

**Wednesday,
October 21**

**GWS Awards
Ceremony**

8:30–8:45a

Ballroom 413ABC

Presenters: Lydia

Kiewra & Linda

*Mazzu, GWS Board
of Directors*

2026 AWARDEES

- The GWS Social & Environmental Justice Award: Beth Kruse
- The GWS Communications Award: Will Rice
- The George Meléndez Wright Award for Excellence: Peter Keller

Plenary Session IV

8:45–10:00a

Ballroom 413ABC

**Names Are Never
Just Names:**

Reconciliation, Revanchism, and the Struggle for Democratic Place- Making

Moderator: Seth T.
Kannarr, PhD

Graduate, University
of Tennessee

- Speaker: Derek
H. Alderman,
Professor,
University of
Tennessee

Place names are not innocent labels on maps or signs. They are civic resources that have become flashpoints in struggles over identity, memory, power, and harm. Drawing on decades of scholarship and public engagement with place (re)naming in America, as well as service on the Federal Advisory

Committee on Reconciliation in Place Names, Derek Alderman examines two competing futures: renaming as reconciliation and renaming as revanchism.

Centering the committee's Place Name Reconciliation Principles, he advances a participatory, research-driven, reparative framework accountable to communities.

Alderman warns against top-down revanchist naming practices that settle political scores and grievances, advance personal branding, weaponize symbols, and restore racial, colonial, and nationalist hierarchies. At stake

is the integrity of the shared American landscape and the democratic making of place.

Refreshment Break •

10:00–10:30a

Breakout Sessions 13–16

10:30a–12:00p

Session #13

Ballroom 413ABC

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

Chairs: Jonathan
Putnam, US National
Park Service (retired)
Lauren Wenzel,
NOAA (retired)

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.

Session #14

Room 400A

Contributed Papers

Connecting with and Delivering Benefits to Diverse Groups

Lydia Kiewra, Chair

- Jennifer Thomsen
et al. / Wildlands
relevance:
Fostering

relationships
between public
lands and
underrepresented
groups

- Sweta Dixit /
Comprehensive
Overview of
Protected Area
Benefit-Sharing
Policy Impacts in
Local Livelihoods
in Asia
 - Rachel Baer &
Melissa Weddell /
Building the Bob:
Volunteer Labor
and Wilderness
Stewardship
 - Lydia A. Kiewra /
Rooted in Place:
Understanding
Place Attachment
and Cultural
Ecosystem
Services in
SWMAs
-

Session #15

Room 406, The Stone Room

Collective Capacity: Building Strength in Small Conservation Nonprofits

Chairs: Ariel

Kimberley and Scott
Hall, Park Institute of
America

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.

Session #16

Room 404

Contributed Papers

New Approaches to Displacement and Crowding

Will Rice, Chair

- Jeffrey Hallo & Louis Santiago / Addressing Visitor Displacement as a Critical Component of Protected Area Management
- Min Kook Kim & Jessica Leahy / How Much Is Too Much? Agent-Based Modeling for Recreation Resource Management in NetLogo
- Louis Santiago Brevan / Rethinking Park Capacity: Cultural Differences in

Visitor
Perceptions and
Management
Actions

- William Rice et al.
/ Communitas,
Crowding, and a
new paradigm in
Visitor
Experience:
Evidence from
two national
forests
-

Lunch Break

12:00–1:30p

Breakout Sessions 17–20

1:30–3:00p

Session #17

Ballroom 413ABC

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

Policy Lenses

Chair: Ulla Reeves,
Director, Clean Air
Program, National
Parks Conservation
Association

- Panelists: Olivia Porter, Southern Appalachian Landscape Project Director – Session Co-Organizer and Co-Presenter
- 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 (presenting remotely)

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.

Session #18

Room 400A

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

Chair: Brian Forist,
Senior Lecturer-
Parks, Recreation, &

the Outdoors, Indiana University

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.

Session #19

Room 406, The Stone Room

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

Presenter: Alexandra Heida

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.

