



Office of International Affairs

Members of the first WPALF meeting.

World Protected Areas Leadership Forum

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In February 2000 the National Park Service hosted the first World Protected Areas Leadership Forum (WPALF) in cooperation with the World Commission on Protected Areas (WCPA) of the World Conservation Union (IUCN). The Forum met in Warrenton, Virginia and drew Directors and CEOs of park management agencies from 19 different countries and provided an opportunity to share common experiences about emerging issues for protected areas around the globe. The WPALF also provided a vehicle to examine lessons learned and allowed a dynamic exchange of ideas, and were squarely focused on the development of a program agenda for the Fifth World Parks Congress that was held in Durban, South Africa in September 2003.

The WPALF organized its ideas around eight priority issues, and began the process of leveraging the resources necessary to take these ideas forward to the World Parks Congress. In 2001 the Government of Spain, through its Autonomous Agency for National Parks, hosted the second meeting of the WPALF at Teide National Park on the island of Tenerife in the Canary Islands. The third meeting of the WPALF was held in Sydney, Australia in May 2002. Minutes from this meeting are available [here](#).

The WPALF is currently a relatively small group of influential leaders and protected areas agencies invited by IUCN/WCPA to participate on the basis of the following criteria: 1) evidence of strong and reliable political or government support; 2) degree of leadership demonstrated on cutting-edge protected area issues; 3) demonstrated track record of innovation; 4) strength and nature of community and NGO support to the agency; 5) capacity for and record of outreach internationally; and 6) capacity and willingness to apply resources beyond immediate internal needs.

The WPALF worked closely with the International Planning Committee (IPC) for the 2003 World Parks Congress. While the WPALF was only one of a number of protected area networks that contributed to the Congress, it had a key role in providing input to the IPC on matters of program development, communications and leveraging resources.

In 2004, a WPALF meeting took place in Finland. Meeting notes are available [here](#).

The next WPALF meeting took place in June 2005 in Canada. More information on that meeting can be found [here](#).

In May 2006, the meeting took place in Mexico. Brief meeting notes are [available](#).

In the Fall of 2007, the WPALF meeting took place in Inverness, Scotland. Notes from the meeting can be found below:

Protected areas managers from around the world met at a recent forum organized by the World Conservation Union (IUCN) in Inverness, Scotland, to share their expertise.

The leaders of government organisations who manage the world's major protected areas gathered for the 2007 World Protected Areas Leadership Forum to discuss the challenges facing national parks, world heritage sites and other protected areas. The NPS was represented by Deputy Director Dan Wenk.

The effects of climate change on protected areas and ideas on how to manage them most efficiently and effectively were

brought up at the meeting. Conservation leaders from protected areas in Australia, Canada, Finland and Kenya, to name but a few, also discussed the importance of marine protected areas and the social and economic value all protected areas.

David Sheppard, Head of IUCN's Programme on Protected Areas, said: *"Leaders agreed that protected areas face many challenges, but their most critical role is in stemming the current global species extinction crisis and supporting sustainable development. The conservation of protected areas is becoming increasingly complicated by rapid global change, at all levels."* The annual forum, jointly convened by IUCN and a rotating host country, brings together the chief executive officers of about 20 of the world's major protected areas. Ian Jardine, CEO of Scottish Natural Heritage and this year's host, said: *"The meeting was very successful in allowing leaders of protected areas agencies from around the world to discuss key issues and to share innovative approaches to these issues."*



Forum delegates agreed that protected areas need to be better related to key issues in society and applauded initiatives, such as the "Healthy Parks, Healthy People" initiative of Parks Victoria in Australia, which makes a direct link between conservation and human health.

The forum also noted the need to give a higher priority to conservation in the marine environment and a number of current activities were outlined.

It is planned to hold the 2008 Leadership Forum in conjunction with the IUCN World Conservation Congress, which will be held in Barcelona, Spain.

Participants at the 2007 WPALF conference in Scotland. IUCN Photo.

- [World Commission on Protected Areas](#)
- [World Parks Congress](#)
- [Nature Conservancy Page on World Parks Congress](#)