

NPS International Programs

The View from Santa Fe

Richard B. Smith

"The National Park Service takes its responsibilities in relation to the preservation and protection of the world's heritage seriously. By working with our conservation colleagues in other countries, we are able not only to share with others our technical advice and counsel, but we also are enriched by learning other cultures' unique points of view regarding the importance of preserving natural, cultural, and recreational resources. Let me extend, then, a hand of friendship and assistance to you and help me be wise enough to carry back to my office in Santa Fe, New Mexico, an expanded vision of what preserving national patrimony means to others."

—John Cook, Director
Southwest Region, NPS
from a 1991 speech in Saudi Arabia

No other statement comes closer to summarizing what our region's commitment is to the National Park Service's international program. We seek to assist the Washington Office of International Affairs (OIA) in accomplishing the Director's international goals and objectives while cooperating with Latin American professionals to manage wisely the natural resources which transcend international boundaries and to preserve the cultural resources which form part of our common heritage.

To implement this program, our regional director has designed a three-tier approach for our international program. To assure this program's high visibility and credibility at the regional level, he has assigned the coordinating responsibilities for international activities to the Associate Regional Director, Resources Management. The first tier involves the active participation of our professionals in international activities. The second emphasizes a strong international "flavor" in the region's planning activities. We have cooperated with Mexican professionals in planning activities related to the Congressionally-authorized studies of the Coronado Trail and the history of Spanish colonization in New Mexico. We are working closely with Mexican military historians to assure balanced interpretation at the Palo Alto Battlefield National Historical Park, near Brownsville, TX. Our planners are also working closely with Mexican colleagues in an innovative heritage corridor project along the Rio Grande. In cooperation with the OIA, Cook has established the Office of Mexican Affairs at Las Cruces (see following article). This office is responsible for implementing agreements made on the national level between Director Kennedy and his Mexican counterpart regarding shared resources. The office also is responsible for advising the regional director on opportunities for promoting sensitive stewardship for

resources along the border between Southwest Region (SWR) parks and Mexico.

Finally, our regional director expects local park superintendents to actively participate in making opportunities available for international tourists to fully participate in park programs and activities. He has officially designated 10 SWR parks as bilingual, indicating that interpretive material and personnel must be available to assist Spanish-speaking visitors. Much of the translation of materials is done by employees at the Service's Spanish Colonial Research Center (SCRC) on the campus of the University of New Mexico in Albuquerque.

Listing the region's international activities during the period 1990-1993 is perhaps the best way to grasp the region's commitment to the program. All our participants in international projects are selected competitively on a Servicewide basis from OIA's International Skills Roster (over 2,000 employees) and participants come routinely from all NPS regions.

Taking advantage of the existence of the SWR's Office of American Indian Programs, the NPS has sent the office's chief, Ed Natay, on two trips. The first was to Australia where Natay shared ideas with Australia's aborigines on the management of parks for which they had recently assumed management control. The second was to Russia, where Natay had a chance to discuss with native peoples the concept of affiliations with conservation areas in which their ancestors had lived. Dr. Milford Fletcher, the region's Geographical Information System (GIS) director and a recognized cave expert, and Hal Spencer, a SWR concession specialist, were part of a US team that advised conservation experts in India on the preservation of 3rd century BC Buddhist shrines that were placed in caves that the monks hollowed out of lava cliffs. Cook himself participated in a trip to Austria and Saudi Arabia sponsored by the United States Information Agency (USIA) through its inter-agency agreement with the NPS. He discussed conservation issues with officials in those countries. Also sponsored by USIA, Associate Regional Director for Operations, Ernest Ortega, visited Bolivia, Colombia, and El Salvador to exchange ideas with conservation professionals. In response to an urgent request of the Costa Rican government, the OIA selected two SWR employees, Andy Ferguson, from Big Bend National Park (TX) and me to assist Costa Rica in assessing damage to that country's national parks following a devastating earthquake. Under a subsequent NPS agreement with Costa Rica, I was selected from the International Skills Roster to return to Costa Rica a year later for a three-month detail during which Costa Rican park officials and I discussed operational issues and designed a program for future NPS aid to the Costa Rican National Park Service. I also visited Honduras in 1991 to determine to which areas future assistance from the Department of the Interior could be directed, acted as an instructor at Uruguay's first-ever training course for park managers in 1992, and participated in 1993 in a New Mexico State University training program for environmental leaders in Paraguay.