Session #20

Room 404

Contributed Papers

Conservation

Solutions II:

**Coexisting with
Wildlife**

Dave Reynolds, Chair

- Kushaga
Meshram &
Lincoln Larson /
Spatial Gradients
of Development in
the Peripheries of
Tiger Reserve in
India

- Isabelle Staph / Coexisting with mountain lions in rural Nevada
 - Michele Remer / Understanding the risk of introducing new species from cruise tourism to Alaska's changing coasts
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Refreshment Break •
3:00–3:30p

Breakout Sessions
21–24
3:30–5:00p

Session #21
Ballroom 413ABC
**Refoundation: Does
Place-Based
Conservation in
America Need to
Start Over? A
Report from a
Special Issue of the**

Journal Parks Stewardship Forum

Chairs: Dave Harmon
& Rebecca Conard,
Co-Managing Editors,
Parks Stewardship
Forum

- Essayist—
Panelists: Fred
Herling, Lydia
Kiewra, Carla
Chung Mattix, Jon
Putnam,
Stephanie
Toothman, Lauren
Wenzel, Anne
Mitchell Whisnant

The theme of the current issue of Parks Stewardship Forum (published September 15) is “Refoundation,” the term used by the George Wright Society to describe efforts to identify and fix systemic vulnerabilities that have been

relentlessly exploited by the current administration to undermine place-based conservation in the United States — with impacts that have reverberated around the world. The fundamental premise of Refoundation is that trying to go back to the previous status quo will not be enough. Beyond that, a wide range of opinions and options are being explored, both here and elsewhere by a number of other groups. The 17 invited theme essays in this issue of Parks Stewardship Forum represent the first installment in an ongoing conversation in PSF on how to begin to repair the damage that has

been inflicted, and what place-based conservation as a whole needs to do to become more resilient. This session will introduce the essays and then we'll have an open discussion on some of the ideas put forward. (On Thursday afternoon we'll host a Sharing Circle on Refoundation.)

Session #22

Room 400A

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

Chair: Jon Kohl,
Executive Director,
PUP Collaboratory

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.

Session #23

Room 406, The Stone Room

Affinity Meeting

LGBTQIA2S+:

Fostering

Community by

Sharing Faced

Challenges and

Successes

Chairs: Cait Henry,

Board Member,

George Wright

Society; Brian Forist,

Affinity Group Co-

Lead, Indiana

University

This sharing circle will be the second in-person George Wright Society LGBTQIA2S+ Affinity Group 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.

Session #24

Room 404

Contributed Papers

What Are They Thinking?

Understanding Visitor Perceptions and Expectations

Ryan Sharp, Chair

- Sophia Loureiro /
Reading the
Terrain: ORV
User
Characteristics
and Site
Perceptions
- Elizabeth Perry &
Hunter Lee /
Navigating
contested pasts:
Heritage identity
and interpretive
shifts at Arlington
House
- Hardt Bergmann /
Artist-in-
Residence
Programs and the
Contemporary
State of Art in
U.S. Public Lands
- Katie Smith &
Ryan Sharp /
Sensory Condition
Acceptability in
Great Smoky
Mountains
National Park

Special Early Evening Event

5:30–7:00p

An Inside Look at UT's McClung Museum of Natural History and Culture (Free)

After the day's sessions conclude — and before you head out to dinner — join us for an early-evening visit to the University of Tennessee's McClung Museum of Natural History and Culture. We'll hear short presentations from two museum personnel before having the chance to explore the museum. Katy Malone, the museum's Manager of Education and Community

Engagement, will provide a brief overview of the museum and then talk about its work in the repatriation of Native American materials to Tribal Nations. Then we'll hear from Kristen Womble, the museum's Malacologist. Malacology is the study of mollusks, soft-bodied invertebrates (such as freshwater mussels) that are extremely important to aquatic biodiversity, especially in the southeastern US. With 300,000 catalogued and uncatalogued specimens, McClung's malacology collection is the largest

freshwater mollusk collection in Tennessee, and one of the largest in the US.

The Museum is a 25-minute, 1.1-mile walk (over hilly terrain) from the UT Conference Center (see walking map in Program PDF). If you have a private vehicle, there is free parking adjacent to the Museum. You can also get to the museum using KATBUS's free Downtown Connector.

No charge; complementary appetizers and non-alcoholic beverages.