Present a Paper

Rachel Baer

Master's Student

University of Montana

Missoula MT

rachel2.baer@umontana.edu

Building the Bob: Volunteer Labor and Wilderness Stewardship

One-sentence summary

Attendees will understand what motivates trail-building volunteers and how this conservation stewardship can be assessed in other contexts.

Abstract

This study examines the motivations and experiences of volunteer trail builders working in the Bob Marshall Wilderness Complex through the Bob Marshall Wilderness Foundation. Using a sequential exploratory mixed-methods approach, the research combines ethnographic observation, semi-structured interviews, and a quantitative survey to better understand how stewardship, recreation, social connection, and personal challenge influence participation in physically demanding conservation work. Grounded in the Volunteer Functions Inventory and Serious Leisure Theory, the study explores how wilderness volunteerism supports long-term conservation stewardship. Because the project will still be in progress in October 2026, preliminary findings and emerging themes from the qualitative phase of the study will be shared.

Additional people involved in the presentation, if any

Melissa Weddell
Director and Research Faculty, Institute for Tourism and Recreation Management
University of Montana

Present a Paper

Elizabeth Baldwin

Associate Professor

Clemson University

Clemson Sou United States

ebaldwn@clemson.edu

Academic Forests in the US: building a database of understanding

One-sentence summary

Attendees/audience members will better understand academic forests in the US and lessons learned from their unique management priorities.

Abstract

Academic forests in the US are part of public and private schools of all sizes. Currently there is no network connecting these forest managers and scientists and even challenges in finding them. Prior to our work at Clemson the estimate was that there are 300,000 acres of school and university forests. This exploratory research includes development of a database of academic forests in the US from publicly available data, meetings with forest managers and representatives, and site visits. With a year of work, our database of Academic Forests is now at 517,000 acres. Our findings indicate that these areas are more alike than different by sharing a similar mission of leading with teaching and research while integrating other activities. The impact of these areas extend well beyond the acres, but isolation may be their greatest liability.

Additional people involved in the presentation, if any

Clemson University Undergraduate Research Students

Present a Paper

Hardt | Bergmann | PhD Candidate

New Mexico State University | Las Cruces | Ne | United States

hardtb@nmsu.edu

Artist-in-Residence Programs and the Contemporary State of Art in U.S Public Lands

One-sentence summary

Attendees will better understand the structure and functions of AIR programs, as well as the ideas and dialogues they produce around protected places.

Abstract

Active at over 80 federal protected sites across the US, artist-in-residence (AIR) programs have become a common outreach tool for public lands administrators and partners. Though these programs can offer useful insight into contemporary role of the arts and humanities in public lands advocacy, they remain largely under-researched. Why are they so popular? Why does the tradition of making art in public lands persist so strongly? How do AIR programs shape the ways people perceive and interact with public lands? Drawing on a statistical inventory of active programs, as well as the presenter's ongoing ethnographic work, this paper takes stock of what we know about US public lands AIR programs—where they come from, how they function, and what they can tell us about ongoing efforts to integrate nature and culture within conservation.

Additional people involved in the presentation, if any

Eric Magrane (faculty advisor and co-author on the paper being presented, will not be in attendance)

Organize a Core Workshop Session: Presentations + Audience Interaction

Clara-Jane | Blye | Assistant Professor

University of Utah | Salt City | ut | United States

clara-jane.blye@utah.edu

From Leave No Trace to Relational Stewardship: Social-Ecological Approaches

One-sentence summary

Attendees/audience members will explore how relational stewardship can expand LNT to address equity, connection to land, and social-ecological systems.

Abstract

Leave No Trace principles have become a global standard for minimizing recreation-related impacts and shaping pro-environmental behaviours. While highly effective at influencing individual actions, current approaches often remain grounded in impact reduction and individual responsibility, limiting their ability to address broader social-ecological challenges such as climate change, biodiversity loss, and inequitable access to outdoor spaces. This interactive workshop introduces relational stewardship as a framework that builds on the strengths of LNT while expanding its relevance for conservation. Drawing on Social-Ecological Systems thinking and Indigenous ways of knowing, relational stewardship positions people as embedded within dynamic ecological and cultural systems, emphasizing reciprocity, responsibility, and connection to place.

Additional people involved in the presentation, if any

I am open to ideas - I do have others yet, but I know there are lots of folks who would be keen to discuss LNT. I am also open to presenting within a sharing circle or other format. Dr. Jeff Rose and Dr. Garett Hutson are co-authors but will be able to attend.

Organize an Information-Sharing Session: Invited Papers

Matt Brownlee

Professor

Clemson University

Clemson SC United States

mbrownl@clemson.edu

Science for Stewardship: Visitor Use Monitoring in the National Wildlife Refuge System

One-sentence summary

Attendees will learn how monitoring, surveys, and frameworks support data-driven decisions and sustainable management on refuges.

Abstract

This organized session highlights collaborative research with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) to advance visitor use management (VUM) across the National Wildlife Refuge System. As visitation grows, refuges must balance quality visitor experiences with conservation goals. Presentations include national efforts to improve visitor monitoring and survey programs, a case study applying the VUM framework at Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge, and research on how visitor surveys inform management decisions. The session also examines system-wide visitor trends. Together, these papers demonstrate how survey data, modeling, and applied frameworks support evidence-based, defensible decision-making for sustainable visitor use on refuges.

Additional people involved in the presentation, if any

Matt Brownlee (Clemson University) - Advancing Visitor Use Management on National Wildlife Refuges: Insights from USFWS Research

Jessica Henry (Clemson University) - Giving Merit to Decisions at Merritt NWR: Application of the VUM Framework at a High-Visitation Wildlife Refuge

Kale Wernsing (Clemson University) - Data in Decision-Making: How Public Lands Use General Visitor Surveys to Inform Management Practices

Mark Gorman (Clemson University) - Rec on the Refuge: Examining Visitor Trends in the National Wildlife Refuge System

Organize a Core Workshop Session: Hands-on Activity

Thomas Bryer

Professor and Director

Old Dominion University, Center for Civic Lands and Democratic Stewardship

Davenport FL United States

bryerta@gmail.com

Mapping the Motivations and Impacts of NPS Heritage and Nature Volunteers

One-sentence summary

Participants will leave with tools to engage new partners, broaden participation in volunteerism, and advance boundary-spanning conservation outcomes.

Abstract

This interactive workshop addresses the workshop theme of Integrating Natural and Cultural Heritage Conservation. It explores how volunteers in the National Park Service experience, interpret, and connect motivations and impacts across both natural and cultural heritage. Drawing on research with more than 200 NPS volunteers and rangers, participants will map volunteer motivations (e.g., stewardship, identity, community) alongside multi-level impacts (self, place, and democracy). Through facilitated small-group activities, attendees will co-create integrated “motivation–impact maps” that dissolve traditional silos between nature and culture. The session centers inclusive dialogue to identify practices that unite conservation and heritage work.

Additional people involved in the presentation, if any

Present a Paper

Zoey Crossley

Undergraduate Student, Research Assistant

Michigan State University

East Lansing MI United States

crossl16@msu.edu

Scaled Place Attachment Across Campus Greenspaces

One-sentence summary

Attendees will learn how greenspaces across spatial scales influence the visitor experience, highlighting place attachment & welcomeness & belonging.

Abstract

Beal Botanical Garden, at the center of Michigan State University, is a campus gem. What makes MSU special though, is that it hosts 25 greenspaces across 700 acres beyond just Beal. This provides a unique opportunity to investigate the spatial differences in place attachment, welcomeness and belonging, and connection across campus. Within the literature, there are a variety of studies regarding greenspaces and these themes, but not often across nested spatial scales. This gap offers an opportunity to provide meaningful feedback to managers. Our analysis of visitor use surveys (n=850) provides insights on the differences respondents report to feeling welcomed and attached at different scales within a protected area system and where there may be efficiencies and “overkill” on management of the garden and larger greenspace system.

Additional people involved in the presentation, if any

Shelby Marocco, Dylan Crysler, Dr. Elizabeth Perry, Maeve Bassett, Alan Prather

Present a Poster

Dylan Crysler

Undergraduate Student, Research Assistant

Michigan State University

East Lansing Mic United States

cryslerd@msu.edu

Metropark delights today and tomorrow: Recreation and conservation draws in Southeast Michigan

One-sentence summary

Attendees will identify how the Kano model applies to a protected area context with implications for recreation and climate change policy.

Abstract

The Huron-Clinton Metroparks are 14 well-loved and used parks in highly developed Southeast Michigan. We assessed recreation and conservation values held by residents and visitors (n=4,100) as we assisted the Metroparks in creating their climate action plan. Using cultural ecosystem services (CES) to frame these values, we quantified strength of agreement on two time scales: what attracts visitors to the Metroparks today and what they would like to see conserved 50 years out. Using a Kano model adapted for recreation and climate inquiry, we examined which CES are dissatisfiers, satisfiers, and delighters today and tomorrow. This speaks to how recreation and conservation intersect in climate impacted protected areas, offering planning for stewardship retention and enhancement.

Additional people involved in the presentation, if any

Dylan Crysler, Elizabeth Perry, Zoey Crossley, Shelby Marocco, & Ellie Schiappa

Present a Poster

Julia Daniell

Ph.D. Student; Graduate Research Assistant

University of Vermont

Essex Junuction VT United States

julia.daniell@uvm.edu

From Dispatch to Data: Predictive Modeling & Trends in Search & Rescue in Grand Canyon National Park

One-sentence summary

Attendees/audience members will better understand risk to recreationists and first responders with a changing climate.

Abstract

This study analyzes 2014–2024 search and rescue (SAR) incidents in Grand Canyon National Park to identify spatial clustering, shifting communication methods, and environmental drivers of rescue demand. Standardized incident data were integrated with weather and visitor use metrics to evaluate hotspot dynamics, temporal trends, and correlations with factors such as temperature and visitation. Communication modes—including in-person reports, cellular devices, and satellite messengers—were assessed to track changing notification patterns. These results inform a predictive framework for SAR likelihood and support adaptive management as climate change and increasing weather variability reshape risk and response.

Additional people involved in the presentation, if any

Present a Poster

Gary Davis

Co-editor, Parks Stewardship Forum

Geroge Wright Society and US National Park Service, retired

Westlake Village CA United States

The Photographer's Frame: Visual Stories of Protected Area Stewardship

One-sentence summary

Attendees/audience members will be inspired to create and share visual narratives about their protected-area stewardship efforts.

