



## Meet The Team: Sena Wiley

*Sena Wiley stepped into the role of the Intermountain Regional Transportation Division Chief approximately one and a half years ago. “It’s crazy busy, but I’ve really been enjoying this position. . .it’s just been a great experience,” she says. “A challenge we have at the Intermountain Region is that there are a couple of very large parks, and a lot of smaller parks.”*

Describing Sena’s tasks takes awhile. “I try to assist all of the parks and the staff in the region with various transportation related questions even if it’s more than just road construction,” Sena said. “And then there’s the FLHP coordination, project execution, and coordinating with Federal Highways, the Washington office, and other transportation coordinators.”

In addition to all of this, Sena is the new co-chair of the NPS/FLHP coordinating committee.

**Sena Wiley is the National Park Service Intermountain Regional Transportation Division Chief**



“Overall, I want to make sure that the Intermountain Region understands what’s going on in the NPS transportation program, and how we interact with the different systems, such as PTATS, PMIS, the Road Inventory Program (RIP), the Bridge Inventory Program (BIP), FMIS, and so on,” she said.

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Sena is quick to point out that she doesn’t handle all of these tasks by herself. “I do all of the project coordination, and the overall 3R/4R program for the Region. But I also have an alternative transportation coordinator, and she handles the Cat III transportation system programs.”

“I also have a transportation planner who does a lot of the coordinating with the state and federal agencies. We have eight states in our Intermountain Region, so there are a lot of players, such as the state DOTs. Finally, I have another employee who handles the asset management side of things; right now, he is basically in charge of our pavement preservation program, and is developing a bridge preservation program.”

The one constant throughout Sena’s 23 years with the National Park Service? “I’ve not spent one day in uniform,” Sena said. “When I started working with Teton National Park, several senior personnel had decided that they weren’t going to work in uniform. I followed their lead, and I have yet to wear a uniform.”



Sena grew up in North Platte, Nebraska, and attended the University of Wyoming, earning a civil engineering degree. “I’m both a cowgirl and a Corn Husker,” she quipped.

“There was a time early in my college career when I thought I was going to be in the Air Force, and I’d received an Air Force scholarship,” she said. “Then I realized what a civil engineer does in the Air Force, and I decided I really didn’t want to do that. So I gave up the scholarship.”

Sena did some work with the Nebraska Department of Roads, and had been looking at CH2MHill, Halliburton, and other opportunities to work as a consulting engineer. But then she was introduced to the National Park Service.

Sena actually started working with the NPS while she was still in college. “A friend and I were on our way to play racquet ball, and I mentioned that I really didn’t want to go home for the summer, but that I had to so I could get free room and board while earning money for the next year of college,” she said. “My friend replied, ‘My dad works for the National Park Service, and they cover your room and board, plus a salary.’ I got in touch with his father, and figured out how to get into the co-op program. So it started out as a way to pay for college, and 23 years later I’m still here.”

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While in college, Sena started working at the Denver Service Center (DSC) in its construction branch. It was during this period that she was detailed to one of her favorite projects.

“I was asked to go on a trip to Glacier National Park to help with the waste water systems for the two back-country chalets [Granite Park Chalet and Sperry Chalet]. To me, that was an awesome job, because we hiked into one of the chalets and spent the night, did some project work, hiked out, and the next day rode horses into the other chalet for more project work. What other job do you get paid to go hiking in a national park? It was an amazing experience.”

In 1998, DSC went through a major downsizing. “I had been working in the Grand Teton National Park for DSC on several projects, so Grand Teton picked me up,” Sena said. “I worked there until I came to the Intermountain Region in 2008.”

“While at Grand Teton I basically served as a project manager on transportation projects. But I was also the collateral duty safety officer. Most parks have a safety officer assigned to them, and Grand Teton does now. But at the time, because I had a safety background, I was doing all of the safety programs as well as the transportation programs.”

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*“That was an awesome job...What other job do you get paid to go hiking in a national park?”*

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While working at Grand Teton, Sena met two people she considers to be important mentors: Jayne Schaffer and Suzy Shulman. “Jayne was a huge mentor, in the way that she handled herself and the program,” Sena said. “And Suzy, who is no longer with the Park Service, taught me to look at the bigger picture of how this organization operates.”

Grand Teton served as a learning experience on a number of levels, including how to discern when someone is pulling your leg. “I grew up in a family that likes practical jokes and teasing,” Sena said. “So I was never sure when someone was giving me grief. During my second season of working with the NPS, I was helping the concessioners at Flagg Ranch with a utility line. I decided to go for a hike. I’d read everything I could find on bears, and how to handle bear encounters.”

“So I’m hiking along, and some people come down the trail, and tell me there’s a bear just further up the trail. My reaction was, ‘Yeah, right!’ And not thinking for a moment that it was unlikely that total strangers would tease me about a bear on the trail, I kept hiking. And lo and behold, right around the corner I encountered a black bear in the trail!”

On a later hike, the same bear charged Sena. “There were a couple and a family on the trail, and we were all backing down the trail to avoid the bear,” Sena related. “I was upset that we were all going downhill after the effort we’d made to get up to that elevation. The couple further up the trail

stepped off the trail to let the bear pass. The family I was with went down the trail another 100 yards or so, and then decided that we'd also step off the trail."

"The bear paused at the first couple, then continued toward our position. I was the first person in our group that it encountered, and it bluff charged me. I thought, 'Oh my God, this is it!' But then the bear continued down the trail. I continued hiking with the family—you tend to bond after you get bluff charged by a bear—and they were saying, 'Wow, you did exactly the right thing, you stood your ground when the bear charged.' I was so scared, I couldn't have moved if I'd wanted to!"

That family-based penchant for practical jokes continued at Grand Teton. "Our facility manager did a detail in the Virgin Islands, and was gone for a couple of months," Sena said. "At the time we were putting a second story on the maintenance building. We had an elevator entryway at the end of the building that wasn't being used yet; it was just a shell. So when the facility manager returned, we'd moved his entire office into that entry shell. It was wide open, but there was his entire office."

Sena has a number of NPS projects she's proud of. "While at Grand Teton we developed the first phase of their multi-use pathway system, got it designed, and then married it to a huge 4R project in the Park," she said. "I'm also very proud of the pavement preservation program here in the Region. I think we took a really good idea that Jayne Schaeffer had and made it work. At this point I've seen all of the parks in the Intermountain Region that have pavement except one; it's been an amazing experience to see the variety of parks that this one region has."

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A more recent project in which Sena participated is the reconstruction of the Swiftcurrent Bridge in Glacier National

Park's Many Glacier Valley. (See the related project profile on this web site. "There were a lot of factors on this project beyond simply replacing the bridge," Sena said. "We dealt with the historic nature of the Swiftcurrent Bridge, which is the only vehicle and pedestrian access to the Many Glacier Hotel. We had to decide how to maintain the historic character, and which point in the bridge's history we were going to maintain, because it had evolved so much over time. In the end, the replacement bridge turned out really well."

Like so many of those we've profiled in this section, as a youngster Sena visited national parks with her family. "We visited three parks as a family: Great Sand Dunes National Park in Colorado, and Mount Rushmore and Wind Cave National Park in South Dakota. But I had no idea what a national park was when I was younger."

When she's not involved in transportation for the Inter-mountain Region. Sena finds herself providing transportation for her two sons, soon to be thirteen and nine. "I'm spending a lot of time at sporting and school events right now," she said. "But when I get the chance to do something else, I like to quit and knit, make cards, to be crafty somehow."

