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Sondrio Festival

MOSTRA INTERNAZIONALE DEI DOCUMENTARI SUI PARCHI
INTERNATIONAL DOCUMENTARY FILM FESTIVAL ON PARKS

Sondrio, Italia, 10 - 16 ottobre/october 2011

Convegno internazionale

“Quale futuro per i parchi di montagna?
Stelvio, Yellowstone, Sagarmatha”

Contributo a vent'anni dalle tesi di Sondrio

Sondrio, 14 ottobre 2011

“The American Legends – Not Only Yellowstone”

by

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Greetings from the United States National Park Service;

My name is Mary Elizabeth Arego and my surname is Mea for my initials.

I come to you here humbly as I walk on the Italian soil of my grandparents and their inspiration to love the land and its people.

I am truly honored and grateful to represent the U.S. National Parks at the Mountains Park Conference as part of the Sondrio International Documentary Film Festival on Parks and to share with you my perspective “The American Legend : Not only Yellowstone”.

From the foot hills of the Green Mountains of Vermont and from Marsh-Billings-Rockefeller National Historical Park; it is a pleasure to speak with you all today at this international conference.

Thank you to Maurizio, Ms. Marina Cotelli, Luciano, Caroline, the sponsors of the Sondrio Festival, and to the U.S. National Park Service.

I have learned so much and I look forward to sharing my experiences of Sondrio with colleagues at home. Gracias!

Over the past 25 years, I have worked in a variety of mountain parks that include Yellowstone, Yosemite, Shenandoah, and now Marsh-Billings-Rockefeller National Historical Park.

The park is nestled in the foothills of the Green Mountains and we interpret the history and evolution of conservation stewardship In America.

One of most my recent career experiences include Yellowstone NP.

The National Park System of the United States comprises 395 areas covering more than 83 million acres.

Approximately 75% of the U.S. National Parks are “Mountain Parks.

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They include the mountainous region of the Appalachian Mountains, the oldest mountain range in the United States; and as you travel west across the United States the mountain ranges include the Rocky Mountains, the Cascades, Coastal and Alaska mountain ranges.

What all of these parks hold in common across the System – are these 4 core trends climate change indicators; engaging in youth, building partnerships; and maintaining economic vitality and cultural traditions.

Climate Change Indicators:

The way the National Park Service has addressed this is by establishing a system of ecological monitoring for all of the bioregions that tracks forest, species and weather pattern change; respond to evolving management challenges based on climate change indicators.

Mountain parks must respond to these changes – but the greater opportunity is to model adaptive management practices.

We also model sustainable practices.

The National Park Service has established the Climate Change Response Strategy and as part of the strategy the Service has established “Climate Friendly Parks Program” whereby lessons learned are shared among the park units. For example, a wood fired system to heat park buildings; create sustainable building designs and having the building be LEED certified such as the Forest Center at my park.

Next Generation of Park Stewards:

The National Park Service is creating opportunities for young students to learn about the parks and provide them with the education and leadership skills that will inspire them to work for the national parks. Examples Include: Youth Conservation Corps; Partnering with the local schools for the Conservation Leadership Institute; and the Youth Intake Program

In addition, the NPS must remain relevant to a changing and diverse society. This builds a constituency for parks in their community. We need to be able to reach all audiences.

Partnerships

Building on the capacity to engage all audiences, the NPS is engaging in a variety of partnerships to carry out the NPS mission for “... which purpose is to conserve the scenery and the natural and historic objects and the wild life therein and to provide for the enjoyment of the same in such manner and by such means as will leave them unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations” *NPS Organic Act*

We are working with local community organizations that share a common goal. For example, in Woodstock we have a Forest Festival Weekend to educate the public on locally made wood products – demonstrating value-added conservation efforts.

We draw from each other the lessons we learn to care for these special places through the partnerships we create to extend the outreach to the local community.

Economic Vitality and Cultural Traditions

Building sustainable partners we both engage in protecting the resources while still maintaining the economic needs of the community.

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Examples of this are engaging in the local community with value-added products that keep the traditions alive now and in the future.

The 4 Pillars of Excellence

The National Park Service Director has created the 4 Pillars of Excellence for the NPS to strive for.

They include Stewardship, Relevancy, Education and Workforce.

In the spirit of the National Park Service Director, as we approach the National Park Service Centennial, and to answer the future needs of the next 100 years, we need to be flexible to the changing needs of a diverse society.

A sustainable funding strategy, that includes the leveraging of public and private funds thus resulting in a continuum of operations and programs.

Engage all members of society especially the youth and thus building the constituency for these special places for future generations.

We all want to ensure that our special places ... national parks are present for now and in the future.

CONCLUSION

We are all working together under a common umbrella with a variety of opportunities where we can shared lessons learned and have a global system approach for managing parks especially in the mountain regions of the United States and the world for future generations.