Abstract

The Photographer’s Frame is a regular feature of Parks Stewardship Forum. It offers opportunities to tell compelling, influential, and inspirational stories about protected area stewardship through visual narratives that appeal to and engage diverse audiences. These essays:
• Create a visual narrative to create a pictoral map, not a script; • Harness the power of images to create memories; • Set scenes, establish sense of place, introduce topics, and “hook” audiences; • Introduce critical elements of the stories; • Explore details of topics, settings, and characters; • Capture and reveal moments that matter; • Distill issues and remind audiences that protected area stories are exciting and vital, and • Close the deal between authors and audiences with memorable endings.

Additional people involved in the presentation, if any

Dorothy A. Davis, Co-editor, The Photographer's Frame

Present a Poster

Mikael Deliyski

Student

Michigan State University

East Lansing MI

m.deliyski@gmail.com

Appreciating Values: Climate's Impact on Visitor Use Perception in Huron-Clinton Metroparks

One-sentence summary

Abstract

Regional park systems provide valuable ecosystem services, buffering extreme events while sustaining outdoor recreation. Informed by the Huron-Clinton Metroparks Climate Action Plan, this poster applies an ecosystem services framework to examine how user perceptions of climate change influence their behaviors, preferences, and values. Using survey data, we evaluate user perceptions across key environmental metrics: seasonality/temperature, precipitation/storm events, and stormwater/flooding. The analysis explores visitors' biggest concerns related to climate change, alongside how place attachment shapes public support for adaptation and mitigation initiatives. Ultimately, integrating these user perception metrics into park management aligns future climate resilience strategies with community values.

Additional people involved in the presentation, if any

Hassan Salem
Elizabeth Perry

Present a Paper

Sweta Dixit

Ph.D. Candidate

North Carolina State University

Raleigh Nort United States

sdixit2@ncsu.edu

Comprehensive Overview of Protected Area Benefit-Sharing Policy Impacts in Local Livelihoods in Asia

One-sentence summary

Attendees will understand Asia's benefit-sharing policies and ways to address existing challenges and implement solutions that improve livelihoods.

Abstract

To address ‘global benefit, local cost’ imbalance, this systematic review examines how Asia’s benefit-sharing policies in protected areas impact local livelihoods, aligning with the themes of ‘social and environmental justice’ and ‘economic value’. The study reveals that while tourism revenue, PES, and compensation are widely implemented, they often fail to support livelihoods. Findings show benefits are frequently uneven, delayed, or unsustainable, undermining conservation trust. This research is significant as it synthesizes regional best practices into a practical guide for conservation solutions, such as fund stability, timely compensation, and capacity building. Through these practices, this study provides a roadmap to shift toward community empowerment and co-management, ensuring socio-economic needs are met with biodiversity goals.

Additional people involved in the presentation, if any

Present a Poster

Sweta Dixit

PhD Candidate

North Carolina State University

Raleigh NC

sdixit2@ncsu.edu

Comparing the Drivers of Public Tolerance for Red Wolves and Florida Panthers

One-sentence summary

Abstract

Red wolves and Florida panthers are among the most imperiled large carnivores in the US, and their recovery depends on people who share the landscape with them. Fear for personal safety, livestock depredation, perceived competition, distrust in agencies fuel opposition to both species. However, little is known about how social drivers of tolerance differ across regions and species. We administered identical statewide online surveys in North Carolina and Florida to assess drivers of tolerance: knowledge, attitudes, norms, and behavioral intentions. In both states, respondents showed a “knowledge paradox”, with self-rated knowledge unrelated to factual knowledge. Attitudes were more favorable toward panthers (M=0.65) than red wolves(M=0.49), yet, both species faced a “not in my backyard” effect. Furthermore, Floridians reported greater willingness to support (M=0.66) and oppose panthers (M=0.16), while NC residents expressed weaker intentions to support (M=0.16) and oppose (M=-0.72) red wolves. These patterns suggest a more polarized public in Florida and more passive public in NC. Agencies can use these differences to tailor outreach that closes knowledge gaps and builds tolerance for controversial carnivores.

Additional people involved in the presentation, if any

1. Dr. Lincoln Larson, Professor, North Carolina State University
2. Dr. Nils Peterson, Professor, North Carolina State University
3. Dr. Leslie Burger, Associate Teaching Professor, Mississippi State University

Organize a Core Workshop Session: Hands-on Activity

Brian Forist

Senior Lecturer-Parks, Recreation, & the Outdoors

Indiana University

Bloomington IN United States

bforist@iu.edu

Beyond the Breadlines: Research, Interpretation, & Contemporary Lessons Regarding New Deal Programs

One-sentence summary

Participants will learn about New Deal programs, engage in study of archival materials, and apply lessons to interpretation and contemporary concerns.

Abstract

This session features research on New Deal employment programs for women and others on Michigan's Keweenaw Peninsula. Indiana University students assisting the research needed hands-on work relevant to their location The project now includes research on New Deal activities at the university and across Indiana. Research results are being used to inform site interpretation and consider contemporary lessons on the Keweenaw Peninsula and in Indiana. Participants will engage in sample primary source research with archival materials and will propose ways to interpret New Deal programs. Lessons from the New Deal applied to the present day will be discussed and examples provided by participants. Ways that New Deal programs demonstrate the integration of natural and cultural heritage conservation and their economic values will be discussed.

Additional people involved in the presentation, if any

Present a Paper

Ann | Gallagher | President and Founding Director/ PhD Candidate

Ann's Backyard Forest, LTD. and Old Dominion University | Bethesda | MD | United States

agm@saltywaters.org

Climate, Management, and Collaboration: Applied Leadership in Extreme Conditions

One-sentence summary

Attendees/audience members will

Abstract

Public land managers are not failing to solve climate and other environmental challenges due to a lack of science. Leadership systems and organizational structures needed to support scientific investigations and implementation are weak. As climate pressures intensify and stewardship demands expand, an engaged and resilient workforce is vital. Drawing on my doctoral research, grounded in transformational leadership theory, I identify the specific behaviors that generate trust, engagement, team resilience, and real-time knowledge integration among interdisciplinary teams. Using an Antarctic expedition as a case study, I illustrate how leadership characteristics determine whether scientific expertise becomes actionable. The future of climate-ready, inclusive, and equitable solutions for public land management depends on effective leadership.

Additional people involved in the presentation, if any

Present a Paper

Ann | Gallagher | Founding Director/ PhD candidate

Ann's Backyard Forest, Ltd. and Old Dominion University | Bethesda | MD

agm@saltywaters.org

Academic Conservation Lands: Connecting People, Place, and Stewardship

One-sentence summary

Attendees will identify opportunities to use academic conservation lands to strengthen stewardship, climate resilience, and community engagement.

Abstract

Natural areas managed by universities fill a valuable niche, delivering ecosystem services and providing place-based, hands-on experiences for academic mastery. Yet, their greatest contribution may be their ability to build novel stewardship pathways that connect people, place, and community. Beyond educating ecologists and land managers, these lands inform future teachers, planners, journalists, engineers, and business leaders. This presentation explores how established stewardship frameworks can advance inclusion, environmental justice, and climate resilience while cultivating literacy, stewardship, and practical conservation skills. Academic conservation areas inform future voters whose decisions will influence conservation outcomes for generations.

Additional people involved in the presentation, if any

Present a Paper

Vernon Gilbert

Retired

Former NPS Naturalist

Knoxville TN United States

vernongilbert@comcast.net

How the Great Smoky Mountains Region Served as an Example in the Creation of the World Network of Biosphere Reserves

One-sentence summary

Attendees/audience members will understand how the biosphere reserves program began as of April 2026 there are 785 sites in 142 Countries.

Abstract

This paper describes how the Great Smoky Mountains National Park cooperated with communities, federal and state agencies, and universities to conserve natural areas in the region. I used this as an example of what a biosphere reserve should be when the UNESCO task force was developing the guidelines for biosphere reserves in 1974. The article also describes how Christian Herder Jr., the assistant secretary of state helped support the development of the world network of biosphere reserves. There are now as of 4-14-2026 785 biosphere reserves across 142 countries. These reserves and their associated institutions and communities serve as ideal places for sustainability and peace education.

Additional people involved in the presentation, if any

People presenting papers in an Invited Papers Information-Sharing Session (also give short title for each paper)

Present a Paper

Chris | Groves | University Distinguished Professor of Hydrogeology

Western Kentucky University | Bowling Green | KY

chris.groves@wku.edu

797 Very Special Places and Counting: UNESCO's Man and the Biosphere Program Today

One-sentence summary

Audience members will better understand the impact of a global program of resource protection that now covers 5% of Earth's terrestrial surface.

Abstract

In 1973, at the request of UNESCO, National Park Service Director George Hertzog sent a young botanist Tom Gilbert to Paris to help provide vision for a nascent "research project on Man and Biosphere." From this collaboration a program was established whose focus was "conservation of natural areas and of the genetic material they contain" in order to “to keep options open for the future” and prevent "destruction of the genetic diversity of life." Today, UNESCO's Man and the Biosphere Program has inscribed 797 properties within the World Network of Biosphere Reserves in 145 countries, each of which serves as a natural laboratory to better understand the relationships between people and the environment. It is incredible that by now Biosphere Reserves cover 7.5 million km2, or 5% of the Earth's terrestrial surface.

Additional people involved in the presentation, if any

Jon Putnam, coauthor, National Park Service (retired), Chair, US Biosphere Network Steering Committee

Cliff McCreedy, coauthor, National Park Service (retired)

Sarah Gaines, coauthor, University of Rhode Island

Participate in the 3MR (Three-Minute Research Competition)

Isabel Haake

Master's Student

Clemson University

Central SC United States

ihaake@clemson.edu

Understanding Barriers and Facilitators to Appalachian Trail Thru Hiker Food Storage Behavior

One-sentence summary

Attendees/audience members will better understand barriers and facilitators affecting the food storage behavior of Appalachian Trail thru hikers.

Abstract

The Appalachian National Scenic Trail is one of the most ecologically diverse locations in the United States. It is also one of the most popular thru-hiking destinations in the world. Thru hikers spend months on the trail, living out of their backpacks. Food storage is one of the most important skills on the trail, but it is also one of the most heavily debated topics of thru hiker life due to the plethora of different food storage options. The proper use of food storage helps the safety of hikers and wildlife. There are many barriers and facilitators hikers face to proper food storage implementation. Understanding these variables allows managers to better educate future hikers on how to keep wildlife wild and humans safe. Findings will be discussed from thru-hiker surveys and interviews.

