

Take a Scientist to the Sauna!

A Great Way to Keep Science and Stewardship Working Together for Another 50 Years

ALAN E. WATSON AND H. KEN CORDELL

At a workshop in Oulanka National Park in Finland, shortly after the Finnish Wilderness Act had passed in 1991, managers and scientists wrestled with how to incorporate science into protection of wildlands of northern Finland. One working group was assigned to develop a list of “why managers don’t apply the information scientists provide” and another group worked up an impressive list of “why scientists don’t produce the information managers need.” A third group was assigned the task of explaining why “sometimes scientific information is valuable, even if it has no immediate management application.”

From this session, it became clear that there was little previously shared knowledge about differences in organization process (organization hierarchies are different, and scientists and managers do different things to identify priorities and move up in their hierarchies), evaluation procedures are different (scientists are often evaluated by a panel of scientists on scientific contribution, managers by their immediate supervisors on accomplishment of management tasks), and even some lack of trust across these boundaries (if I don’t understand your motivation or how you are evaluated, your science must be aimed at someone else; if I don’t understand your motivation or how you are evaluated, your management decisions probably don’t consider the science). In the end everyone shared from new understanding of each other. And, in typical Finnish tradition, the most promising solution that came to the top of proposals was that managers more often take the opportunity to invite scientists to the sauna, a holy place in Finnish culture, where the participants take time to think, talk, reflect, build trust, and cleanse themselves and relationships.

This issue of the *International Journal of Wilderness* isn’t exactly a good substitute for all of us sharing time

in the sauna, but it is aimed at giving scientists an opportunity to share with managers and other scientists their understanding of what has driven the science intended to help managers with their decisions during the past 50 years. For instance, David Cole, scientist emeritus of the Aldo Leopold Wilderness Research Institute, in telling his story of wilderness science over time suggests that it has contributed most in the areas of recreation and fire management, but it has lost some of the focus and collaborative spirit that existed in its first couple decades. Reestablishing that focus and collaborative spirit may be very important to wilderness protection. Alan Watson and Ken Cordell strongly attribute changes in wilderness social science to changes in the questions asked by managers due to changes in society, technology, and public use patterns. All of these things will certainly continue to change into the future. In this issue, Carol Miller also explains how a history of natural fire management contributed a great deal of knowledge to wilderness fire science and the social science surrounding public response to natural fire programs. And through Mike Bowker and others’ explanation of the development of wilderness economics, we may also develop new appreciation for the many components of wilderness that the public values, and that is maybe more important than the total value estimate itself.

Wilderness as we know it is often thought of as an American ideal. Scientists from the UK, the United States, the Czech Republic, and Canada, in this issue, however, suggest that in Europe there is the perception that the wilderness idea is really attributable to European influences on our society, and now they are ready to reimport the concept to the European landscape. They readily acknowledge the many benefits afforded by the long history of wilderness

Continued on page 13

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Continued from TAKE A SCIENTIST TO THE SAUNA!, page 3

research in the United States and other countries.

This issue could not include a complete review of all wilderness research. The executive editors – and the readers – of *IJW*, however, would welcome additional reviews of relevant research on wilderness issues at this, an important watershed moment in wilderness history: the 50th anniversary of the U.S. Wilderness Act. The history, debate, and future of wilderness restoration pur-

pose and methods could be reviewed; the role of wildlife in wilderness is an important topic; the role of wilderness in off-site water benefits; and how the public has responded to both management-ignited fire in wilderness and restoration of natural fire are all important topics not covered as well as they could be in these short, applied articles. We hope the readership will like the summaries provided and be inspired to contribute further to current efforts to strategically plan

the direction for the next 50 years of wilderness science and stewardship.

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