you.

Why count traveling encounters and occupied sites separately?

- Research suggests that encounters at campsites can have a significant impact on visitors' experiences and sense of solitude, so it is important to record those encounters. On the other hand, because day visitors do not camp, the only encounters they have are traveling encounters, and it is important to be able to document those types of encounters. Additionally, management actions to improve or maintain opportunities for solitude at camps and while traveling could be different.

Why do observers need to be present for 4 hours?

- Analysis of comprehensive encounter data has shown that 3-4 hours is the minimum time block needed to gain a valid indication of the number of encounters a person would have over an 8-hour time period. Counting encounters for 4 hours is a strong indicator of (highly correlated with) the total number of encounters in a full day.

What do I do if I encounter the same group more than one time?

- In this protocol, any group seen more than one time is considered an additional (new) encounter if more than 15 minutes have elapsed since the time the group was first seen. This is a judgment call, and amending the protocol to fit your unique situation is acceptable.

What if an observer loses track of encounters while talking with visitors or performing other duties?

- It is important to be as accurate as possible in documenting encounters. However, if you lose track of numbers, make a note of the gap in data and simply subtract that amount of time from the overall monitoring session.

Other questions:

Why doesn't the protocol include primitive and unconfined recreation?

- The aspects of Element 5 related to primitive and unconfined recreation are best tracked through upward reporting in InfraWILD. For instance, the opportunity for primitive recreation is related to trail development and the presence of structures, while the opportunity for unconfined recreation is affected by the number and type of regulations on visitors.
- Monitoring opportunities for solitude is best done by collecting field data, and there have been many requests for guidance in establishing procedures for collecting such data.

How do I generate a random sample of dates?

- You may want to have a more rigorous and defensible dataset than would be obtained with the convenience sampling approach in the minimum protocol (perhaps because you want to track trends over time, you want to make a determination about whether a monitoring area is out of compliance with wilderness plan standards, or other reasons). Dates can be randomly sampled using any random number generator – simply assign unique numbers (sequentially) to each weekday during your sampling season, then use the random number generator (e.g., in Excel) to create 10 random numbers