

## Summary Report

International Training Initiative Brainstorming Session  
National Park Service, Office of International Affairs  
February 24, 2006

### Summary

On February 24, 2006, the Office of International Affairs for the U.S. National Park Service (NPS) held a brainstorming session that brought together close to 40 participants representing U.S. government agencies, non-governmental organizations and foundations involved in international protected area management issues. The session focused on training opportunities and needs for international protected area managers.

NPS is interested in facilitating training and capacity building for protected area management internationally in a way that would benefit NPS as much as our international colleagues. The brainstorming session was a first step in identifying potential partners, recognizing the strengths and weaknesses in the current offering of training programs, and determining the appropriate role for the NPS in international protected area management training.

### Themes

Several organizing themes were repeated during the brainstorming session.

#### *International Activities Benefit Domestic Conservation*

The National Park Service's engagement in international activities and training benefits the domestic mission of the Service – preserving America's natural and cultural resources for future generations. International training will not only develop protected area management capacity in other countries, but also within the U.S. system. International cooperation by NPS is in the interests of the U.S., and can be used as a diplomatic tool.

International governmental and nongovernmental counterparts respect the National Park Service. *Protected Area Management* is a theme that can bring together people from different countries no matter the status of that country's current relationship with the U.S.

#### *Partnership*

This includes both approaching international training in a spirit of partnership and exchange with other countries, and also the need to implement training through a partnership with other U.S. governmental organizations, non-governmental organizations, private foundations, private companies, and international organizations to leverage resources and be more effective.

### *Framework*

NPS should determine a framework for international training. This would help target NPS involvement and lead toward measurable goals and achievements. For example, the World Wildlife Federation uses the UN's Millennium Challenge goals as a framework for their capacity building work. A framework could be organized by geographic area, theme, or type of protected area.

### *Targeted*

Any NPS effort must be targeted. After determining a framework, NPS can then strategically focus resources where they will be most effective, and bring the greatest benefit to the Service.

### *Network*

One goal and important achievement of any international training is the network that is created through the experience. Alumni of the former International Seminar that NPS organized from 1965 until 1991 name the Seminar's alumni network as one of the most important outcomes and a valuable resource that they still use today.

## **Brainstorming Results**

During the brainstorming session, participants were asked to think about the idea of improving the capacity of protected area managers around the world, and to focus on the following questions:

- ❖ Who is the target audience?
- ❖ What are the priority training needs?
- ❖ What strengths does NPS bring?
- ❖ What resources are already available?
- ❖ What additional resources are needed?
- ❖ How should a training program be formatted?
- ❖ What are the initial next steps?

The responses and suggestions to these questions included:

### *Audience*

- Those who need the training the most and who will have greatest impact.
- Field staff.
- Park managers and executives.
- Policy makers and politicians, regional and national ministers.
- Private sector and NGO stakeholders.
- Schools.
- Site-level operations managers.
- Donor community.
- Commercial operators, concessionaires, jurisdictional stakeholders, training partners.

### *Training Needs*

- Vary depending on region, country, system, geography. Need to customize.
- Sustainable financing.
- Governance.
- Influencing policymaking.
- Business processes: includes system management, financial management, administration, performance-based management, teaching business sense and processes.
- Building constituencies for conservation.
- Managing for change.
- Managing outside the protected area boundaries.
- Addressing impacts we know are coming but don't know enough about – e.g. global change forces – climate change, invasive species, globalization and trade.

#### *NPS Strengths and Resources*

- Strong internal training program including training facilities and research learning centers, dedicated staff, and capability to provide distance learning.
- Lessons learned from over 90 years of experience.
- Skills that fit into international mandates such as the Convention on Biodiversity (CBD). Even if the U.S. isn't a signatory, NPS can assist other countries to meet their commitments.
- Partnerships with NGOs and universities.
- Private partnerships – Canon.
- Connections to other federal agencies.
- “Brand recognition” amazing partnership and outreach capability – everyone knows parks.
- Tie in international initiative with NPS 2016 initiative.
- Business Planning capacity – lessons learned through NPS process of creating business plans.
- Sustainable design and environmental leadership program.
- Adaptive management model in NPS.
- Core competencies model.
- Management effectiveness and professional standards.
- History of NPS is unmatched
- Retired personnel a great resource

#### *Available Resources (outside of NPS)*

- Partnerships
- State IVIP program
- International Ranger Federation
- George Wright Society
- International agreements and agendas set a framework
- USAID programs
- US FWS programs
- Foreign government assessments of own needs

#### *Additional Resources Needed*

- Broad network of partners – Private sector, foundations, other government entities outside the US.
- How do we make the program sustainable? Example: Create an endowment to contribute to sustainability.
- Funding
- Strategy and implementation plan.
- Internal champion and leadership within NPS

#### *Training Format*

- Train two or more people from one institution to make it more sustainable and transfer capacity building to institution.
- Courses should consider partnerships with other organizations, combine expertise, and make logistics easier.
- Important to do follow up.
- Travel and interaction important. Opportunities for networking and hands-on learning.
- Mix formal and informal training methods.
- Hold trainings outside of US for cost savings and convenience of participants.
- Train the Trainers.
- Exchanges: attempt 1:1 pairing, expert to expert.
- Create information clearing houses and make available for follow-on activities.

#### *Next Steps*

- Partner with other government agencies, organizations.
- Identify areas of mutual concern between partners and NPS, and also between NPS and other countries.
- Determine which NPS priorities match those of key funders and also match the needs of protected area managers. Identify NPS competitive advantage.
- Build global consensus on identification of core competencies of protected area managers and standards for protected area management profession.
- Consider foreign policy priorities and general U.S. interests.
- Create roster of available courses and staff expertise.
- Try a pilot program. Add on to an existing initiative?