Additional people involved in the presentation, if any

Present a Paper

Jeffrey Hallo

Professor & Associate Dean

Clemson University

Clemson SC United States

jhallo@clemson.edu

Addressing Visitor Displacement as a Critical Component of Protected Area Management

One-sentence summary

Attendees/audience members will better understand the importance of visitor displacement, how to measure it, and management approaches to address it.

Abstract

The displacement of visitors due to poor resource or experiential conditions is one of the most critical issues preventing highly used protected areas from achieving a mission of protecting public access and providing sustained economic benefits. Current and prevalent issues regarding overtourism, user conflicts, and public access all support this. Despite its importance, examinations of displacement are often infrequent and superficial. This presentation explores and expands the concept of displacement. Also, it provides several examples from applied visitor use management projects at diverse state and federal protected areas that measured displacement, determined its prevalence, and explored solutions to it through more intensive, data-informed management. Recommendations are provided for addressing displacement in protected areas.

Additional people involved in the presentation, if any

Louis Santiago, co-author, Graduate Research Assistant, Clemson University

Organize a Core Workshop Session: Presentations + Audience Interaction

Alexandra Heida

N/A

N/A

Fort Lauderdale FL United States

alexandra27heida@gmail.com

When Youth Don't Fit the Program: Using Cultural Density to Adapt Outdoor Recreation

One-sentence summary

Attendees/audience members will better understand more avenues of youth retention in their organization's outdoor youth programming.

Abstract

The youth who benefit most are often the first ones excluded from outdoor programming. If youth don't fit the program, how can the program adapt to fit them? A successful program makes room for the youth it was created to serve while keeping everyone safe and supporting their growth. Cultural Density is a way of adjusting a program's structure, support, oversight, and autonomy to fit the youth and the setting. The Cultural Density Model is a developing framework designed to help create more inclusive outdoor leadership programs by focusing on the program environment, relationships, and organizational culture. In this workshop, attendees will learn about Cultural Density, apply the model to real-life scenarios, and contribute their own experiences and ideas to help develop the model.

Additional people involved in the presentation, if any

N/A

Organize an Information-Sharing Session: Sharing Circle

Cait Henry

Board Member

George Wright Society

East Lansing MI United States

caithenry56@gmail.com

LGBTQIA2S+: Fostering Community by Sharing Faced Challenges and Successes

One-sentence summary

Attendees/audience members will feel refreshed by joining a community of folks with shared living experiences and feel welcomed in the Affinity Group

Abstract

This sharing circle will be the second in-person LGBTQIA2S+ affinity meeting, where the co-leads will discuss the challenges and successes from the inaugural year of the group. Most of the time will be spent welcoming current and new folks into the fray to discuss personal challenges and successes navigating spaces as an LGBTQIA2S+ person or an Ally.

Additional people involved in the presentation, if any

Dr. Brian Forist, Affinity Group Co-Lead, Indiana University

Present a Paper

David | Huff | Photographer, Conservationist, and Storyteller

David Huff Creative; Founder, George Masa Foundation | Asheville | Nort | United States

david@davidhuffcreative.com

Trail Magic: The Cultural Infrastructure That Sustains Public Lands

One-sentence summary

Attendees will learn how fostering participation culture can strengthen volunteer engagement and sustain long-term stewardship of public lands.

Abstract

“Trail magic” is a term used within long-distance hiking communities to describe small, timely acts of generosity—rides, food, or care offered along the trail. This presentation examines trail magic as a form of cultural infrastructure that supports stewardship of public lands. Drawing on Appalachian Trail experience and post–Hurricane Helene recovery in Western North Carolina, it shows how these informal, participatory practices sustain trails and communities when formal systems are strained. Trail magic functions as a repeatable pattern that reinforces shared responsibility and motivates volunteer engagement. Understanding and supporting this participation culture offers a practical conservation solution: strengthening the human systems that make long-term stewardship possible.

Additional people involved in the presentation, if any

Present a Poster

David Huff Founder

George Masa Foundation Asheville NC

david@georgemasafoundation.org

Photography as Stewardship: George Masa and the Cultural Infrastructure of Conservation

One-sentence summary

Attendees will better understand how visual storytelling and photography contribute to long-term stewardship of parks and protected places.

Abstract

Public lands are sustained not only by policy, science, and infrastructure, but also by the stories and images that help people form emotional relationships with place. This presentation examines how Japanese immigrant photographer George Masa helped shape the public imagination of the Great Smoky Mountains through photography, mapping, and advocacy during the conservation movement of the 1920s and 1930s. Situating Masa's work within broader discussions of interpretation, stewardship, and public attachment to protected landscapes, the presentation explores how visual storytelling contributes to conservation culture and civic participation. It also considers how contemporary conservation photography and youth engagement initiatives continue this tradition today.

Additional people involved in the presentation, if any

Present a Paper

Joy James

Professor, Recreation Management

PO Box 32181

Boone NC

jamesjj@appstate.edu

Expanding the Experience: Integrating Natural and Cultural Heritage through Junior Ranger Programs

One-sentence summary

Attendees will better understand how experiential Junior Ranger design can integrate natural and cultural heritage to foster holistic stewardship.

Abstract

This research examines NPS Junior Ranger programs as an underutilized tool for advancing integrated natural and cultural heritage conservation through youth engagement. Analysis of Junior Ranger booklets shows they often rely on fragmented, question-based learning that separates ecological knowledge from cultural meaning. This study identifies experiential, place-based design strategies that connect landscapes, histories, and personal experiences. By emphasizing exploration, observation, and storytelling, these approaches strengthen cognitive and emotional connections to place. This work contributes to interpretation and conservation by positioning youth programs as a key pathway for breaking down silos, fostering holistic stewardship, and supporting more integrated, inclusive conservation outcomes.

Additional people involved in the presentation, if any

During the session, participants will work with real Junior Ranger Booklet activity examples and create prototype modifications or interpretive twists that more intentionally connect natural and cultural heritage. In small groups, attendees will reimagine existing formats, test redesigned versions through quick peer walk-throughs, and reflect on how these interpretive shifts deepen youth meaning-making and stewardship.

Present a Poster

Joy James

Professor, Recreation Management

PO Box 32181

Boone NC

jamesjj@appstate.edu

Youth as Stewards: Junior Ranger Engagement as a Pathway to Integrated Conservation Outcomes

One-sentence summary

Attendees will better understand how experiential Junior Ranger design can integrate natural and cultural heritage to foster holistic stewardship.

Abstract

Junior Ranger booklets are valuable entry points, not the full pathway to stewardship. This poster shares findings from a national evaluation showing how booklets can spark curiosity but must be paired with exploration, storytelling, and guided experiences to build deeper natural–cultural connections. Suggestions highlight developmental alignment and activity designs that help participants of all ages link landscapes, histories, and personal meaning. By reframing booklets as catalysts rather than conclusions, this work positions youth engagement as a foundation for integrated conservation outcomes.

Additional people involved in the presentation, if any

Present a Poster

Madison Janes

Operations and Grants Administrator

Lakeshore Parks Conservancy

Knoxville TN

madison@lakeshoreparkknoxville.org

Public Park, Private Investment: Economic Value Through Partnership at Lakeshore Park

One-sentence summary

Attendees will better understand how public–nonprofit partnerships can bring private investment into public parks and support long-term value.

Abstract

Lakeshore Park is a 185-acre public park in Knoxville, Tennessee, owned by the City of Knoxville and supported by Lakeshore Park Conservancy. This presentation will look at the economic value of the park's public–nonprofit partnership and what private investment makes possible in a public park. Using Lakeshore Park as a case study, it will explore how private funding, fundraising, rentals, and other resources work alongside public support to fund park improvements, operations, maintenance, and long-term care. It will also look at how this model helps the park keep up with growing visitation and use. Tied to ParkForum's Economic Value theme, the presentation will show how public–nonprofit partnerships can bring additional resources into public parks and help sustain their value to the communities they serve.

Additional people involved in the presentation, if any

Present a Paper

Madison Janes

Operations and Grants Administrator

Lakeshore Parks Conservancy

Knoxville TN

madison@lakeshoreparkknoxville.org

Public Park, Private Investment: Economic Value Through Partnership at Lakeshore Park

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Additional people involved in the presentation, if any

Present a Paper

Emma Keinath-Lopez

Social Scientist

Institute of Tourism and Recreation Research

Missoula MT

emma.keinath-lopez@umconnect.umt.edu

Counting the Uncountable: Estimating Visitation and Visitor Spending Across 1.5 Million Acres with Eight Traffic Counters

One-sentence summary

Attendees will better understand methods for estimating wilderness visitation and visitor experiences in large, dispersed landscapes.

Abstract

The Bob Marshall Wilderness Complex (BMWC) contains more than 1.5 million acres of designated wilderness and over 110 access points, yet comprehensive visitor-use data remain limited. This presentation outlines an ongoing mixed-methods recreation research study designed to better understand visitor characteristics, recreation preferences, satisfaction, and estimated use patterns across representative BMWC trailheads. Methods include intercept and follow-up surveys, automated infrared traffic counters, and structured field observations used to estimate visitor volumes and people-per-vehicle ratios. Findings will support wilderness stewardship, visitor management, and recreation planning by providing baseline data on use patterns and visitor experiences in one of the largest wilderness complexes in the United States.

Additional people involved in the presentation, if any

Potential co-presenter is Rachel Baer, graduate student and research assistant at University of Montana.

Participate in the 3MR (Three-Minute Research Competition)

Vishal Kennedy

Graduate Student

The University of Tennessee

Knoxville TN United States

vkenned2@vols.utk.edu

Assessing the Representation of U.S. Terrestrial Ecosystems in Protected Areas

One-sentence summary

Audience members will better understand ecosystem-level gaps in U.S. protected areas and their implications for equitable conservation planning.

Abstract

Understanding how well terrestrial ecosystems are represented within protected area networks is central to conservation science and policy. Species-level gap analyses are well established, but systematic, fine-resolution assessments across U.S. ecosystems remain limited. Here we evaluate the lower 48 states using the Map of Ecosystems of North America and PAD-US v4.1 (2025). We quantify the proportion of 283 USNVC Group-level ecosystems within strictly protected and broadly protected lands, and examine how patterns shift when aggregated to Biomes. Regression models tested against a proportional null (slope = 1) show strongest deviations at the Group level, weakening toward Biomes. Larger ecosystems are underrepresented under strict protection, while smaller ones are overrepresented; this pattern disappears under GAP 1–3.

