

# Proposal for a National Park Institute: A Call for Interest

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**IN AN EFFORT TO MEET NATIONAL GOALS** for a better federal government, we are faced with the sudden loss of a generation of park managers. The recent or imminent retirement of so many of the "best and brightest" leaders of the National Park Service creates not only a crisis in leadership but also provides an opportunity to shape the future of protected area management and to restore the fading eminence of the United States in international conservation. Leadership in conservation needs more than mere training; it requires post-graduate education that is largely not available in American universities today.

The George Wright Society can catalyze that education. Working with the National Park Service and other interested conservation leaders, the Society would like to establish a National Park Institute. We envision the Institute as a two-year, resident, post-graduate course of study and practice, similar to the War College, designed to meet National Park Service needs for leadership development and advancement of conservation practices. The curriculum would include such topics as negotiation, facilitation and mediation, organizational leadership skills, constituency-building, strategic planning, scientific adaptive management, conflict resolution, and ecosystem management. Located at a site like the Presidio of San Francisco, the Institute could utilize resources of academic institutions and practicing park professionals extensively as instructors, with minimal needs for a permanent staff. Applied mid-career, the Institute could be used to simultaneously inspire, select, and

bond cohorts of potential leaders, and provide an opportunity to encourage cultural diversity in conservation leadership.

No doubt many of you have already seen some of the material on the proposed Land Management Institute, which would use the Presidio as one unit in a campus system comprising the BLM National Training Center, USFS's Grey Towers, the USFWS National Training Center, the Williamsport Preservation Training Center, the Carhart Wilderness Management Center, the National Center for Preservation Technology and Training, the National Interagency Fire Center, the Federal Law Enforcement Training Center, BOR's National Training Center, the National Center for Ecology, NPS's Mather Training Center, the Washington Training Center, and NPS's Albright Training Center. As envisioned, the Land Management Institute would be a quasi-governmental independent agency governed by a Board of Regents. A National Park Institute

could perhaps be an additional "center" in this campus, possibly as part of the proposed Presidio Training Center.

The GWS Officers and Board of Directors would like to explore ways to facilitate development of this concept with the membership. We believe the Society's members have the collective knowledge, skills, and abilities to create an Institute, and that the Society's role is to bring those people together

and focus their attention and energy on this task. If you are interested in pursuing development and establishment of the National Park Institute with your peers in the George Wright Society, contact President Gary Davis or Executive Director Bob Linn. If there is enough interest in the idea, we will schedule a special meeting at our conference this April in Portland to discuss it and plan our next move.

