



Hawai'i Volcanoes News Release

September 18, 2007

Park Embraces International Affairs Opportunity

On September 7 and 8, Hawai'i Volcanoes hosted Mr. Wang Guangtao, Minister of Construction of the People's Republic of China. Minister Wang oversees China's vast network of natural areas, its national parks and preserves. Given a choice of places to visit on his return to China from Washington DC, Hawai'i Volcanoes rose easily to the top of the list.

The minister was accompanied by a twenty-two person delegation that represented various high-level government and business officials including those in communication and marketing, housing and real estate, industry, transportation, engineering, and safety.

During a reception at Volcano House, the minister and delegates mingled with park partners—Hawai'i Natural History Association, Friends of Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park, and Native Hawaiian Consultation Committee. The group raised their glasses in toasts of appreciation and good fortune, and exchanged greetings, gifts, and business cards. Many joined in an impromptu hula and all applauded songs sung in both Hawaiian and Mandarin.

Accompanied by Superintendent Cindy Orlando and other key staff, Minister Wang and his delegation toured the park. They discussed management strategies, preservation of indigenous culture, and the importance of balancing visitor use with resource protection. As if on cue, a pair of endangered Hawaiian geese made a rare appearance, their image captured by a whirr of digital technology.

The tour encircled the volcano's summit, traveling through desert and rain forest, past lava trees and pit craters, before descending 4,078' to the sea. Here, the route abruptly ends. Recent lava flows have buried miles of the park's Chain of Craters Road. Kilauea continues to erupt and more change is certain.

Minister Wang and his group seized the opportunity to walk upon some of the newest land on earth. The experience creates an incredible, everlasting impression. Each step a step in the right direction towards positive international relations.

At day's end, emotions overcame language barriers. Our foreign visitors bid us *yi hou zai jian* and we responded *a hui hou*. In a final cultural exchange—for both Chinese and American—this was not goodbye, but rather *until we meet again*.



Minister Wang's first steps on new land.
Photo by Dave Boyle

EXPERIENCE YOUR AMERICA

The National Park Service cares for special places saved by the American people so that all may experience our heritage.