Additional people involved in the presentation, if any

Present a Paper

Lydia Kiewra

PhD Candidate & Graduate Research Assistant

Michigan State University

East Lansing Mic United States

kiewraly@msu.edu

Rooted in Place: Understanding Place Attachment and Cultural Ecosystem Services in SWMAs

One-sentence summary

Attendees will understand how place attachment and cultural ecosystem services intersect to shape recreation behavior in protected areas.

Abstract

Understanding protected areas requires integrating psychological constructs with ecological benefit frameworks. This study investigates the overlap between place attachment and Cultural Ecosystem Services at multi-use wildlife sites to ask: what attachments exist to these sites, and what do they mean for management and use predictions? We address three inquiries: How do perceptions of emotional and functional attachment vary by activity? Are specific CES associated with certain forms of attachment across user groups? And, how does the breadth of recreation activities relate to the CES visitors seek and their resulting place attachment? By linking intangible values to behavior, this research advances theory on how place-based meanings shape use.

Additional people involved in the presentation, if any

Lydia Ann Kiewra (Presenter): PhD Candidate in Sustainable Tourism and Protected Areas Management at Michigan State University; George Write Society Graduate Student Representative to the Board
Elizabeth E. Perry: Assistant Professor, Protected Areas & Natural Resources Recreation Management; Director, Park Connections Lab; Department of Community Sustainability at Michigan State University
Emily F. Pomeranz: Assistant Professor, Department of Fisheries and Wildlife at Michigan State University

Present a Paper

Min Kook | Kim | Assistant Professor

Stockton University | Galloway | NJ | United States

minkook.kim@stockton.edu

How Much Is Too Much? Agent-Based Modeling for Recreation Resource Management in NetLogo

One-sentence summary

Attendees will better understand how visitor behavior drives recreation impacts and how ABM can inform management decisions.

Abstract

Managing recreation impacts requires understanding visitor responses to environmental conditions, social factors, and management interventions. This study presents an exploratory agent-based model in NetLogo simulating visitor movement, compliance behavior, and vegetation change in a loop trail system. The model includes three visitor groups with age-based compliance tendencies that adapt to crowding and management actions including signage, barriers, and ranger patrols. Visitors repeatedly choose on- or off-trail movement, with off-trail travel incrementally damaging vegetation that may become permanent after threshold loss. Scenario simulations vary visitor numbers, compliance, and management strategies. Results show visitor volume is the dominant driver of impact. The model supports ABM as a decision-support and educational tool.

Additional people involved in the presentation, if any

Jessica Leahy, Professor, School of Forest Resources, University of Maine

Organize an Information-Sharing Session: Presentation with Audience Participation

Ariel | Kimberley | Executive Director

Park Institute of America | Durham | Nort | United States

ariel.kimberley@parkinstituteofamerica.org

Rooted: An Ecology of Gullah Geechee Memory Along the Coast

One-sentence summary

Attendees will learn how storytelling advances equitable conservation and deepen their understanding of the Gullah Geechee Corridor.

Abstract

"Rooted" is a multimedia storytelling project supported by a 2024 National Park Foundation Storytelling grant. Through a short film and interactive virtual exhibit launching in June, the project centers Gullah Geechee voices and explores themes of home and land, language and voice, environment, community and resistance, and art and craft. These stories illuminate the deep interconnections between cultural heritage and coastal ecosystems, while confronting ongoing challenges including climate change, land loss, and systemic inequities. This panel will share the project's development, partnerships, and outcomes, and consider how storytelling can advance more just, integrated approaches to conserving living cultural landscapes. It would be helpful if participants brought an electronic device, with a preference for devices with larger screens (laptops, iPads, etc.).

Additional people involved in the presentation, if any

Karen Kasmauski, Board Member, Park Institute of America

Present a Paper

Ariel | Kimberley | Executive Director

Park Institute of America | Durham | Nort | United States

ariel.kimberley@parkinstituteofamerica.org

Coastal Resiliency in Practice: Bridging Science, Policy, and Partnerships

One-sentence summary

Attendees will learn how cross-sector collaboration can strengthen coastal resilience and inform park management decisions.

Abstract

The Coastal Resiliency Research Symposium convenes researchers, park managers, policymakers, and community leaders to address urgent challenges facing coastal protected areas. The 2024 symposium highlighted emerging science, policy frameworks, and outreach strategies—from erosion and infrastructure loss to stakeholder-driven adaptation planning. A second symposium in 2026 will expand this work, deepening partnerships and advancing actionable solutions. This presentation will synthesize key findings across convenings, emphasizing how interdisciplinary collaboration improves resilience outcomes. It will also explore how integrating cultural and natural resource management, alongside community engagement, strengthens long-term conservation in dynamic coastal landscapes.

Additional people involved in the presentation, if any

Potentially other Coastal Resiliency Research Symposium partners and contributors

Organize a Core Workshop Session: Hands-on Activity

Ariel Kimberley

Executive Director

Park Institute of America

Durham Nort United States

ariel.kimberley@gmail.com

Project Worthy: An Interactive Exploration of Redlining and Preservation

One-sentence summary

Attendees will gain tools to identify redlining-linked preservation inequities, analyze their communities, and plan more equitable futures.

Abstract

Project Worthy examines how historic redlining continues to shape which places are deemed “worthy of preservation.” Using GIS analysis across more than one hundred U.S. cities, the project reveals that National Historic Districts are systematically underrepresented in formerly redlined neighborhoods. This work highlights how cultural heritage designation, investment, and storytelling remain uneven—and why integrating cultural and natural resource stewardship is essential to more holistic, place-based conservation. This interactive workshop will guide participants through the data, invite them to interpret patterns in their own regions, and co-develop strategies to address disparities in preservation practice. Together, we will identify pathways to more equitable, integrated conservation outcomes.

Additional people involved in the presentation, if any

Park Institute team including our summer fellow (Caroline Felker) and potentially some previous contributors

Organize an Information-Sharing Session: Affinity Group Meeting

Ariel | Kimberley | Executive Director

Park Institute of America | Durham | NC | United States

ariel.kimberley@parkinstituteofamerica.org

Collective Capacity: Building Strength in Small Conservation Nonprofits

One-sentence summary

Attendees will gain practical strategies, shared tools, and peer connections to strengthen small nonprofit impact and collaboration.

Abstract

This session convenes an affinity group for small conservation nonprofits to exchange strengths, strategies, and practical skills for increasing impact. Relevant to all Workshop Themes, this session takes a step back to understand not only what work is accomplished by small nonprofits, but also how that work is carried out. It centers peer learning to discuss strengths, such as capitalizing on flexibility, alongside challenges of funding and staffing. Participants will share tools, map their networks, and co-develop approaches for collaboration, resource-sharing, and resilience. Additionally, there is potential to incorporate voices from larger nonprofits, helping to identify blind spots and opportunities for collaboration. The interactive session will produce actionable takeaways and a framework for ongoing connection beyond the Forum.

Additional people involved in the presentation, if any

In addition to the Park Institute of America executive director, it could be helpful to hear from other board members, and maybe representatives of the George Wright Society as well. All involved will act more as facilitators to create a group dialogue.

Participate in the 3MR (Three-Minute Research Competition)

Kyla Knauf

PhD Candidate

Northwestern University & Chicago Botanic Garden

Evanston IL United States

kylaknauf2027@u.northwestern.edu

Can historic seed collection and climate data inform future restoration in Glacier National Park?

One-sentence summary

Attendees/audience members will connect historic seed collection and climate data to future seed collection efforts at Glacier National Park.

Abstract

For seed collections to be successful, crew travel must be timed precisely to seed maturation. Determining the appropriate time window for this travel is often based on recent experience and/or data. However, as climate change drives drastic interannual climate differences, recent accounts can become less applicable, potentially reducing seed collection success and in turn restoration success. We seek to combat this concern at Glacier National Park using 28 years of seed collection timing data. Here, we will pair seed collection timing records with historic, high-resolution temperature and precipitation data to determine if seed maturation has tracked climate change in key restoration species. We hope this study will yield trends that GLAC staff can use as an informational tool to support future seed collection planning.

Additional people involved in the presentation, if any

Dr. Amy Iler, Northwestern University & Chicago Botanic Garden (academic advisor, but will not be attending conference)

Present a Poster

Carly Knudson

PhD Student

University of Utah

South Salt Lake City UT United States

carly.knudson@utah.edu

Feasibility of Viewshed Analysis as a Visitor Use Management Tool Along the Blue Ridge Parkway

One-sentence summary

Attendees will gain insight into how viewshed assessment tools can support viewshed conservation management and visitor-use decision-making.

Abstract

The Blue Ridge Parkway (BLRI) contains iconic mountain views vulnerable to development impacts. To support conservation and management, researchers conducted 59 viewshed assessments along a 116-mile segment of the parkway using an adapted protocol based on existing scenic evaluation tools (Meyer, Taylor, & Palmer, 2021; Miller et al., 2024). Over five days, trained graduate researchers quantitatively scored 11 aesthetic qualities and documented qualitative descriptors, photographs, and management concerns for each site. Human-built intrusions such as power lines and mines were reverse scored. Results produced a ranked inventory of viewsheds and demonstrated that the tool was practical, replicable, and useful for prioritizing conservation, maintenance, and visitor dispersion decisions along the BLRI.

Additional people involved in the presentation, if any

Rachel Baer, University of Montana
Keerthi Krishna Devulapally, Auburn University
Payton Egan, University of Georgia
Marie Haidara, Clemson University
Carly Knudson, University of Utah
Faranak Parkami, Arizona State University
Isabelle Staph, University of Tennessee
Kathryn Wrigley, University of Vermont
Robert Powell, Clemson University
Ryan Sharp, University of Tennessee
Lauren Stephens, Virginia Wesleyan University

Present a Paper

Maitreyi | Koduganti Venkata | PhD Researcher

van Riper Lab, Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Science | Urbana | IL

mk142@illinois.edu

From Values to Action in Denali: Understanding Pro-Environmental Behavior across Visitors & Residents

One-sentence summary

What people value and experience within protected areas shapes conservation behavior similarly for visitors and residents.

