

Cultural Resources and Climate Change Above and Beyond: The Accumulation of Great Minds All Around the World

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THROUGHOUT THE GEORGE WRIGHT SOCIETY CONFERENCE in Oakland, California, there were multiple moments where I felt way out of my league. The level of intelligence some of the presenters demonstrated regarding the topic was at an extent that I had not anticipated. I attended the panel titled “Beyond Sydney: Achieving Our Goals for the Next Decade of Marine Conservation” with six different speakers: Lauren Wenzel, Stephen Woodley, Karen Keenleyside, Mike Wong, Tim Badman and Melia Lane-Kamahele (who only handed out a paper version of her power point presentation because she lost her voice). This topic mainly covered various conversations regarding marine protected areas across a vast span of regions all over the world. The primary aspect of information that caught my attention was that marine protected areas include specific areas on land as well, such as marshes, swamps, and even some lakes. This means that the strategies implemented to each individual marine protected area are going to greatly vary.

The mere definition of marine protected areas has the potential to be so huge with a broad span of factors, which brings additional challenges when trying to conserve these areas. These challenges include the public/private access, preserved areas, passing laws/policy, identifying harmful effects and controlling them, and identifying other factors that play a role in the various ecosystems of marine protected areas. Since these areas have such a degree of sensitivity and vulnerability, researchers and organization leaders do the best they can to keep in mind all the challenges to conserve the areas.

The panelists gave great insight into the problems they are encountering in their own research. They all discussed various strategies they have been implementing in their local organization and what seems to be working and not working. I was able to see behind the scenes of the work and thought involved to make an organization operate as effectively as possible. All the speakers shared their experiences with the specific things they are working on currently and how it is helping these marine protected areas. These speakers were from Canada, Australia, and the U.S. East Coast and all presented on completely different climates which seemed to make it slightly more difficult. Depending on the location, climate, and outside harmful effects also makes conservation efforts vary from one marine protected site to another. This was another major issue they were facing. However, it was also beneficial to have other professionals there and present to

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help gain a different perspective on the specific issues they are facing with their own research and implementation. At the end of each presentation, there was time allotted for open questions. Many people provided new ideas and thoughts that could be of great service for the marine protected areas.

Reflection

The dynamics of this panel between the presenters and the response of the audience directly helped my professional career. It all gave me a great sense of what is happening systematically with some of these large scale and international organizations. Beyond the difficulty of trying to keep in mind what is in the best interest of the species and organisms living within these marine protected areas, organizations have to take into consideration the opinion and vote of the public. Decisions made within an organization are not simply based on one person's scientific results or opinion. However, it is a networked system that incorporates and benefits from a larger scale of input. Being exposed to various opinions based on people's great experience helped me to formulate my own opinion. There is much more that goes on with marine protected areas than I could have ever imagined! Everything matters and is important, from the smallest levels of all plants and animals being affected, to the larger scale of what factors are causing these effects and it was awesome to be exposed to that dialogue.