



5th Wilderness Conference Addresses Changing Picture

The 5th Annual Interagency Wilderness Conference was held May 17-21 in Tucson, AZ, with 268 persons from NPS, FWS, BLM, USFS, and numerous universities, attending. The program addressed three major themes: (1) Wilderness Restoration: Use of minimum tools in revegetation, (2) Managing Wilderness, Cultural Resources, and Cultural Diversity, and (3) Emerging Challenges: Adjacent land uses, day use, outfitters, and access for the disabled.

A pair of plenary speakers addressed each theme. Thought and dialogue about wilderness restoration focused on the minimum tools necessary to accomplish reintroduction of extirpated plants and removal of alien species. The need for and lack of comprehensive inventory and monitoring efforts in daily wilderness management programs surfaced repeatedly. One of the most widely-attended sessions depicted the strong role trail maintenance staff can have in revegetation activities, as well as reducing original losses of vegetative cover and soil.

Gary Machlis, (CPSU/U/ID) asserted that viability of the wilderness concept may wane as demographic, social, and political change sweeps the country. This was underscored by Hal Salwasser (U/MT-Missoula), who predicted that wilderness managers who view their role as merely stewards of dynamic ecosystems may be overlooking important actions necessary to manage or restore spiritual, religious, economic, subsistence, social, or cultural values.

A conference handbook with the 70+ papers presented is available upon request from Resource Management Specialist/Wilderness Forester Alan Schmierer via FAX 415-744-3932 or cc:mail.

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