

Introduction and Acknowledgments

David Harmon, The George Wright Society, P.O. Box 65, Hancock, MI 49930-0065; dharmon@georgewright.org

The theme of the 2009 George Wright Society Conference on Parks, Protected Areas, and Cultural Sites, “Rethinking Protected Areas in a Changing World,” was reprised from the 2007 meeting. The Conference Committee felt it was appropriate to repeat the theme as a challenge to the community of park and resource professionals to assess the large-scale changes that are transforming the world. Climate change, shifting demographics, the erosion of biological diversity, the democratization of heritage, and the rise of civic engagement were just a few of the trends taken up at GWS2009. In addition, a large range of other topics were discussed, spanning the entire spectrum of natural and cultural resource disciplines and the social sciences. The conference was held in Portland, Oregon, March 2–6, and was the 15th in a series of conferences that date back to 1976.

A record crowd of 1,050 attendees made the week a busy and exciting one. There were many highlights during the meeting, but I would give pride of place to three. First, the opening plenary, which featured the screening of an excerpt spotlighting George Melendez Wright from the Ken Burns/Dayton Duncan film “America’s Best Idea: The National Parks,” presented by the filmmakers themselves. Their documentary subsequently aired on PBS in September 2009. The plenary session was made even more special by the presence of the extended family of Pamela Wright Lloyd, one of George Wright’s two daughters. Second was the presence of Pam and her husband Jim Lloyd at a breakfast honoring the winners of the George Melendez Wright Minority Student Travel Scholarships. Third was the Native Film Night—another emotional and moving event where thought-provoking short films prompted many Native (and non-Native) attendees to share their ideas and experiences.

This proceedings volume contains more than 60 papers that are broadly representative of those presented at the conference. It is available in both paperback and as PDF files of individual papers downloadable from the GWS website.

The GWS is grateful to the many people who made GWS2009 possible. At the heart of the effort is the Conference Committee. Chaired by Stephanie Toothman, the other members were Brad Barr, Rebecca Conard, Rolf Diamant, Melia Lane-Kamahele, Abby Miller, Rebecca Stanfield McCown, John Waithaka, and Stephen Woodley. Equally important are our two principal organizational sponsors, both of whom have worked with us for many years: the National Park Service and the U.S. Geological Survey. We also welcomed HDR, Inc., as a conference supporter.

Beyond that, the GWS is grateful to the many individuals who helped make this conference happen. For securing vital funding for the conference, our thanks go to Bert Frost and John Dennis of the National Park Service, Sue Haseltine of the U.S. Geological Survey, and Bill Schenk of HDR, Inc. We thank all the people who organized the slate of field trips. We also express our appreciation to all the institutions and individuals who helped sponsor the George Melendez Wright Student Travel Scholarships and the Native Participant Travel Grants; here, we particularly thank Gillian Bowser and Sharon Franklet, respectively, for

their tireless efforts on behalf of these programs. Beyond this, many others provided assistance on various aspects of the conference—to all of them, we extend our sincere appreciation.

Last, but not least, a special thanks goes to Samantha Weber for her able editing of this volume.

The next conference will be held March 14–18, 2011, in New Orleans, Louisiana.