Abstract

Protected areas are central to global conservation; however, management agencies are challenged to understand the diverse values that shape conservation behavior across different stakeholder groups. We examined the psychological drivers of behavior for both short-term visitors (n=667) and long-term residents (n=398) surrounding Denali National Park and Preserve, Alaska. We found that nature-based values and landscape experiences were positively associated with behaviors intended to benefit the environment, while the relationships between values and behavior remained consistent across stakeholder groups. By integrating two different studies, we offer a new multigroup perspective on the drivers of conservation behavior to enhance communication strategies and identify pathways for deepening engagement in environmental stewardship activities.

Additional people involved in the presentation, if any

• Dr. Carena Van Riper, Associate Professor, Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Sciences, University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign
• Evan Salcido, Postdoctoral Research Associate, University of Maine
• Elizabeth Golebie, Senior Associate, The Ohio State University
• Shi Xue, Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Sciences, University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign

Organize a Core Workshop Session: Hands-on Activity

Jon Kohl

Executive Director

PUP Collaboratory

Tres Rios Cart Costa Rica

jon@pupcollaboratory.net

From Silos to Systems: Training Guides to Integrate Natural and Cultural Heritage in Practice

One-sentence summary

Integration fails not only due to institutional silos and weak partnerships, but because frontline training remains reductionist and fragmented.

Abstract

Integration of natural and cultural heritage often focuses on dismantling disciplinary silos and building partnerships. While essential, these efforts overlook a less visible but equally important barrier: how guides and guards are trained. Training remains largely reductionist and fragmented, focusing on individual competencies rather than the broader conditions that shape performance. As a result, even well-designed integrative strategies struggle to translate into practice. A holistic training approach addresses this gap by aligning psychological, behavioral, cultural, and institutional domains, enabling guides to operate across nature–culture boundaries and contribute to conservation solutions. This session presents a framework for domain integration and practical steps to design holistic training interventions.

Additional people involved in the presentation, if any

I hope to attend in person, but cannot yet ensure the possibility so I checked yes above to the remote possibility.

Information-Sharing Session

Will Kuhn

Director of Science and Research

Discover Life in America

Gatlinburg TN

will@dlia.org

Smokies All Taxa Biodiversity Inventory: Community Scientists Informing Conservation Decisions

One-sentence summary

Attendees/audience members will learn how ATBI collects baseline data, involves community scientists, and informs conservation decisions.

Abstract

Introducing the Smokies ATBI, highlighting how community science contributes to the inventory, and talking about a project where we're crunching baseline ATBI data on bees in the Smokies to inform natural resource management.

Additional people involved in the presentation, if any

Present a Paper

John Kupfer Professor

Univ. of South Carolina Columbia Sou United States

kupfer@mailbox.sc.edu

Mapping Stakeholder Perceptions of Conservation Benefits & Opportunities in the Congaree Biosphere

One-sentence summary

Attendees/audience members will understand how spatial and stakeholder insights improve targeted conservation planning across diverse landscapes.

Abstract

Effective conservation planning must consider spatial patterns of factors that shape management goals and activities across a landscape. In this study, we examined spatial variation in conservation benefits and opportunities as perceived by stakeholders in the Congaree Biosphere Region, near Columbia, SC. The study area was divided into six relatively homogeneous subregions, and surveys of a group of conservation experts, planners, business owners, and residents captured their views on environmental, economic, and social benefits and future conservation opportunities. Results revealed both region-wide themes and subregional differences linked to land cover, protected areas, and existing environmental and cultural features. We conclude with a discussion of the linkage between our findings and ongoing conservation efforts.

Additional people involved in the presentation, if any

Lily Hutchens, Co-author, Triangle Land Conservancy

Present a Paper

Lincoln | Larson | Professor

North Carolina State University | Raleigh | NC | United States

lrlarson@ncsu.edu

Mental health promotion via North Carolina State Parks

One-sentence summary

Attendees will be able to quantify the mental health benefits parks provide and describe specific park amenities that promote health and well-being.

Abstract

In this study, we investigated the self-reported mental health outcomes associated with visits to North Carolina state parks. We administered 1,152 intercept surveys at three different parks in 2024. We found that 84% of respondents reported an improvement in overall wellbeing (measured using WHO-5 items) during their park visit, and 71% of respondents reported a reduction in symptoms associated with psychological distress (measuring using STOP-D items). People across all demographic groups reported improvement in mental health, especially visitors reporting the lowest baseline health metrics. Different amenities and natural landscapes had a unique influence on mental health outcomes. These findings suggest state parks, if visited, can promote well-being for all, including vulnerable populations.

Additional people involved in the presentation, if any

Audrey Fatone, Appalachian Mountain Club
Charlynne Smith, NC State University
Yu-Fai Leung, NC State University

Present a Paper

Rachel Layko

Doctoral Student

North Carolina State University

Raleigh

Nort

United States

rblayko@ncsu.edu

Forecasted development and climate change increase flood risk to Mid-Atlantic battlefield parks

One-sentence summary

Attendees will better understand the impacts of development and climate change on resource vulnerability in mid-Atlantic parks.

Abstract

Climate change and human development are threatening protected areas. Small inland battlefield parks in the U.S. mid-Atlantic region are especially vulnerable due to their proximity to dense urban development and exposure to climate change threats. To examine the impact of these threats, we apply a multi-level simulation model to forecast regional development patterns to 2100. We use the spatially explicit development outputs to quantify changes in impervious surface and flood risk and assess the likely climate change impacts to in-land protected areas. This work contributes to the themes of “Responding to Climate Change” and “Natural and Cultural Heritage Conservation”.

Additional people involved in the presentation, if any

Authors: Rachel Layko (PhD Student, North Carolina State University), Jelena Vukomanovic (Associate Professor, North Carolina State University Center for Geospatial Analytics), John Vogler (Research Scholar, North Carolina State University Center for Geospatial Analytics), Ross Meentemeyer (Director, North Carolina State University Center for Geospatial Analytics)

Present a Paper

Peizhe Li

PhD Student, Department of Parks, Recreation and Tourism Management

North Carolina State University

Raleigh Nort United States

pli26@ncsu.edu

Gamification for climate adaptation planning of cultural resources and landscapes

One-sentence summary

Attendees will better understand how a gamified, participatory planning tool can reveal climate adaptation tradeoffs and interest-holder priorities.

Abstract

Stewarding cultural resources in a changing climate is complex and computational models can support planning and decision-making. Yet, such tools often fail to effectively communicate tradeoffs during interest-holder engagement and outreach. District Decisions, a gamified planning tool, gives participants the “power of the purse” to make collective decisions about historic structures under budget constraints while confronting potential damages to and losses of historic structures. District Decisions helps interest-holders realize the trade-offs and challenges of adaptation planning, as well as articulate their emotional dimensions of loss and place-based priorities. These priorities are reflected in cultural landscape outcomes that can be included into computational models, thereby yielding more desirable stewardship outcomes.

Additional people involved in the presentation, if any

Erin Seekamp, & Xiao Xiao

Present a Poster

Abigail Lourdraj

Research Associate

University of Tennessee

Knoxville TN

alourdra@vols.utk.edu

Understanding Mt. LeConte Trail System Visitation in the Great Smoky Mountains National Park

One-sentence summary

Attendees/audience members will understand current visitation research at the Great Smoky Mountains National Park and LeConte trail system.

Abstract

The Mt. LeConte Summit is a popular destination for visitors of the Great Smoky Mountains National Park (GSMNP). Trails leading up to the summit continue to generate high numbers of visitor traffic, leading to the creation of this study. Researchers at the University of Tennessee collaborated with park managers and Friends of the Smokies to further understand visitation rates at the Alum Cave, Rainbow Falls, Boulevard, Bullhead, and Trillium Gap Trails. Visitation was observed via trail eco-counters and manual parking lot counts for Summer 2026. Results from this study will inform GSMNP managers of current visitation across the LeConte trail system and will offer suggestions on how to address the parking issues the park faces due to high traffic rates.

Additional people involved in the presentation, if any

Ryan Sharp, University of Tennessee
Isabelle Watson, University of Tennessee

Present a Paper

Sophia Loureiro

Master's Student

Michigan State University

Lansing Mic United States

loureir3@msu.edu

Reading the Terrain: ORV User Characteristics and Site Perceptions

One-sentence summary

Attendees/audience members will better understand what characteristics drive ORV users' motivations and perceptions of site conditions.

Abstract

Silver Lake State Park (SLSP) encompasses 450 acres of sand dunes on the shores of Lake Michigan. The dunes attract a diverse community of recreationists, offering beginner-friendly buggy rentals as well as hosting a large community of experienced "duners" with personal off-road vehicles (ORVs). When recreationists evaluate site conditions, they are applying their preferences, expectations, and norms. In high use recreation landscapes like SLSP, these evaluations can provide valuable information about pathways to sustainable site management and, potentially, stewardship connections. As part of a broader visitor use management study, we examine how ORV users perceive their environmental, social, and managerial environs and what may inform these perceptions.

Additional people involved in the presentation, if any

Present a Paper

Sophia Loureiro

Master's Student

Michigan State University

Lansing Mic United States

sloureiro433@gmail.com

Reading the Terrain: ORV User Characteristics and Site Perceptions

One-sentence summary

Attendees/audience members will better understand what characteristics drive ORV users' motivations and perceptions of site conditions.

Abstract

Silver Lake State Park (SLSP) encompasses 450 acres of sand dunes on the shores of Lake Michigan. The dunes attract a diverse community of recreationists, offering beginner-friendly buggy rentals as well as hosting a large community of experienced “duners” with personal off-road vehicles (ORVs). When recreationists evaluate site conditions, they are applying their preferences, expectations, and norms. In high use recreation landscapes like SLSP, these evaluations can provide valuable information about pathways to sustainable site management and, potentially, stewardship connections. As part of a broader visitor use management study, we examine how ORV users perceive their environmental, social, and managerial environs and what may inform these perceptions.

Additional people involved in the presentation, if any

Information Sharing Session—Sharing Circle

Gary Machlis

Professor

Clemson University

Clemson SC

machlis@clemson.edu

Toward a Unifying Vision of Collaborative Conservation

One-sentence summary

Attendees/audience members will learn about the process leading to the summit, which is planned for 2027.

