

Introduction

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The lineage of the George Wright Society (GWS) biennial conferences on research and resource management in parks stretches back almost to the beginnings of the organization itself. In 1982, just two years into its existence, the GWS took over sponsorship and organization of a national-level science conference focused on U.S. national parks. There had been two of these meetings, in 1976 and 1979, both sponsored by the National Park Service (NPS). When the GWS took over the event in 1982, it expanded its scope to include cultural resources as well as parks outside the National Park System. Nonetheless, the GWS conferences have always been done in close coordination with NPS.

The 2003 conference was no exception. “Protecting Our Diverse Heritage: The Role of Parks, Protected Areas, and Cultural Sites” was billed as a joint conference between GWS and NPS because it merged the GWS biennial conference with NPS’s national-level cultural resources conference (which had been revived, after a long hiatus, in 2000). The result was that the GWS/CR2003 conference had the highest amount of cultural resources content ever for a GWS event. Thanks to an expanded number of sessions, the natural resource content was not thereby diminished, and in addition there were numerous sessions that could not be easily pigeonholed as one or the other. All of this is well in keeping with the GWS’s interdisciplinary mission.

Despite the war in Iraq and its attendant budgetary consequences for the federal government, over 850 people attended GWS/CR2003, which was held in San Diego in mid-April. This was the highest attendance since the GWS began its involvement. The next meeting, the 13th in the series, will be March 2005 in Philadelphia.

By prior arrangement, several wilderness-related papers from the conference have been published in the GWS’s quarterly journal, *THE GEORGE WRIGHT FORUM*, and are therefore not included here. The papers, guest-edited by David J. Parsons and David N. Cole, were published under the title “The Challenge of Wilderness Stewardship” (volume 20, number 3, September 2003). They are:

- The Challenge of Wilderness Stewardship / *David J. Parsons and David N. Cole*
- Agency Policy and the Resolution of Wilderness Stewardship Dilemmas / *David N. Cole*
- Ecological Restoration in Wilderness: Natural versus Wild in National Park Service Wilderness / *David M. Graber*
- The Challenge of Doing Science in Wilderness: Historical, Legal, and Policy Context / *Peter Landres, Judy Alderson, and David J. Parsons*
- Wolf Handling at Isle Royale: Can We Find Another Approach? / *Jack Oelfke, Rolf Peterson, John Vucetich, and Leah Vucetich*
- Selecting Indicators and Understanding Their Role in Wilderness Experience Stewardship at Gates of the Arctic National Park and Preserve / *Brian Glaspell, Alan Watson, Katie Kneeshaw, and Don Pendergrast*
- Computer Simulation as a Tool for Developing Alternatives for Managing Crowding at Wilderness Campsites on Isle Royale / *Steven R. Lawson, Ann Mayo Kiely, and Robert E. Manning*

- Cultural Resource Management in National Park Service Wilderness Areas: Conflict or Cooperation? / *Gary F. Somers*
- Securing an Enduring Wilderness in the National Park System: The Role of the National Wilderness Steering Committee / *Wes Henry and Steve Ulvi*

As with all back issues of THE GEORGE WRIGHT FORUM, this one can be downloaded from the GWS website (www.georgewright.org) as a series of PDF files. Hard copies of that issue can be purchased from the GWS, as can this proceedings volume (paperback or CD). Contact details are on the copyright page.

Many people worked hard behind the scenes to make the conference a reality. In an event of this size, there are too many to name individually, but the GWS and the conference committee extends its sincere thanks to all who helped. We are especially grateful to our co-sponsors (the National Park Service, U.S. Geological Survey, and California Department of Parks and Recreation) and our supporting organizations (Eastern National and the Environmental Careers Organization). Their financial and logistical support are vital to the success of these conferences.

