Derrick Taff



Year Elected ALS Fellow: 2026

Highest Degree: Ph.D. Colorado State University

Current Position: Assistant Dean for Research and Graduate Education, College of Health and Human Development; Associate Professor, Recreation, Park and Tourism Management

University/Organization: Penn State University

Bio:

Associated with Derrick Taff's appointments at Penn State University, he is the Suzie and Allen Martin Professor, the Science Advisor for the Leave No Trace organization, and Affiliate Faculty within the Rock Ethics Institute and the Transdisciplinary Research on Environment and Society dual-degree graduate program.

His research strives to improve communication strategies aimed at influencing human health and environmental sustainability in parks and protected areas. Much of his research has focused on Leave No Trace ethics-based communication strategies and how to positively influence human perceptions and behaviors in a manner that promotes social and ecological well-being. In particular, Derrick is focused on ethical decision-making and behaviors regarding environmental responsibility in parks, and beyond.

Derrick has two decades of experience in higher education and protected areas management research, with previous stints working for the National Park Service at the Denver Service Center, and at Rocky Mountain National Park, where he served as their Scholar in Residence in 2023. He holds a PhD from Colorado State University in Human Dimensions of Natural Resources, and a Master's Degree in American Studies, as well as a Bachelor's Degree in Wilderness Recreation from the University of Alabama.

In his leisure time, Derrick enjoys biking, snow skiing, hiking, and traveling with his family,

Derrick was inducted as a Fellow of The Academy of Leisure Sciences in 2026.