Abstract

The branches of conservation—from natural resource protection, sustainability, indigenous knowledge, restorative agriculture, historical preservation, and more-- work largely independently, often competitively, and sometimes at cross purposes. A more unified vision of conservation is needed to gain leverage and make progress in the years ahead. A Unifying Vision of Conservation "Summit" is being organized for 2027, with the George Wright Society's assistance and engagement. This session, led by one of the summit organizers, is an opportunity to learn about the unified vision concept and preparations for the summit.

Additional people involved in the presentation, if any

Present a Paper

Shelby | Marocco | Research Assistant

Michigan State University | East Lansing | MI | United States

smarocco2016@gmail.com

People among Plants: Assessments of welcomeness and belonging at a Mid-Michigan Botanical Garden

One-sentence summary

Gaining insight into how community groups engage with a mid-Michigan botanical garden, as measured by a validated survey tool.

Abstract

Beal Botanical Garden, at the center of Michigan State University's East Lansing campus, preserves native and non-native plants. This garden is open year-round for free and offers a peaceful retreat for the MSU and East Lansing communities. Although many visit, little is known about who uses the garden, why they come, or how their visit affects their wellbeing. This gap offers a chance to better understand visitor management and its practical use for Beal staff. Beal managers helped develop an intercept survey to measure visitors' sense of welcomeness and belonging. Peer reviewed scales were employed in the survey to directly examine this concept, (Powers et al., 2024). Over 22 weeks from May to October 2025, 850 surveys were collected for this exploration of visitor perceptions and comparative statistical analysis.

Additional people involved in the presentation, if any

Dr. Elizabeth Perry, Dr. Alan Prather, Maeve Bassett

Organize an Information-Sharing Session: Sharing Circle

Carla Mattix

Author/Former NPS Attorney

n/a

Santa Fe NM United States

ccmattix@gmail.com

Book Talk - National Parks and the Supreme Court: Groundbreaking Legal Battles

One-sentence summary

Attendees/audience members will better understand how court decisions can influence the trajectory of the National Park Service.

Abstract

My book talk will highlight the role that courts and lawyers play to achieve the mission of the National Park Service. "National Parks and the Supreme Court," published by the University of Nevada Press, America's National Park Series, examines five landmark Supreme Court cases involving national parks—Gettysburg, Yellowstone, Grand Canyon, Death Valley, and the National Mall. Each chapter blends legal analysis with historical context, tracing the origins of the parks and the disputes that brought them before the nation's highest court. Spanning nearly a century, these cases reveal how the Court has shaped park policy, land use, Native American rights, water law, and free speech.

Additional people involved in the presentation, if any

Present a Paper

Annabelle Mayes

Master's Student

Georgia Southern University; Clemson University

Savannah GA United States

amayes219@gmail.com

International Perspectives on the Values of Antarctic Wilderness

One-sentence summary

Attendees/audience members will understand the competing values associated with Antarctica and the need for wilderness protection.

Abstract

The Antarctic Treaty sets Antarctica aside for peace, science, and environmental protection, but there have been no concrete actions taken to protect Antarctica's wilderness values. This study examined perceptions of Antarctic wilderness. Content analysis was conducted on data from four published studies to determine how subjective perspectives varied among populations in different geographic regions. All study populations indicated higher levels of support for Antarctica as wilderness, a component of the climate system, and a science laboratory. Respondents indicated less support for Antarctica as a tourist destination or mineral reserve. In Europe, support for Antarctica as a wilderness was higher among tourists than students and residents. In the US, support for Antarctica as a mineral reserve was higher among students than tourists.

Additional people involved in the presentation, if any

Dr. John Peden, Professor, Georgia Southern University
Dr. Tina Tin, Consultant, The Wildland Research Institute

Present a Poster

Annabelle Mayes

MS Student

Clemson University

Seneca SC

agmayes@clemson.edu

How Do People Define Antarctic Wilderness?

One-sentence summary

Abstract

Consultative parties to the 1959 Antarctic Treaty have yet to take concrete actions to protect Antarctica's wilderness values as agreed under the 1991 Protocol on Environmental Protection. Neither the Treaty nor the Protocol define wilderness or dictate its management. This study used content analysis to analyze findings from two published papers that reported on open-ended responses about the nature of wilderness and Antarctic wilderness. A list of a priori codes was used to analyze textual information. When analyzing text, additional codes were added. Textual information was grouped and themes were extracted. Wilderness was perceived as an uninhabited, pristine area necessary for education and ecosystem services. Antarctic wilderness was characterized by ecological, bequest and existence (intrinsic) values. Antarctica was important for non-extractive purposes and was to be protected. Findings were consistent with the objectives of the Treaty and the Protocol and can be used to inform a definition of Antarctic Wilderness.

Additional people involved in the presentation, if any

John Peden, PhD, Georgia Southern University
Tina Tin, PhD. Wildland Institute

Present a Paper

Kushaga Meshram

PhD Student

North Carolina State University

Raleigh Nort United States

kmeshra@ncsu.edu

Spatial Gradients of Development in the Peripheries of Tiger Reserve in India

One-sentence summary

Attendees/audience members will better understand the develpment pressures in the peripheries of Indian Tiger Reserves.

Abstract

Protected areas in India are embedded within rapidly changing human-dominated landscapes, making peripheral dynamics critical for tiger conservation. We analyzed land-use change around 26 tiger reserves (2000–2020) using 30 m land cover data to quantify built-up expansion across distance gradients. We found distinct peaks of development at varying distances from reserve boundaries, with some reserves showing >300% increases in built-up areas. We also found that tiger reserve peripheries show patterns based on accessibility, human population pressure, and nightlight intensity, indicating differing development trajectories across landscapes. These findings highlight the need for stronger policy frameworks to guide infrastructure and tourism development around tiger reserves while ensuring ecological connectivity.

Additional people involved in the presentation, if any

Lincoln Larson, Associate Professor, Dept. of Parks, Recreation and Tourism Management, North Carolina State University

Organize an Information-Sharing Session: Sharing Circle

Elizabeth Metraux

N/A

N/A (will obtain clearance for attendance in my professional capacity, if selected; I serve as the

Brookline NH United States

emetraux@unfoundation.org

We Need to Tell a Better Story: Reframing Global Issues Through a Local Lens

One-sentence summary

Attendees will see why global framing falls short—and how local impact messaging can sway public opinion.

Abstract

As skepticism toward global cooperation grows, the challenge is not only one of policy, but of language. For years, advocates have led with global impact—conservation wins, international partnerships and big-picture outcomes. That framing is increasingly missing the mark with domestic audiences. This conversation argues for a shift: translating global issues into what they mean closer to home, with a clearer focus on tangible value and economic return—from supply chain stability and disaster response to public health and environmental protection. Drawing on real-world campaign examples and message testing, we explore what resonates, what falls flat, and how reframing global work in local, meaningful terms can help build durable public support for international engagement to protect our shared spaces.

Additional people involved in the presentation, if any

Participate in the 3MR (Three-Minute Research Competition)

Mike Miller

Master's Student

University of Montana, Wildland & Recreation Management Lab

Missoula MT United States

mike1.miller@umontana.edu

From Image to Experience: Social Media Photography and Visitor Behavior at an Iconic Viewpoint

One-sentence summary

Attendees/audience members will better understand how social media shapes visitor expectations and behavior at iconic national park destinations.

Abstract

It all starts with a photo on social media. Sandstone cliffs tower over the Colorado River as it winds through Horseshoe Bend in the American Southwest. Over time, one composition prevails across the feed, standardizing the landscape, shaping what visitors expect to see and the photos they hope to take, turning viral viewpoints into modern icons. Using observation and short intercept interviews, I examine how social media photography shapes what visitors expect before they arrive, how those expectations hold up against reality on-site, and how the experience they photograph and share reinforces the same images that shaped their visit. Understanding this cycle matters for how parks communicate with visitors about iconic places increasingly defined, and sometimes distorted, by the images made of them.

Additional people involved in the presentation, if any

Dr. Will Rice, Academic Advisor

Present a Paper

Niki | Nicholas | Superintendent

National Park Service | Oneida | TN

Niki_Nicholas@nps.gov

Building Backyard Buy-In: Working to Ensure that Gateway Community Members are Park Advocates

One-sentence summary

Attendees/audience members will learn about various ways to partner with gateway community members.

Abstract

More than 300 million people visit National Park Service units each year. They come from all over the world to experience majestic landscapes and inspiring history. But what about people in the adjoining gateway communities? While parks often serve as economic tourism engines, the relationship between community members and neighboring parks can be more nuanced.
Over the past decade Obed Wild & Scenic River has made a concentrated effort to actively engage gateway communities through specific programming. Ongoing analyses indicate that targeted outreach efforts correlate with increased local community support for the parks, increased participation, and reduced vandalism. Generating this buy-in is critical to ensuring the protection of park resources.

Additional people involved in the presentation, if any

Co-author: Matt Hudson, Management Analyst, National Park Service

Present a Poster

Cordelia Norris

Founder + Creative Director

Luna Creative

Knoxville TN

cordelia@lunacreates.com

Coloring Wonder: Enlivening Environmental Education Through Art, Community, and an Optional Pint

One-sentence summary

Attendees/audience members will gain new tools to expand environmental education beyond traditional frameworks and meet audiences where they are.

Abstract

Expanding public awareness is an essential first step in successful conservation efforts, and it requires a deft touch. To help address this gap, we've developed a series of engaging and scientifically accurate coloring books, each exploring an aspect of the natural world. These books feature line drawings from leading scientific illustrators, accompanied by deeply researched text. The series evolved into a novel path for environmental education when we started hosting free Drink and Draw events at local breweries. These community events help foster a shared love of place and help people connect more deeply to the natural world by creating a playful, non-didactic experience. The act of coloring fosters deeper engagement while providing a creative permission slip and allowing the participants to be artistic co-creators.

Additional people involved in the presentation, if any

Present a Paper

Katie | Peek | Coastal Research Scientist

Program for the Study of Developed Shorelines | Cullowhee | NC

kmcdowell@wcu.edu

Assessing the Vulnerability of National Park Service Infrastructure to Coastal Hazards

One-sentence summary

Attendees/audience members will better understand the vulnerability of national park infrastructure to coastal hazards and sea-level rise.