SWR employees of the Service's Submerged Cultural Resources Unit (SCRU) and the Spanish Colonial Research Center have worked extensively in areas out-

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side the 50 states. Employees of SCRU have assisted their colleagues in Guam, Micronesia, and Mexico to assess the richness of their underwater cultural resources. In the summer of 1993, they participated in dives on the sunken Confederate warship, the CSS *Alabama*, in the English Channel near Cherbourg with French divers. The division's chief, Dan Lenihan, is currently planning a trip to Honduras to assist the Honduran Institute of Anthropology and History design a program to assess the extent and condition of the country's submerged cultural resources. Dr. Joe Sanchez, the Chief of the Spanish Colonial Research Center, has traveled to Spain and Puerto Rico to search in foreign archives for relevant Spanish-language information on areas that are now under the jurisdiction of the NPS.

SWR employees have also assumed leadership roles in international conservation efforts. Dan Lenihan and Mike Taylor, of the Division of Conservation, serve on ICOMOS committees in their specialties. In August 1993, Lenihan met with the members of the Underwater Archaeology Committee in Sri Lanka at the 10th General Assembly of ICOMOS, and Taylor presented a paper at an ICOMOS-sponsored symposium on earthen architecture in Portugal in October 1993. Taylor also organized the highly successful 6th International Conference on the Conservation of Earthen Architecture ("Adobe 90") in Las Cruces, NM. The National Park Service was one of its principal co-sponsors. Kate Dowdy and Kevin Brandt, SWRO employees, presented papers in Portugal and Venezuela respectively. (Dowdy's was on earthen architecture; Brandt's on "Sustainable Design in Protected Areas.") Barry Sulam, Chief of the Division of Conservation, has instituted a creative partnership with ICOMOS that allows architectural interns from other countries to work for the division. The SWR's conservation efforts in the last two years have been enriched by interns from Great Britain, Scotland, Lithuania, and Mexico. Howard Ness and Ramon Olivares of the Mexican Affairs Office have coordinated cooperative efforts to promote transboundary conservation efforts, especially in the training of Mexican conservation officials.

The region was especially proud of the opportunity to assist the Department of the Interior in hosting the 20th anniversary meeting of the World Heritage Committee, an event which brought approximately 150 foreign delegates to Santa Fe in December of 1992. We worked on the details of this meeting for six months. CRM readers can be assured that we welcomed the delegates to the United States in the finest traditions of the National Park Service.

As one of several regions which share a border with a foreign country, the Southwest Region is especially mindful that conservation and preservation efforts that stop at international borders are doomed to failure. To paraphrase the observations our Regional Director made in Saudi Arabia in 1991, we are eager to share what we know about resources preservation and we hope we are humble enough to recognize that we have much to learn from each other.

Rick Smith is the Associate Regional Director, Resources Management, NPS Southwest Region.

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Heritage for use at all sites, training of seasonal interpreters, use of the World Heritage logo in signs and materials, and encouragement of Cooperating Associations to sell World Heritage related items.

There is evidence that site managers involved in these work sessions have already implemented some of these recommendations.

Prior to the World Heritage Committee meeting at Santa Fe, the United States, through the National Park Service, produced proposed revisions of the Committee's "Operational Guidelines" that would implement the letter and spirit of the Committee's "Strategic Orientations." At the June 1993 meeting of the Committee's Bureau in Paris, nearly all the proposed revisions of the Guidelines were approved for formal acceptance by the Committee at its next session.

Work is nearing completion on revisions to the criteria for evaluating natural heritage site nominations, and proposals have also been developed by NPS for a framework for the "Global Study" of cultural heritage sites, which would lead ultimately to similar revisions of the cultural criteria based on comparative assessments of the World Heritage List.

All these efforts have been undertaken to enable the Convention not only to realize its full potential as envisioned in 1972, but also to address new challenges based on anticipated trends of the future.

It should be noted that the process of evaluation and change is by no means marked by a clear beginning and ending. On the contrary, the process should be maintained and improved, on a continuous basis. However, the 1992 anniversary was an appropriate occasion to begin to advance the core elements that could be the bases for strategic plans by all the major players in the Convention, including the advisory bodies, UNESCO's World Heritage Centre, and the member countries.

There has been widespread support of the international community in these efforts to strengthen the World Heritage Convention. In all regions of the world there is growing evidence of the increasing number and intensity of threats to natural and cultural heritage sites. There is also an awareness that the future of many of these irreplaceable properties will be decided, for better or worse, within the next 10-20 years. It is all the more important, therefore, to assure that existing legal instruments—particularly those such as the World Heritage Convention—be allowed to reach their full potential in the service of monument and site protection worldwide.

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