

The Scientific and Land Management Community has Made Huge Advances in Identifying and Mitigating Impacts to Protected Areas

Cory Goldstein

THE GEORGE WRIGHT SOCIETY BROUGHT NUMEROUS INFLUENTIAL SPEAKERS to the ears of the public via numerous concurrent session panels. One such panel was the Renewable Energy Development Case Studies and Applications for Enhanced Resource Protection. Within this panel five speakers took the stage to demonstrate some of the most recent technologies, challenges, and practices currently happening with Renewable energy Development in California.

The first presenter was Valerie Grussing who brought attention to issues that may arise during renewable energy development in or near tribal landscapes. She discussed multiple proactive strategies that either are being used or should be used to mitigate potential conflict with tribes. She outlined Tribal pre-consultation and engagement approaches using the Tribal Cultural Landscape, which focuses on a seven-step plan to limit conflicts with Tribal leaders. The first is to identify clear management objectives, second is to engage tribes, third is identify places, landscapes, and values, fourth is plan for management of cultural values, fifth is integrate into existing a management framework, sixth is using feedback dialogue, and finally monitor and review the impacts and reactions.

The second presenter was Mark Meyer who discussed the use of “Visual Impact Evaluation for Protecting View Sheds from Offshore Renewable Energy Development.” One of the key strategies Mark discussed in his presentation is the use of visual simulations as a tool to represent the impacts renewable energy would have on view sheds. He would record sunsets in potential offshore renewable energy construction areas, and create models to represent the visual impacts to these areas.

The third speaker was Susan McPartland who wanted to spread a practice of “Assessing Visitor Thoughts on Impacts Caused from Wind Energy Development Surrounding Southwestern U.S. National Parks.” Within the United States, renewable energy construction is being expanded yearly, the issue these large renewable energy projects are being constructed near national parks. Many park managers feel this seriously impacts the natural beauty of these national parks. Susan believes park goers have a sense of place identity with these areas and creating renewable energy

Citation: Weber, Samantha, ed. 2016. *Engagement, Education, and Expectations—The Future of Parks and Protected Areas: Proceedings of the 2015 George Wright Society Conference on Parks, Protected Areas, and Cultural Sites*.

Hancock, Michigan: George Wright Society.

© 2016 George Wright Society. All rights reserved. Please direct all permission requests to info@georgewright.org.

may impede on that identity. She encouraged members of the audience to talk to visitors about these developments to try and spread the word on the impacts of renewable energy within national parks.

The fourth speaker was Andrea Compton perfectly followed up Susan's point by discussing "A Case Study on Mitigating Solar Development near Joshua Tree National Park." Andrea discussed the pros and cons of renewable energy production near Joshua Tree. Even if these projects create renewable energy, the loss to landscape can't be mitigated. She urges others to push to move these projects further from national parks.

The final speaker was R. Sky McClain who encouraged the audience to be proactive in discussing energy development within parks with park goers. She discussed multiple tools to help set the stage for visitors to feel comfortable discussing thoughts. Some tools she discussed were using ice breakers, sharing personal perspectives, withholding judgements, and to think of questions connected parks to everyday life.

Reflection

Students within the environmental movement are taught about how revolutionary renewable energy is and as a society we should push to implement renewable energy all across the globe. The negative impacts of renewable energy are not as highlighted as one may think in traditional education, the panel leaders each brought up separate issues regarding renewable energy development in the United States. The development of renewable energy is not black and white; a plethora of problems can arise from its development. Issues largely addressed in this panel focused on renewable energy development and its effect on natural view sheds. Students within environmental studies need to look at both sides of an issue and this panel did exactly that for us. Within the environmental movement one of the most powerful tools we have is communication. One of the speakers spent her whole panel discussion bringing up ways to improve educational information given to park goers, which felt like a powerful tool in spreading awareness of key issues within the parks. In order to spread the word on environmental issues discussion is needed, we are the voice of the planet, if we want to make a change then let's, one word at a time!!