Abstract

Western Carolina University, in collaboration with the National Park Service, has established a methodology for assessing the vulnerability of infrastructure to coastal hazards and sea-level rise. Data from this protocol directly informs asset-level planning and provides critical information to support science-based decisions for adaptation and resilience efforts. Results from individual park units are standardized and can be combined into regional or national summaries. This protocol has been used to assess over 10,000 assets in 78 coastal national parks. To date, approximately one-quarter of the assets evaluated have high vulnerability, many of which have historical or cultural value. The next phase of this project is focused on completing the remaining coastal parks, primarily in the Pacific Islands and Alaska.

Additional people involved in the presentation, if any

Holli Thompson, Data Manager, Program for the Study of Developed Shorelines
Rob Young, Director, Program for the Study of Developed Shorelines
Blair Tormey, Coastal Research Scientist, Program for the Study of Developed Shorelines

Present a Paper

Elizabeth Perry

Assistant Professor

Michigan State University

East Lansing MI United States

eeperry@msu.edu

Navigating contested pasts: Heritage identity and interpretive shifts at Arlington House

One-sentence summary

They will learn how critically informed interpretation fosters ethical engagement and dialogue, helping managers navigate complex, layered histories.

Abstract

This work examines visitor experience at contested heritage sites to explore interpretation and engagement with difficult pasts. Research often focuses on visitor motivations. Less is known about how those with place-relevant identities engage with sites undergoing interpretive shifts. We address this empirically at Arlington House, where narratives have shifted from commemorating a Confederate general to a critical approach foregrounding enslavement. Surveying visitors (n=263), we analyze identities, expectations, and meanings. Findings reveal three identity groups co-engaging: those with strong heritage ties reported deeper emotional engagement, while others showed willingness to grapple with uncomfortable histories. This highlights interpretation as a relational, affective practice fostering reflection and dialogue over nostalgia.

Additional people involved in the presentation, if any

Hunter Lee, PhD Student, George Mason University

Organize a Core Workshop Session: Presentations + Audience Interaction

Robert | Powell | Prof.

Clemson Univ. | Asheville | NC | United States

rbp@clemson.edu

Which approaches to live interpretation lead to better participant outcomes?

One-sentence summary

Attendees/audience members will learn key principles for live interpretation that if implemented well consistently lead to better visitor outcomes.

Abstract

Our team collected data at 419 interpretive programs across 62 NPS units. We systematically observed 70 characteristics of each program related to context, the interpreter, and program design and delivery. We then administered short written surveys to program attendees ages 14 and older that measured three outcomes: (1) Quality Assessment; (2) Resource Connection; and (3) Social Connection. We conducted multiple analyses to determine which characteristics were most strongly associated with each of these outcomes. Key findings highlight the importance of traditional interpretive practices in addition to novel techniques associated with better storytelling, grappling with sticky problems, engaging audiences in meaning-making, and building positive relationships. We will discuss implications for enhancing program delivery and for training.

Additional people involved in the presentation, if any

Marc J. Stern, Virginia Tech
Kelley Anderson, Virginia Tech
Jess Henry, Clemson
maybe others!

Organize an Information-Sharing Session: Panel Discussion

Jonathan | Putnam | Retired (NPS)

Retired NPS, US Biosphere Network Steering Committee, World Commission on Protected A | Cabin John | Mar | United States

wputnam10@hotmail.com

International Park and Protected Area Issues Dialogue: Institutions, Networks and Opportunities

One-sentence summary

Attendees/audience members will understand the key issues and challenges in international park issues and how to engage with the world parks community

Abstract

This interactive panel discussion will highlight some of the key current issues in international park and protected area management, including the 30x30 initiative, Indigenous-led conservation, and the status of U.S. involvement in international conservation through IUCN, World Heritage and the U.S. Biosphere Network. We will share examples of how participants can engage in the international protected area community, including through the World Commission on Protected Areas, the International Ranger Federation and other organizations, and major international events scheduled for 2027 (the World Congress on Protected And Conserved Areas, the International Marine Protected Area Congress and the World Ranger Congress). Participants will be engaged in the dialogue to share their questions, experiences and insights.

Additional people involved in the presentation, if any

Co-organizer: Lauren Wenzel, Retired NOAA, WCPA, GWS

Organize an Information-Sharing Session: Panel Discussion

Ulla Reeves

Director, Clean Air Program

National Parks Conservation Association

Asheville Nort United States

ureeves@npca.org

Beyond Boundaries: Air, Energy and Ecosystem Threats to Parks through Landscape and Policy Lenses

One-sentence summary

Our audience will learn that parks aren't isolated. Pollution, development and policy decisions beyond their borders threaten ecosystems and wildlife.

Abstract

From energy and human development to air and water pollution and climate change, national parks face daily threats that undermine their integrity, ecosystems, wildlife and visitor experiences. Air pollution from outside park boundaries causes hazy views, harms human and ecological health and fuels the climate crisis that stresses nature. Development in and around park landscapes fragments habitat, disrupts wildlife movement and food security along natural corridors, increases runoff that degrades water quality, and allows invasive species to spread. At the same time, policies that have protected parks from air and climate pollution are being repealed and weakened; varied land use regulations governing development around parks exacerbates landscape fragmentation. Join us to learn from advocates working to address these myriad challenges.

Additional people involved in the presentation, if any

Olivia Porter, Southern Appalachian Landscape Project Director – Session Co-Organizer and Co-Presenter

Sara Cawley, NPCA's Energy Director in Conservation Programs

George Ivey, Blue Ridge Parkway Foundation

Katie Allen or Shyla Miller, Appalachian Trail Landscape Partnership

Natalie Levine, Clean Air Campaign Director, National Parks Conservation Association

Present a Paper

Michele Remer

PhD Student

Michigan State University

Lansing MI United States

remermic@msu.edu

Understanding the risk of introducing new species from cruise tourism to Alaska's changing coasts

One-sentence summary

Attendees/audience members will better understand invasion risk in an Arctic facing rapid climate change.

Abstract

Within the Arctic Ocean, the first ice-free day is anticipated to occur before 2030, leading to more vessel traffic. In our study, we focused specifically on how cruise tourism to remote areas of Alaska, including nearby parks and protected areas, may lead to new introductions. To determine whether tourists traveling to the Arctic may be a vector for invasive species spread, we surveyed cruise tourists. Survey answers helped us to understand the terrestrial risk of invasive species introductions, and the unit of analysis is at the individual level. We then combined those survey results with ship level data to model marine risk, using port data, geographic distance, and invasive species locations. This research will improve our understanding of a region undergoing rapid environmental change.

Additional people involved in the presentation, if any

Present a Paper

William Rice

Associate Professor

University of Montana

Missoula MT United States

will.rice@mso.umt.edu

Communitas, Crowding, and a new paradigm in Visitor Experience: Evidence from two national forests

One-sentence summary

Attendees/audience members will gain fluency regarding communitas as it relates to VUM and how to measure communitas.

Abstract

This presentation uses data collected in two Western national forests in summer 2025 to demonstrate how the theoretical foundation of communitas, borrowed from anthropology, can offer a different means of conceptualizing the upshot of increased visitation to public lands. We will show how communitas offers an alternative to the assumption of crowding, including empirical relationships between experiences of communitas and crowding. This work builds on Pan and Rice's (2026) Crowding-Communitas Spectrum by presenting data grounded in this new paradigm for conceptualizing visitor experience and challenges fundamental assumptions baked into visitor use management. The presentation will also include a new measurement tool for communitas, honed through these studies.

Additional people involved in the presentation, if any

Christopher A. Armatas, Aldo Leopold Wilderness Research Institute, USDA Forest Service
Abigail Fuesler, University of Montana
Phoebe Omolara, University Montana
Bing Pan, Pennsylvania State University

Present a Poster

Hassan Salem

Student

Michigan State University

East Lansing MI

smsmsalim4444@gmail.com

Understanding Visitor Characteristics and Visitation Patterns at Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore: A Case Study of Crystal River

One-sentence summary

Abstract

This study examines visitor characteristics and visitation patterns at Crystal River within Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore , using secondary data from the 2024 Visitor Use Study. A quantitative descriptive analysis of 299 survey responses explored visitor demographics, recreational activities, motivations, and crowding perceptions. Results showed that visitors averaged 41.52 years of age and traveled in groups of 4.68 people. Nearly half (49.2%) were first-time visitors, while the average number of visits was 4.15. Canoeing and kayaking was the most popular activity (47.7%), followed by stargazing (26.3%). Seeking excitement was a prominent motivation. Most visitors arrived between 10 AM and 1 PM and departed between 1 PM and 4 PM . Visitors generally preferred fewer encounters with other groups, reflecting a preference for less crowded recreational settings. These findings provide insights for managing visitor experiences and supporting sustainable recreation planning at Crystal River.

Additional people involved in the presentation, if any

Mikael Deliyski
Elizabeth Perry
Robert Dvorak

Present a Poster

Hassan Salem

Student

Michigan State University

East Lansing MI

smsmsalim4444@gmail.com

Understanding Visitor Characteristics and Visitation Patterns at Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore: A Case Study of Crystal River

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Additional people involved in the presentation, if any

Mikael Deliyski
Elizabeth Perry
Robert Dvorak

Present a Paper

Louis A. | Santiago Brevan | PhD Student

Clemson University | Clemson | SC | United States

lasanti@clemson.edu

Rethinking Park Capacity: Cultural Differences in Visitor Perceptions and Management Actions

One-sentence summary

The audience will learn techniques for understanding visitors' attitudes and identifying key indicators and thresholds for assessing park capacity.

Abstract

Effective visitor use management in parks requires understanding cultural differences in perceptions of park capacity and experiences. This is increasingly important as the U.S. grows more diverse, with Latinos as the fastest-growing ethnic group. Despite this shift, little research explores how diversity influences recreation preferences in state parks. This study examined ethnic differences (Latinos vs. non-Latinos) in social norms and management perceptions at Leesylvania State Park, Virginia. Data from 294 on-site surveys (summer 2024) suggest Latinos have distinct preferences, including higher tolerance for high-use densities. Findings offer culturally informed recommendations to enhance park management strategies.

Additional people involved in the presentation, if any

Innocent Kahigana, PhD Student, Clemson University
Olalekan Tunde-Ajayi, PhD Student, Clemson University
Dr. Jeffrey Hallo, Associate Dean, Clemson University

Organize an Information-Sharing Session: Affinity Group Meeting

Craig Shafer

retired

US National Park Service

Arlington Virgi United States

gokyoo@verizon.net

Publishing for Beginners

One-sentence summary

Attendees will be less naive and intimidated when seeking to submit their work to publication venues.

