



ALDO LEOPOLD WILDERNESS RESEARCH INSTITUTE

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WILDERNESS IN THE CIRCUMPOLAR NORTH: SEARCHING FOR COMPATIBILITY IN ECOLOGICAL, TRADITIONAL, AND ECOTOURISM VALUES



Keywords: biodiversity, tourism, wilderness, conflict, collaboration, culture, traditional ecological knowledge

Background & Management Issues:

Although preservation of natural and cultural landscapes as “Wilderness” began in the United States in the late 19th century and spread worldwide, the International community has not agreed on a single definition of Wilderness. The World Conservation Union (IUCN) developed a definition of Wilderness based largely on physical attributes, size and degree of modification, with the intent of retaining the area’s natural character and influence. Their objectives included the enjoyment of relatively undisturbed areas by future generations, maintaining natural attributes and qualities, providing appropriate access for physical and spiritual well-being, and enabling indigenous communities to live within the balance of natural resources.

Although the definition put forth by the IUCN aims to extend across cultures, many regions of the world would benefit from increased understanding of the values, constraints, and contributors to Wilderness protection. Of special concern is protection in the Circumpolar North where wild, undeveloped lands are facing growing pressure for economic development, oil and gas exploration and extraction, development of geothermal energy resources, and development of heavy industry close to energy sources. This seminar and workshop was an initial effort to explore values affecting protection of the arctic in an international context.

Project Objectives:

To describe the current and anticipated priority research, education, methodological, and infrastructure issues surrounding wilderness protection in the Circumpolar North

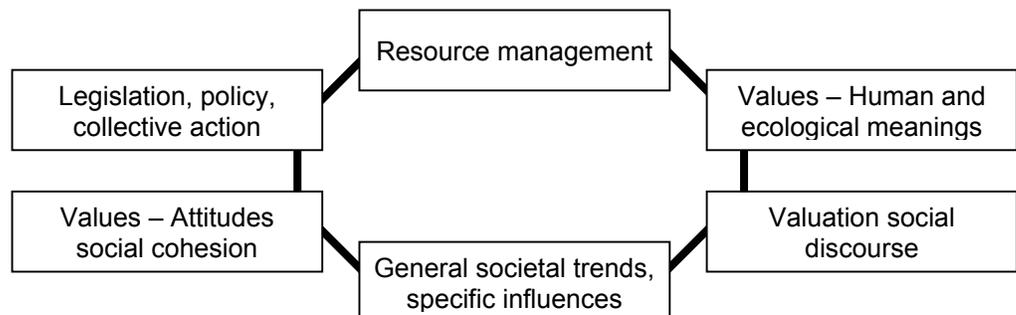
Project Description: Scientists working in Arctic countries convened for a 2-day seminar and 1-day workshop designed to present and discuss issues affecting the Circumpolar North.

Contributions: Invited papers, listed below, followed a general framework for the evolution of Wilderness values as developed by Watson and Landres (1999) and Watson (2000).

Values–Human and Ecological Meanings

- Alaska Exceptionality Hypothesis: Is Alaska Wilderness Really Different?
- Biodiversity in Finnish Wilderness Areas: Historical and Cultural Constraints to Preserve Species and Habitats
- Can Traditional Ecological Knowledge and Wilderness Benefit One Another?
- Perspectives on Wilderness in the Arctic
- Wilderness and Well-Being: Complexity, Time, and Psychological Growth

Framework – Wilderness Values and Valuation



Valuation Decisions

- ❖ Origin of Political Conflict in Arctic Wilderness Areas
- ❖ Social Construction of Arctic Wilderness: Place Meanings, Value Pluralism, and Globalization

Societal Trends and Influences on Values

- ❖ Nature and Tourism in Greenland

Values—Attitudes toward Wilderness

- ❖ Northwest Territories Protected Areas Strategy: How Community Values Are Shaping the Protection of Wild Spaces and Heritage Places

- ❖ Collaboration Across Cultural Boundaries to Protect Wild Places: The British Columbia Experience

Legislation, Policy, and Protection

- ❖ Protected Areas of the Central Siberian Arctic: History, Status, and Prospects
- ❖ Planning in the Human Ecotone: Managing Wild Places on the Togiak National Wildlife Refuge
- ❖ Increasing Value of Wilderness: Protecting Cultural Heritage
- ❖ Iceland's Central Highlands: Nature Conservation, Ecotourism, and Energy Resource Utilization
- ❖ Evaluating Nature and Wilderness in Iceland

Priority Research Issues:

- ❖ Research has largely ignored traditional values associated with protected lands and the interaction of subsistence and other wilderness uses, especially as technology impacts cultural and natural resources.
- ❖ Because these ecosystems are unique and fragile, they may be difficult to restore. Few comparative studies of the types of impacts and their effects are available. Management of marine and coastal ecosystems is addressed far less than their terrestrial counterparts.
- ❖ Before wilderness interpretation can create awareness and appreciation of different orientations toward wilderness, the broad meanings, and identities, activities, experiences, and motivations for using wilderness need to be explored.
- ❖ As pressure mounts to develop energy resources and attract tourists, little is known about how these forces impact wilderness values, including the sociocultural and biophysical aspects of wilderness, or how these impacts can be mitigated without impairing reasonable economic evolution.

Priority Education Issues:

- ❖ Protection of the unique resources found in these ecosystems requires informing diverse and distant visitors. The current approach of conveying these systems as purely biophysical or sociocultural needs to reflect the complex influences of the diversity found there.

Priority Methodological Issues:

- ❖ Methods to assess landscapes and evaluate their importance as wilderness are needed.
- ❖ Research on the different orientations toward northern wilderness requires an interdisciplinary approach employing both qualitative and quantitative research.

Priority Infrastructure Issues:

- ❖ Communication is necessary to address these research, education, and methodological issues. In addition, stakeholders should be able to access information about decisions and the decision-making framework.

Publications / Products:

- ❖ Watson, Alan E.; Alessa, Lilian; Sproull, Janet, comps. 2002. Wilderness in the Circumpolar North: Searching for compatibility in ecological, traditional, and ecotourism values; 2001 May 15–16; Anchorage, AK. Proceedings RMRS-P-26. Ogden, UT: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service, Rocky Mountain Research Station. 143 p. **Leopold Publication Number 466.** [Read it here!](#)
- ❖ Watson, Alan; Landres, Peter. 1999. Changing wilderness values. In: Cordell, H. Ken, principal investigator. Outdoor recreation in American life: a national assessment of demand and supply trends. Champaign, IL: Sagamore Publishing: 384-388. **Leopold Publication Number 357.**

- ❖ Watson, Alan E. 2000. Wilderness use in the year 2000: societal changes that influence human relationships with wilderness. In: Cole, David N.; McCool, Stephen F.; Borrie, William T.; O'Loughlin, Jennifer, comps. Wilderness science in a time of change conference—Volume 4: Wilderness visitors, experiences, and visitor management; 1999 May 23–27; Missoula, MT. Proc. RMRS-P-15-VOL-4. Ogden, UT: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service, Rocky Mountain Research Station: 53-60. **Leopold Publication Number 388.** [Read it here!](#)

For additional information...

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