

## Preparing for Conservation—Strategies for the Next Century (Session Summary)

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Although the attendance was small, the scope and potential of this discussion was significant. The session was organized and speakers were introduced by Judy Alderson, national natural landmarks program coordinator and wilderness coordinator for Alaska, National Park Service (NPS), Alaska Support Office. Steve Elkinton, program leader for the National Trails System in the Washington office of NPS, started the presentations by outlining the director's concept of the "Seamless System of Parks, Special Places, and Open Spaces." This concept is still evolving, has been the subject of intense interest by the NPS National Leadership Council, and will be a prime theme of the Joint Venture 2003 Conference (November) in Los Angeles.

Elkinton then went on to describe the National Trails System, created by law in 1968 "to spread the success of the Appalachian Trail across America." Today, it includes eight national scenic trails (NSTs) and 15 national historic trails (NHTs), totaling over 42,000 miles. Of these, NPS has a perpetual administrative responsibility for 17 trails. Successful partnership projects include the 14-state inventory of natural resources along the Appalachian NST, the Mapping Emigrant Trails trail types developed by the Oregon-California Trails Association, innovative use of the Land and Water Conservation Fund to help states protect part of these trails, community involvement along the Potomac Heritage NST, and intercultural links along the Ala Kahakai and Lewis and Clark NHTs. Partner commitment is strong (in FY01, 620,000 volunteer hours and \$6.2 million in contributions were donated to support these trails).

Margi Brooks, national program leader for the NPS National Natural Landmarks Program, based in Tucson, Arizona, described the 40-year-old program. It is definitely a working example of the secretary of the interior's "4 Cs," as a voluntary program that encourages local resource conservation. Today, there are 587 National Natural Landmarks, of which 50% are on public lands. Brooks presented examples of how working with landowners had preserved the nationally significant resources within landmarks. Often, designation enables landowners

to learn much more about their own property's natural values. One valuable aspect of the program for landowners is technical assistance offered in areas of design, education, and research.

John Sprinkle, National Register historian in the Washington Office, described National Historic Landmarks, which require secretarial action for designation. Today, there are 2,342 historic landmarks, of which about 50% are publicly owned. He also described the National Register of Historic Places, now listing over 76,000 properties at all levels of significance. Most of these nominations come through state historic preservation offices. Save America's Treasures funding is available for nationally significant cultural resources. National Register programs have grown to include travel itineraries and the educational program "Teaching with Historic Places," which are both now found on the worldwide web.

Harry Williamson works for the National Park Service in Sacramento and coordinates the Wild and Scenic Rivers Program for California. He described the program, and the associated compliance, regulations, and section 404 permit reviews. Wild and scenic rivers managed by the NPS are considered units of the National Park System. Many of the wild and scenic rivers are state-managed, requiring close cooperation and coordination with state agencies. Some of the recent river projects are partnership rivers with strong involvement by local communities. Within

## Administrative and Intellectual Tools for Park Management

NPS there is no hierarchy of responsibility for wild and scenic rivers, although many compliance documents are circulated for review. State management of rivers is often difficult when state economies are struggling. Work with landowners along the river banks is a critical part of the program, and there is a need for expanded communications with these owners to enlist their support for the protection of the river corridors.

Angie Tornes from the NPS office in Milwaukee rounded out the presentations, representing the Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance Program. This technical assistance program operates in all NPS regions with 80 staff, and provides assistance to local communities, state agencies, local nonprofits, and others to develop trails, greenways, river projects, and other conservation-related projects. Projects can range in scope from entire states and watersheds down to urban projects vital to local communities and neighborhoods. The program's key roles are helping groups develop visions and set goals, identifying barriers, educating partners about project benefits, sharing current literature and best practices, and steering groups towards funding sources.

In the closing discussion, five points were raised that may have value for the broader NPS resource management community:

- All of these programs should be better known and used by NPS and its conservation partners. A self-tutorial CD describing the programs and their benefits could be assembled and called "The NPS Family of Services."
- These programs are subtly different, one from the other, based on differences in law and practice. For example, some are more regulatory in nature.
- There is a difference between programs that highlight superlatives (such as national landmarks) and those assisting wherever asked.
- There is plenty of room to encourage supporters and constituents to promote the programs and bring in greater funding.
- When NPS develops new websites, it would be helpful to the public to feature these programs too, state by state, thereby giving information on the full array of NPS services that augment the more well-known park operations.