Abstract

Publishing for Beginners
Trying to publish an article in a professional venue can be a frustrating experience for first-timers. You may not have an experienced coauthor to help you along. This topic is often not taught in graduate schools, but is learned the hard way. Many questions arise. What type of paper to write for a journal: original research, review, case study, or essay? Which journal to submit to? Dealing with journal gatekeepers, reviewers, and editors? What are the publication alternatives to journals? How to write a scientific paper will not be addressed, but a few tips will be offered. Come prepared to ask questions.

Additional people involved in the presentation, if any

Dave Harmon, GWS Executive Director

Present a Paper

Ryan Sharp

Associate Professor

University of Tennessee

Knoxville TN United States

rsharp19@utk.edu

Tearing Down Silos: The Tennessee Outdoor Partnership as a Driver of Economic Opportunity

One-sentence summary

Participants will be able to identify attributes of a productive work group for developing and promoting outdoor recreation opportunities.

Abstract

Too often, governmental organizations operate in silos, limiting collaboration and shared impact. Yet extensive research demonstrate that organizations are far more effective when teams work together rather than independently. In Tennessee, this principle is evident through the Tennessee Outdoor Partnership (TOP). Recognizing an opportunity to strengthen collaboration, state government agencies, non-governmental organizations, and universities joined forces to create TOP. The partnership's mission is to collaboratively enhance conservation efforts, align funding priorities and opportunities to support economic development while expanding access to outdoor recreation opportunities for Tennessee residents and visitors. This presentation will explore the formation of TOP, examine how it can serve as a model for other states.

Additional people involved in the presentation, if any

Justine Cucchiara - Director of the Tennessee Office of Outdoor Recreation

Present a Paper

Guilherme | Silva | Graduate student

University of Tennessee, Knoxville | Knoxville | TN | United States

gsilva1@utk.edu

Socioenvironmental vulnerability in US Biosphere Regions

One-sentence summary

Attendees/audience members will understand how to identify key drivers and hotspots of socioenvironmental variability around protected areas.

Abstract

Protected areas provide important benefits to surrounding communities and help them navigate environmental hazards. These communities will be closely affected by changes to environmental benefits and hazards under climate and land use change. We examined patterns of socio-environmental vulnerability of communities in U. S. Biosphere Regions. We collated indicators of social and environmental vulnerability and identified key axes of variation that describe patterns of vulnerability. We also examined regional variation in the factors that emerged as being particularly important for describing vulnerability. We developed an online interface to help planners and resource managers address Social and Environmental Justice concerns, by identifying hotspots of socioenvironmental vulnerability and how these might shift in coming decades.

Additional people involved in the presentation, if any

Guilherme Silva*
John Kupfer**
Dean Hardy**
Paul Armsworth*

* Department of Ecology and Evolutionary Biology, University of Tennessee, Knoxville
** Department of Geography, University of South Carolina

Present a Paper

Katie | Smith | Doctoral Candidate

University of Tennessee | Knoxville | TN | United States

ksmit430@vols.utk.edu

Sensory Condition Acceptability in Great Smoky Mountains National Park

One-sentence summary

Attendees/audience members will understand visitor perceptions of light pollution in Great Smoky Mountains National Park.

Abstract

National parks are legally required to manage all resources in an unimpaired state for the enjoyment of future generations. Sensory resources within parks are at risk, as national parks suffer from intangible pollutants. Understanding how visitors perceive altered conditions is the first step in managing those conditions. Visitors to Great Smoky Mountains National Park and the adjoining gateway communities will be surveyed on their perceptions of varying levels of light pollution using photo elicitation. This study marks one of the first attempts to understand national park day visitor perceptions of light pollution and will further the knowledge of visitor experiences in the Smoky Mountains.

Additional people involved in the presentation, if any

Ryan Sharp, Associate Professor, University of Tennessee

Present a Paper

Wes Soward

Urban Wilderness Coordinator

City of Knoxville

Knoxville TN

wsoward@knoxvilletn.gov

Knoxville's Urban Wilderness, Connectivity, Culture, Conservation

One-sentence summary

Attendees/audience members will understand the impacts of Knoxville's Urban Wilderness on the community and region.

Abstract

Knoxville's Urban Wilderness has become an outdoor recreation asset for Knoxville and the region. Knoxville's Urban Wilderness highlights the nexus of quality of life, conservation, recreation, and economic development in a medium-sized city. From grassroots organization to business development, the history and implementation of these open spaces is a great illustration of the value of conserving natural landscapes near city centers.

Additional people involved in the presentation, if any

Present a Paper

Isabelle Staph

PhD Student

University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Knoxville TN United States

isabellestaph@gmail.com

Coexisting with mountain lions in rural Nevada

One-sentence summary

Attendees/audience members will have a better understanding of human-mountain lion relationships, as well as the importance of qualitative inquiry.

Abstract

Mountain lions are one of the largest apex predators found in the United States. Mountain lion management has historically been a controversial and polarizing topic, partially due to the volume of partners often involved in their management. In partnership with The National Park Service, we sought to observe how human-mountain conflict affected residents in rural Nevada. We conducted a phenomenological study in which our phenomenon is coexisting with mountain lions. We conducted unstructured interviews and several rounds of interview analysis, including “in vivo” and inductive coding. Not only do our results indicate high tolerance for living amongst mountain lions, but also sheds light on the importance of qualitative methods in the natural resource field, and how much data is missed when the primary analysis tool is quantitative.

Additional people involved in the presentation, if any

Present a Paper

Levi Tenen

Assistant Professor of Philosophy

Virginia Wesleyan University

Norfolk VA United States

ltenen@vwu.edu

Should Parks Be Profitable?

One-sentence summary

Attendees/audience members will explore the debate about economic uses of parks and hear a novel reason for their non-economic management.

Abstract

The answer to my title's question will seem obvious to many, yet people give vastly different answers. Some folks think national parks ought to make money for the nation, or at least not drain resources. Others take parks to be special precisely because they lie outside the market. This classic debate reaches an impasse, I suggest, because of a disagreement about foundational values. There is a way through the impasse, however, once we recognize the importance of pluralism—a neutral consideration that pushes us to respect differing views about value and the scope of the market. When applied to the contemporary world, pluralism supports the existence of non-monetized public lands and provides guidance about whether visitor services should be outsourced, whether parks should collect fees, and what the price of those fees should be.

Additional people involved in the presentation, if any

Present a Paper

Jennifer Thomsen

Associate Professor

University of Montana

Missoula MT United States

jennifer.thomsen@umontana.edu

Wildlands relevance: Fostering relationships between public lands and underrepresented groups

One-sentence summary

Attendees will learn key aspects/strategies for agencies and NGOs to partner to support relevance of public lands for underrepresented groups.

Abstract

Public lands are for the benefit of the public and provide numerous benefits. Despite the emphasis on increasing access on federal lands, decades of research has shown that there is persistent underrepresentation of demographic groups in outdoor recreation (e.g., low-income, racial/ethnic minorities). Research has identified constraints to accessing public lands but have not focused on the relationships people have with public lands (i.e. relevance). While it may be difficult for agencies to engage with the public, there are NGOs that have relationships with demographic/interest groups, that can serve as a bridge to building relevance of public lands. We present findings to understand what underpins the relevance of federal wildlands among underrepresented communities and how federal agencies and NGOs can partner to increase relevance.

Additional people involved in the presentation, if any

Jaclyn Rushing, Aldo Leopold Wilderness Research Institute
Chris Armatas, Aldo Leopold Wilderness Research Institute

Present a Paper

Michael | Tranel | Retired from US National Park Service, attending in personal capacity

n/a (currently National Park Service but retiring in August/September) | Yellowstone National Park | WY | United States

mtranel66@gmail.com

Four foundational lessons from four decades with the National Park Service

One-sentence summary

Attendees will better understand how partnerships and academia can help the NPS rebuild capacity to meet challenges, including learning from the past.

Abstract

After a 41-year career with the NPS in 9 different parks and 3 central offices, including roles as park ranger, chief of planning, park superintendent, group superintendent, and finally deputy superintendent of Yellowstone National Park, I will share 4 major lessons that are instructive for all levels of protected area management. 1. Success in protected area management requires building and maintaining relationships. 2. The NPS often underestimates the value of focusing on the enabling legislation for individual park units when dealing with controversial issues. 3. USNPS has much to share with the international community. At the same time, the agency can learn much from international partners. 4. Your team is critical to your success and the viability of the protected area you manage. Successful managers recognize potential and enthusiastically invest in developing people.

Additional people involved in the presentation, if any

n/a

Present a Paper

David | White | Professor

Clemson University; Parks, Recreation, and Tourism Management | Clemson | SC | United States

whitedl@clemson.edu

Developing a Spatial Database for Signage Inventory and Management in a University Forest

One-sentence summary

Attendees/audience members will understand how multiple technologies were used to develop a turn-key sign management system.

Abstract

Signage is a critical infrastructure element supporting public use of natural resources through wayfinding, behavioral influence, interpretive value, and other management functions. An undergraduate team initiated a systematic inventory to establish a baseline understanding of existing signage conditions and support improved visitor communication within the Clemson University Forest. Signs were located, photographed, and documented based on intended purpose, message structure, and accuracy. An AI-assisted review of sign photographs was incorporated to accelerate and standardize attribute classification. The team then initiated development of a GIS-based database to support spatial visualization, standardized attribute management, and enhanced decision support for signage planning and maintenance.

Additional people involved in the presentation, if any

Betty Baldwin, co-PI, Clemson University; Parks, Recreation, and Tourism Management

Present a Paper

Jason Wong

Economic Analyst

Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society

Ottawa Ont Canada

jwong@cpaws.org

Understanding the Economic, Environmental, and Health Benefits of Canada's Protected Areas

One-sentence summary

Discover ways to produce measures to advocate for the funding and protection of nature to policymakers and the public.

Abstract

In a context where financing for conservation constantly competes against numerous policy priorities, this session explores how nature contributes to national economies, climate resilience, and health and well-being. Through modeling, we share how Canada's terrestrial and marine protected and conserved areas generate billions in economic activity, store vast amounts of carbon, provide essential ecosystem services, and contribute to a higher sense of well-being. Participants will explore real-world data at subnational levels and three case studies across Canada based on national statistics and survey data. This workshop offers professionals of all levels practical knowledge and inspiration to help protect and promote the natural assets that support our lives and communities.

Additional people involved in the presentation, if any