

PERSPECTIVES FROM THE
ALDO LEOPOLD WILDERNESS RESEARCH INSTITUTE

International Science Activities

BY DAVID J. PARSONS

The 1993 charter establishing the Aldo Leopold Wilderness Research Institute (ALWRI) recognized “the special roles that wilderness resources serve in the ecology, economy, and social fabric of the U.S.’s and the global environment.” The Leopold Institute and its supporting agencies (U.S. Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, Fish and Wildlife Service, National Park Service, and U.S. Geological Survey) recognize the importance of looking beyond national boundaries if we are to fulfill our vision as leaders in wilderness science. Not only is there much that can be learned from the management and science experiences related to wilderness issues around the world, but interest from other countries in the products and expertise provided by the institute and our cooperators has increased dramatically as our programs and expertise have become better known (see <http://leopold.wilderness.net>). In response to this challenge, the ALWRI has become increasingly involved in a wide range of international activities. Some of the more significant of these activities over the past several years include:

- Founding member that contributes financial support, executive and associate editorships, and frequent scholarly scientific and applied articles to *IJW*.
- Active leadership in the organization, and as presenters and facilitators of the scientific sessions at the 6th (India, 1998) and 7th (South Africa, 2001) World Wilderness Congresses. Publishing the proceedings of both those sessions.
- ALWRI scientist Alan Watson’s 1999 Fulbright Scholar award in Finland led directly to active collaboration (including a conference in 2001) on wilderness-related issues of common interest to countries in the circum-polar north, including Canada, Finland, Norway, Iceland, Greenland, Russia, and the United States.
- Organization of a workshop on simulation modeling of recreation use at a conference in Austria on visitor flows in recreational and protected areas.
- Provision of on-site expertise and consultation to wilderness, park, and other protected area managers and planners in Australia, Canada, and South Africa.
- Invited presentations by ALWRI staff members at international conferences and workshops in Scotland, England, Canada, Austria, Australia, Finland, New Zealand, Norway, Mexico, and South Africa.
- Support and participation in the International Seminar on Protected Areas (Montana) and the International Wilderness Management Workshop (South Africa).
- Recently hosting of visiting scientists from such diverse locations as Australia, Canada, Denmark, Iceland, Finland, New Zealand, Norway, Spain, Russia, South Africa, and Tunisia.



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The Sierra Club's improved understanding that the communities and groups representing them can define their needs and determine the solutions has paved the way for new relationships.

Heladio has developed natural pesticides derived from local plants and has also established a laboratory to harvest insects for pest control purposes.

The *Ecosta Yutu Cuii* initiative encourages members of poor communities around Mexico to actively work toward the preservation of 15,000 acres (6,000 ha.) of land. The training programs include forest fire prevention and reduction of the domestic use of wood resources. Heladio's idea differs from ex-

isting programs in that it involves underserved indigenous community members in social programs, agricultural technology, forest preservation strategy, and natural resource conservation.

Heladio organized and conducted last year's Environmental Festival in Oaxaca, Mexico, which drew about 700 participants from around the country. Themes of the event included fauna conservation, natural foods, herbal remedies, for-estation, and agricultural products. As a

result of the Environmental Festival and other activities over the past year, Heladio established formal relationships with numerous organizations, such as the Kellogg Foundation, the Mexican Natural Conservation Fund, the Autonomous University of Chapingo, and the National Agro-Ichthyological Technology Center of Pinotepa. With continued support, *Ecosta Yutu Cuii* will continue to develop its new credit and savings project, which currently includes 180 members and a \$200,000 endowment, to support education, care for the infirm, housing, and travel. 

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wilderness boundaries. Christopher Jones and Steven J. Hollenhorst present chronologically the controversy over climbers using fixed-anchors in wilderness. Pauline Thorndike and I summarize what is known about state designated wilderness within the United States. Six spiritual benefits of

wilderness experiences are presented by Baylor Johnson, who suggests in his essay how we are psychologically nurtured from this experience.

The benchmark and the connection with wilderness we leave for the next generation around the world include both the protected land areas called

wilderness and our attitude and ethic about the value of wildness in the environment and within ourselves. 

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- Membership in the International Union for the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (IUCN's) World Commission on Protected Areas; efforts to include wilderness in the agenda of the 2003 World Protected Areas Conference.

Exposure to the variety of approaches and attitudes toward the

understanding and management of wilderness, parks, and similarly protected wildlands that has come with our increased international activity has provided ALWRI scientists with new insights into ways to approach and apply science to the many challenges facing wilderness managers, both in the United States and in other countries. Collaboration with scientists and managers across the world has become an

increasingly valued tool in the institute's toolbox. It is clear that international collaboration is now critical to the effective stewardship of natural areas across the globe. 

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