

editorial

The 7th Annual Conference on Research and Resource Management in Parks and on Public Lands (Nov. 16-20, 1992 in Jacksonville, FL) spoke eloquently in the tongues of many public and private agencies to the increasingly complex nature of resource management today and to the urgent need for scientists and historians to *communicate* their findings....not just to one another, but to resource managers and to the public.

"Partners in Stewardship," the conference theme, was intended to intensify communication among scientists, historians, and the managers of natural and cultural resources. Speaker after speaker testified to the mounting complexity of air and water quality, the dwindling biological diversity, the uncertain consequences of global climate change, and the rapidly changing public perception of what constitutes recreation in public lands. A parade of spokespersons from NPS, USFS, USFWS, the Bureau of Reclamation and Land Management, and from "watchdog" groups reminded the conference of the social, political, and economic factors that bear heavily on management of natural and cultural resources.

In the course of 5 days of plenary and concurrent sessions, (and some initial confusion over conference objectives) an emergent theme was the dawn of a third era in the evolution of protected areas: from preservation (John Muir) and conservation (Gifford Pinchot) to **sustainability** (the consistent new note throughout all areas of the conference.) The sharing of vision and experience added up to "staying ahead of the curve" of rapid change in our culture and recognition of how that change is writing itself on the face of our land and waters. In case after case, it became apparent that the implications of research findings must be communicated to the public users of protected areas, for out of the public's perceptions grow the public's expectations--and these are what, inevitably, **will be served**.

Gene Hester (NPS/AD for Natural Resources) described the binary vision (natural and cultural) currently being focused through such activities as GIS, I&M, and Resource Management Plans. He cited both the Vail conference (October 1991) and the NAS Report (August 1992) as having "helped us recognize two main questions: Do you know what your problems are? and Do you know what you're going to do about them?" The answers, he suggested, require the very best of both natural and social sciences.

Dr. Hester alluded to the 5-Year Strategic Plan, designed as implementation of the Vail and NAS agendas (see Denny Fenn article, p.17 this issue) and stressed the necessity of on-going linkage among scientists, historians, and resource managers.

A booklet of conference abstracts is available in limited quantities from the George Wright Society, PO Box 65, Hancock, MI 49930. Selected papers from the conference will be published in 1993.