



## Introduction and Acknowledgments

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Connections are the heart of place-based conservation. Parks, protected areas, and cultural sites are embedded in a world of interrelated ecological and cultural networks, and success in protecting them depends on an awareness of connections across many dimensions. Promoting that awareness is a core part of what we do in the George Wright Society. Our 2017 conference emphasized that aspect of the GWS mission. Titled “Connections Across People, Place & Time,” it brought together over 350 people who contributed to more than 100 sessions over the week of March 29–April 3. We met in Norfolk, Virginia—one of the U.S. cities most susceptible to the climate change that looms as the biggest challenge conservation faces today. This proceedings volume will give you a taste of the variety of intellectual engagement that is a hallmark of our conferences.

GWS2017 was the nineteenth in a series of conferences whose origins date back to 1976. Over the years since 1982, when the GWS became the organizer and primary sponsor of the conferences, they have expanded to include all fields in natural and cultural resources and have helped cement the GWS’s reputation as a leader in interdisciplinary approaches to conservation of our most precious places.

We extend our deep appreciation to our major organizational sponsor, the U.S. National Park Service, and we were delighted to welcome back VHB as a conference supporter. We especially thank the following individuals who helped arrange sponsorships for GWS2017: the Park Service’s Ray Sauvajot, Stephanie Toothman, and Julia Washburn, and VHB’s Rosemary Morris.

The Norfolk conference was the result of months of hard work by the GWS2017 Conference Committee, co-chaired by Lynn Wilson and Dave Harmon. Gina Depper, Shaun Eyring, David Graber, Melia Lane-Kamahele, David Parsons, and David Reynolds were the other members. We sincerely thank them for their efforts, as we do the members of our Indigenous Involvement Working Group for theirs. The IIWG put in many hours planning activities to engage with, and

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give a platform to, Indigenous people at the conference. For GWS2017, the members of the IIWG were Deanna Beacham, Melia Lane-Kamahele, Peter Lariviere, Freddie Romero, and Angela Mooney D'Arcy. Last but not least, we thank Samantha Weber for once again taking on the job of editing these proceedings, and doing it so expertly.

GWS2017 also marked a milestone in terms of the history of our Society. In Norfolk, long-time Executive Director Dave Harmon stepped down to pursue his interest in writing, handing over the reins to our new Executive Director, Jennifer Palmer—a culmination of a long-planned-for transition to the next phase of our organizational development.

Dave continues to work with GWS as co-editor of our journal, *The George Wright Forum*, which, like much else with the Society, will be undergoing a refresh in the coming months and years.

Jennifer is working closely with the GWS Board of Directors and members to develop a successful strategy that better serves GWS members and expands membership, shares the GWS story and mission to a more broad audience, and elevates the opportunity to connect our community and share best practices. A few key goals and aspirations for GWS in 2018 include:

- *Launch new regional and thematic professional training and exchange opportunities.*
- *Strengthen communication platforms to better share relevant and timely information with our community via The George Wright Forum, the GWS website, social media, webinars, podcasts, and live stream events.*
- *Build a new strategy to shift and diversify our funding sources.*
- *Expand membership and partnerships, nationally and internationally.*
- *Extend student chapter, emerging leadership, and Park Break programs.*
- *Increase diversity in protected areas workforce.*
- *Support the vision of our Indigenous Involvement Working Group*

The GWS conference is the leading major professional meeting to actively seek participation from across the entire spectrum of disciplines and activities that are necessary for successful management of parks, protected areas, and cultural sites.

Meetings such as GWS2017 that advance thought and practice by connecting people across boundaries are needed now more than ever. Even so, the future of the GWS conference series is under development as a number of factors have emerged that challenge the GWS to find new ways to bring people together to share their experiences. The executive team and Board of the George Wright Society are diligently exploring alternatives to traditional large-scale conferences that better fit today's budgetary and administrative realities. We invite readers of these proceedings to stay in touch with us as we move forward on this front.

Please keep up with the GWS through our various social media platforms and at our new, redesigned website: [www.georgewright society.org](http://www.georgewright society.org).

Thank you all for your support and dedication!