



RESOLUTION: # 36

TITLE: Recognition and conservation of sacred natural sites in protected areas

WHEREAS

RECOGNIZING that Sacred Natural Sites of indigenous communities and mainstream faiths often are centers of biological and cultural diversity and their traditional management constitutes effective conservation of natural and cultural values of wilderness and protected areas.

BEING AWARE that sacred natural sites: forests, mountains, caves, rivers as well as pilgrimage trails and places where temples are located are places of special cultural practices such as ceremony, festivities, worship and initiation integral to human identity, survival, evolution and human relations to nature.

RECALLING that indigenous peoples and main stream faith groups are in relationship with nature and have held intergenerational custodian and stewardship over their sacred natural sites for thousands of years.

ACKNOWLEDGING that many sacred natural sites have been integrated into legally declared wilderness and other protected areas without adequate recognition of the local communities' cultural and spiritual values and the traditional beliefs, practices and knowledge that have sustained the associated locations, cultures and resources;

REMEMBERING that protection of sacred natural sites has been encouraged in the Man and the Biosphere Programme (1970), the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands (1971), the World Heritage Convention (1972), the Convention on Biological Diversity (1992), the Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage (2003), Recommendation V.13 *Cultural and Spiritual Values of Protected Areas* endorsed by the Vth World Parks Congress (Durban, 2003), Resolution 3.049 *Community Conserved Areas* adopted by the 3rd IUCN World Conservation Congress (Bangkok, 2004), and the *U.N. Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* (2007); Resolution 4.038 *Recognition and conservation of sacred natural sites in protected areas* adopted by the 4th IUCN World Conservation Congress (Barcelona 2008).

THEREFORE

Acknowledge that WILD9 from the land of the Maya, supports the challenge of protecting wilderness and understanding traditional wilderness custodians and their sacred natural sites.

CONCERNED that many sacred natural sites are at risk and subject to global change, development pressures, cultural change and adverse cultural and societal values.

CONCERNED that legally recognized protected areas sometimes deny access to sacred natural sites to indigenous peoples or religious groups who have utilized and cared for them for many generations.

AWARE that sacred sites are often poorly understood outside of their specific cultural communities and that more scientific and applied research is needed in order to support their conservation and custodianship by conservationists in the field and by policy makers.

RESOLVED:

We call on WILD9 to:

CALL ON National governments to adopt a specific regulatory framework, law and policy for recognition and conservation of Sacred Natural Sites and implement the IUCN UNESCO WCPA Best Practice Series 16: Sacred Natural Sites, Guidelines for Protected Area Managers;

URGE National Protected Area Agencies and other national government agencies to recognize sacred natural sites, pilgrim trails and to assist with their protection by conducting a national inventory of Sacred Natural Sites in order to recognize and facilitate the rights and interests of their custodians in development and planning exercises;

CALL FOR increased scientific and anthropological research into the complex relationship between biological diversity, cultural diversity and sacred natural sites;

ENCOURAGES additional investment in public education and international networks dedicated to the conservation and protection of sacred natural sites;

ENCOURAGE indigenous communities, policy makers and conservationists to open their hearts in an attitude of “*Concordia*”, - *with heart* - in order to promote and participate on the efforts to protect Natural Sacred Sites.

PROPOSER:

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