

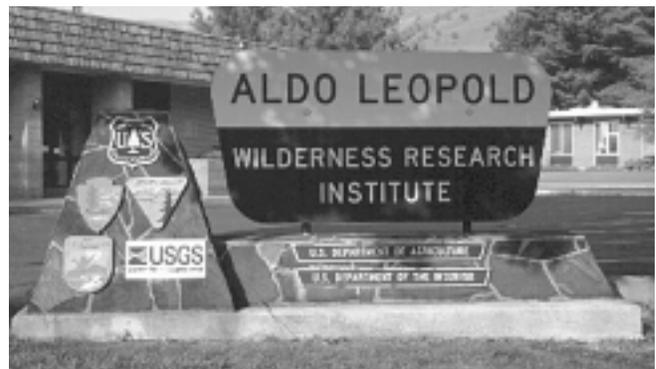
Revisiting Wilderness Science Priorities

BY DAVID J. PARSONS

The Aldo Leopold Wilderness Research Institute recently completed an extensive effort to address its role in meeting the future needs for science to support wilderness stewardship. Carried out in collaboration with wilderness managers and scientists from its partner agencies (Bureau of Land Management, Forest Service, Fish and Wildlife Service, National Park Service, and U.S. Geological Survey) as well as universities, NGOs, and international partners, this effort resulted in a new Program Charter that is expected to provide guidance to the institute's research, application, and service programs over the next decade. Approved in late 2005, the Program Charter identifies a program of work that aims to provide scientific leadership in bringing diverse groups of scientists and managers together in developing and using the knowledge needed to sustain wilderness ecosystems and values.

Building on a vision of being the premier institution for wilderness stewardship research, the Leopold Institute's Program Charter identifies important roles in the conduct, support, and facilitation of scientifically rigorous research; the delivery and application of research findings; and in fostering collaboration and partnerships with a wide variety of individuals and organizations. Much of the charter focuses on identifying a program of work that is built around five priority areas. These emphasize the importance of multidisciplinary approaches to challenging issues that face wilderness managers. The five problem areas identified in the charter are:

1. Recreation experiences and the impacts of recreation. This includes such topics as understanding the basic dimensions of human experiences in wilderness and influences on those experiences, biophysical impacts of recreation activities, guidelines for restoration of impacted sites, and an understanding of visitor distribution and flow patterns needed to guide planning and management decisions.
2. Relationships between people and lands protected for



their wilderness values, including how these relationships affect and are affected by management policies and actions. This includes improved understanding of contrasting values of different stakeholders, conflicts between differing demands and interests, and the attitudes people hold toward public lands.

3. Stewardship of fire as a natural process. This includes an improved understanding of natural fire regimes, options and consequences of strategies for restoring fire as a natural process, and how social and institutional factors influence the evaluation of trade-offs by managers and the public.
4. Wilderness in the context of larger ecological and social systems. This includes such topics as the introduction, spread, and effects of nonnative species; global change and its effects on wildlife and other wilderness values; protection of water quality and quantity; and development of indicators and monitoring protocols to assess trends in ecological and social conditions.
5. The delivery and application of scientific knowledge and tools. This focuses on facilitating access to and improving awareness of scientific knowledge and tools, as well as investigating influences on and developing improved

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importantly on the environment. It is time to fight strongly for the truth, to not let noise be confused with wisdom or sound bites for thought, to have our message be heard, and to leave the world a better place.

Preservation of our wilderness and expansion of our national parks has traditionally been a Republican issue. Yet we have in Washington today a group from the radical right that wishes to destroy what has been preserved for centuries. It is time for moderate Republicans, Democrats, and Independents to fight for the land, to speak out for wild nature, to acknowledge the intrinsic value of all life-forms.

A shift of 1% or 2% of the votes would have changed the last several elections. If a politician, any politician, does not care about the future that we leave to our grandchildren or about the environment, and will not address the issues, he or she should be defeated. It is time for us to speak out. It is time for us to take back our country.

Finally, there are excellent young writers, some of whom were at the 8th WWC, born in the 1970s and 1980s, who will someday be considered in the same class as those named previously. There are also great writers from Africa, Latin America, Asia, and elsewhere, unknown to those in North America and

Europe. It is our jobs as readers, as editors, and as publishers to find them, to encourage them, and to read their books.

The fight for wilderness and the natural world continues. We are grateful to those who write about our relationship to wilderness. **IJW**

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approaches for effective science delivery and application.

In addition to these priorities, the Program Charter outlines a renewed commitment to collaboration and partnerships. To fulfill its science leadership vision the Leopold Institute must work closely with the science and management staffs of the federal wilderness agencies to identify information needs and priorities and apply research find-

ings to management and policy issues. Scientific collaboration with the many other scientists that conduct research important to wilderness management or that use wilderness as study sites is particularly important. In an effort to further strengthen its collaborative activities, the Leopold Institute has recently formalized a Visiting Expert and Exchange Program in which scientists, managers, students, and other specialists with expertise in areas relevant to wilderness science or

management can be hosted at the institute for varying periods of time.

The Leopold Institute's 2005 Program Charter, as well as additional information on its wide variety of research and science delivery and application programs, can be found at <http://leopold.wilderness.net>.

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