

Introduction and Acknowledgments

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DENVER, COLORADO, WAS THE SITE OF THE 2013 GEORGE WRIGHT SOCIETY CONFERENCE on Parks, Protected Areas, and Cultural Sites. The event, which took place March 11–15, was the seventeenth in a series of conferences whose origins date back to 1976. That year marked the first US National Park Service science conference, and another followed in 1979. Beginning in 1982, the GWS became the organizer and primary sponsor of the conferences, expanding them to include all fields in natural and cultural resources—not just science—and all kinds of parks, protected areas, and cultural sites—not just US national parks. The GWS biennial has become the USA’s largest interdisciplinary conference in the field. It is the only such conference to actively seek participation from across the entire spectrum of disciplines and activities that are necessary for successful protected area management.

GWS2013 was significantly affected by mandatory cuts to the US federal government budget that went into place just 10 days before the start of the conference. The uncertainty surrounding these cuts presented the biggest planning, logistical, and financial challenges the GWS has ever faced in organizing these conferences. There were many repercussions, but one is particularly germane to these proceedings: virtually no US federal employees were allowed to attend. This explains the absence of agency representatives among the authors of the papers presented here, as well as the brevity of this volume in comparison with previous ones.

Despite all this, the overwhelming judgment of those who did attend was that the event was a success. Some new faces were able to step into the limelight, and the week was full of new ideas and dynamic interactions. We are indebted to many people for making this possible. Once more, Samantha Weber has applied her exacting and discerning editorial skills to this proceedings volume, and we thank her for all her good work. As always, the Conference Committee labored over many months to shape a large, interdisciplinary program. It was chaired by David Parsons, and the other members were Brad Barr, Andy Ferrell, Nathalie Gagnon, Barrett Kennedy, Melia Lane-Kamahele, Brent Mitchell, Jerry Mitchell, Carena van Riper, Jan van Wagtendonk, and Mike Wong. Our principal organizational sponsor was once again the US National Park Service, and we were pleased to have Vanasse Hangen Brustlin, Inc., and Hitachi Consulting as conference supporters.

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We also thank the members of our Native Involvement Working Group for their many hours of discussion and planning of activities to engage Indigenous people at GWS2013: Nathalie Gagnon and Melia Lane-Kamahele (co-chairs), Deanna Beacham, Monique Fordham, Angeles Mondoza Sammet, Angela Mooney D'Arcy, and Fawn YoungBear-Tibbetts. Beyond that, the GWS thanks all the people who organized the slate of field trips, the institutions and individuals who helped sponsor the George Melendez Wright Student Travel Scholarships and the Native Participant Travel Grants, and the many others provided assistance on various aspects of the conference—we extend our sincere appreciation to all of them.

The next conference will be held March 29–April 2, 2015, in Oakland, California.