

Season 8 Episode 3 – Responsible Stewardship with Benny Braden

Introduction and Welcome!

- We are LIVE! Welcome to THE Overland Podcast. My name is Joey, they call me the BROfessor along with my co-host and personal mechanic Tony from @batsoffroad.
- Hope everyone has enjoyed the cold ...the snow is gone and it is just COLD.
- Tony – you staying warm up in your neck of the woods?
- It is getting to the point where the heater in my house cannot keep up.
- Today at school, for the first time in 11 years, I took one of my propane heaters outside and stood by it for over an hour. THEN, came in my office and turned the heater on the rest of the day.

Our Guest this evening...

- I am excited about our guest this evening as we do this live recording of the show
- So, if you are watching or listening, you might want to be thinking of some questions
- We have with us this evening @therealbennybraden
- You can find him on IG personally and also see what is going on with the organization that he founded called Responsible Stewardship
- Welcome Benny!

Personal Background

- I absolutely love what Responsible Stewardship is doing, but before we get into that, I want to get to know you a little better.
- You are from East Tennessee? Born and raised?
- I read where you spent a lot of time on your grandparent's farm. This cultivated your love for the outdoors.
- Formerly a First Responder
 1. Volunteer Firefighter
 2. Rescue Diver
 3. EMT
- Talk about what you experienced, what you went through in/around 2013 that led to you getting back to your roots in the outdoors...PTS
 1. You state in an article I read that being in the outdoors allowed you to “clean off your desk”
 2. What did you mean by this statement?
- This led to you hiking a LOT
 1. Not just normal hiking...
 2. You set an FKT on the Great Smoky Mountain 900 Miler
 3. Not being from that area I had never heard of the Great Smoky Mountain 900 –
 - Most efficient route to cover all the trails in GSM NP
 - Roughly 950 miles
 - Over 200,000 feet of elevation gain
- Your First Attempt at the FKT on the Great Smoky Mountain 900 Miler

1. Dec 2016 to March 2017 where you completed it in 78 days.
 2. Hiking not trail running
- Your Second record setting FKT on the Great Smoky Mountain 900 Miler
 1. In the SAME YEAR
 2. You started October and finished in November completing 924.3 miles in 43 days
 3. Only 1 other person to do it twice in a calendar year
 - Take us back to this time...what made you want to attempt this not just once but twice in a year?
 1. How difficult was this?
 2. Did you enjoy it?
 3. I've always read how rough the winters are in the Smoky Mountains and frigidly cold...the first attempt, how was the weather? Did that factor in your decision to do it around that time?
 - In 2019 you began to broaden your horizons for places to hike...
 1. You did a coast to coast in Scotland
 2. Tell us about that and your decision to go there.
 - Do you still get out and enjoy nature today?
 1. I know things change as we get older
 2. We go from trying to go FAST to just trying not to hurt ourselves
 3. Or just make it to the end or to our goal and still be alive
 - You really seem to enjoy photography now
 1. I notice on your Instagram that you take some cool photos
 2. From musicians to old boats in Scotland to police and fire
 - You also have an English Chocolate Lab called HOSS
 1. Training to be a PTSD service dog
 2. You have some great pics of him
 3. How does he help you every day?

Responsible Stewardship

- So getting out and being involved in nature as your therapy, your getaway...
 1. You began to notice things and how the land had been treated...
 2. This was a time you wanted to do something...
- You went out on our own and started doing cleanups...(Max Patch in NC)
- You aided a non-profit called Save our Smokies
 1. Save Our Smokies was formed in October 2020 in response to increasing litter, graffiti and damage occurring to our public lands.
 2. This was geared to a specific area
 3. You saw a need that was much bigger than this...
- In 2021 you started what you call a "movement" called Responsible Stewardship
- In 2022 Responsible Stewardship became a non-profit organization.
- You stated in another interview with Shout Out Colorado, "I did this because I knew there were other first responders like me and were going to need these outdoor spaces like I did. So, I wanted to make sure they were clean and inviting to everyone so they could be enjoyed responsibly. And at one time my life depended on these lands. I knew theirs would too."

Nature Connection

- You have described me to a T
- I am in public service...Nature, outdoors is my getaway
- It is where I can unwind and get rid of all I have to deal with throughout each day.
- I need it. I haven't gotten to the point YET where my life depends on it, but it could happen at any moment and that is exactly where I would turn. I need it to be there and ready.

Impact

- Since 2022
 1. Responsible Stewardship has removed 314,658 lbs. of trash
 2. Organized countless cleanups
 3. Removed thousands of lbs. of tires
- Have you reached your original goals for this organization since its inception?
- I see you have organized cleanups going on in North Carolina, TN and Virginia
 1. In looking to the future, do you see this spreading to other states
 2. What do you hope to see in 2025?
- What can people do to get involved and make a difference?

Wrap it Up...

- Thank you for coming on sharing with us a little about yourself and responsible stewardship
- Educating us on something where we can make a difference.
 1. In the Overlanding Community we have had a thing or two throughout the years
 2. Some people have tried to organize cleanups
 3. But mainly it is just a website that advocates for "leave no trace."
 4. They don't really do anything about what is happening to our lands
 5. Responsible Stewardship is DOING things and I love that.
- And that is why I wanted to have you on here...
 1. We can all learn from each other
 2. Smarter and more educated.
 3. The more educated we are, the more motivated we are and when we are motivated we DO THINGS to make this world a better place for us and for the next generation.
- So, thank you for taking time out and visiting with us
- Thank you to everyone who joined us LIVE.
 1. The podcast will be available for download on all podcast platforms
 2. Thank you to our sponsors who make sure the show happens each week
 3. All everyone who supports us by listening and participating.
- I hope you all have a wonderful week
 1. Get outside...
 2. Learn something new
 3. DO something to leave it better than you found it.

4. Get involved...don't just sit back and watch others make a difference...YOU make a difference.
 5. Whatever you do, look out for number one and don't step in number 2.
- TII next week, we are OUT.