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Q&A About WILD9 August 2009

o What is WILD9 and how is it unique?

WILD9 is the 9th World Wilderness Congress (WWC). Launched by The WILD Foundation in 1977, the WWC is the longest-running, public, international environmental forum. With over 30 years of conservation achievements, the WWC has become a high-profile global platform for debate, planning and action on wilderness-related issues.

The Congress brings together senior-level participants from governments, the private sector, non-governmental organizations, science, academia, native peoples and the arts, purposefully integrating a diverse range of views and dialogue on protecting and managing critical, wild lands and seas. It is unique in its longevity, conservation achievements, and encouragement of public participation in a week of learning, discussion, cultural programs and eco-tourism opportunities.

The Congress convenes every three to four years, having been held 8 times in 5 continents: South Africa (1977, 2001), Australia (1980), Scotland (1983), USA (1987, 2005), Norway (1993), and India (1998). WILD9 represents the first time the Congress is held in Latin America.

Each WWC is carefully designed to generate practical conservation outcomes. Planning and follow up span at least three years prior and after the event, during which committees representing a range of interests and perspectives work on agendas, objectives and targets aimed at protecting wild nature— wilderness, wetlands, wildlife, and clean and healthy seas. The WWC is a platform to stimulate dialogue and informed action on the common agenda of wilderness protection for the well-being of human society.

In addition to addressing high-level policy issues, the WWC showcases international scientific, corporate and artistic perspectives on wilderness, and emphasizes participation by native peoples, who have been the traditional stewards of our wilderness. Of no less importance, congresses incorporate a strong commitment to cultural aspects as part of the conservation solution, and offer diversity, fun and excitement. See www.wild9.org for more information.



www.wild9.org
6-13 November 2009
Merida – Mexico -



○ Why is the event a “congress” rather than a “conference?”

WILD9 is more than a “conference.” It is a several year conservation program, involving many partners worldwide and a diverse range of projects, outcomes and practical achievements for wilderness.

○ What is the format and schedule of WILD9?

In addition to numerous eco-tourism outings, pre-Congress sessions start in Merida on November 1 with Wilderness Management Training for select professionals. The Global Government Forum will be held Nov. 4 and 5, enabling government agencies to network with other protected area managers from around the world and participate in structured workshops and breakout sessions.

On November 6, WILD9 kicks off with a two-day Global Wilderness Forum of presentations from a host of notable speakers, followed by five days of Working Sessions.

WILD9 will host the inaugural WiLD SPEAK, a Conservation Communications Symposium, held Nov. 9-12, in which nature photographers, writers and filmmakers will exhibit their work and discuss their role in raising awareness and realizing conservation objectives. The largest gathering of conservation photographers ever will be participating in WiLD SPEAK.

WILD9 also includes a Scientific Symposium, a Youth/Young Professionals program, a meeting of the Native Lands and Wilderness Council, evening events, entertainment, tours, expeditions and an exhibitor area which will include 4 premier photographic galleries with curated exhibits.

Who are the organizers of WILD9?

WILD9 is a collaborative program of The WILD Foundation and Unidos para la Conservación, and relies on the support and participation of a great many partner organizations, agencies and others.

Founded in 1974, The WILD Foundation (<http://www.wild.org>) is the only international organization dedicated entirely and explicitly to wilderness protection around the world. WILD believes that intact wilderness areas are an essential core element of a healthy modern society.

Founded in 1992, Unidos para la Conservación (<http://www.unidosparalaconservacion.org>) is a nonprofit Mexican conservation organization that has actively promoted the concept of wilderness conservation in Mexico. Its working strategy combines the establishment of alliances with government, non-profit and corporate partners with the promotion of a conservation culture through publications and films in a search of conservation solutions through specific action.

Who will be speaking/presenting at WILD9?

World renowned politicians, economists, conservationists, academia, photographers, religious and spiritual figures, traditional/native peoples, business leaders, artists and the general public will be attending and presenting at WILD9.



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What is “Wilderness”?

“Wilderness” definitions can vary in cultural, scientific and legal contexts, and by country. The WILD Foundation defines wilderness areas as the most intact, undisturbed wild natural areas left on our planet that humans do not control and have not developed with roads, pipelines or other industrial infrastructure.

A wilderness area can have two dimensions:

A place that is mostly **biologically intact**, meaning that ecological and biological systems are functioning in a near or at “natural” condition, not having been impacted significantly by human activity, and;

A place that is **legally protected** so that it remains wild, and free of industrial infrastructure, and open to traditional indigenous use, or low impact recreation.

A wilderness area is not necessarily a place that is biologically “pristine” or free of human habitation. Very few places on earth are not in some way impacted by humans and many indigenous populations live in wild areas around the world, often playing a key role in keeping wilderness intact and free of development. Rather, the key is that a wilderness area be mainly biologically intact, and scientists have conducted several global inventories of wilderness areas. Oceans also comprise critical wilderness areas. See www.wild.org for more info.

Why protect wilderness areas?

The acceleration of human development across our planet precipitates an urgent need to protect wilderness areas for a broad range of biological, social, economic, spiritual and recreational benefits - they also often have powerful iconic value, holding great significance as spectacular, awe inspiring places.

Protecting wilderness results in protecting:

- Biodiversity -- the sum total of life: that wealth of species, ecosystems, and ecological processes that makes our living planet healthy and life sustaining.
- Watersheds – healthy rivers and streams; fresh water
- Clean air – the air we breath and vistas we enjoy
- Refuge, recreation, spirituality -- wild, quiet, protected havens of nature
- Science – living laboratories for medicinal, geological, ecological and other scientific research.
- Oceans – healthy oceans and marine ecosystems which are critical to human wellbeing.

○ ***How are “oceans” considered wilderness?***

The concept of “Marine Wilderness” was launched in 1987 at the 4th World Wilderness Congress. Since then the idea has been advanced by NGOs and numerous agencies such as NOAA, however, as of yet, there is no consistent definition or legal designation, the closest analog (used by U.S. agencies) being “Marine Sanctuary” with “no-take” zones. There are water/marine wilderness areas that are zoned into existing protected areas, mostly adjacent to terrestrial/coastal protected areas, which are administratively declared, but not legislated.

○ *Why is this year's Congress being held in Mexico?*

For the first time, the WWC will be held in Latin America, in the culturally rich, colonial city of Merida, capital of Mexico's Yucatan state. Mexican President Felipe Calderon's commitment to the environment, eagerness to host the Congress, and his country's rich biodiversity and ecologically significant land and seascapes, drove the decision to hold WILD9 in Mexico. Organizers believe Merida is an ideal host city, being safe, charming and friendly, and in the heart of the Yucatan where the great Mayan civilization flourished until its collapse widely attributed to poor management of natural resources. The International League of Conservation Photographers will present at WILD9 the results of its Yucatan RAVE (Rapid Assessment Visual Expedition), conducted by a multi-disciplinary team of conservationists and artists in the preceding months. The RAVE will document and illustrate the fauna and flora of the Yucatan and threats to its ecosystems.

○ *Is Mexico committed to protecting wilderness?*

The concept of wilderness, *tierras silvestres*, is a new and growing component of biodiversity conservation in Mexico and Latin America. Convening WILD9 in Mexico is hoped to result in more concrete action in identifying and protecting wilderness areas in the region. At WILD8 in 2005, Ernesto Enkerlin (President of CONANP, National Commission for Protected Areas in Mexico) announced that "wilderness" would be a new official category within Mexico's protected areas framework. At the same WWC, CEMEX corporation announced the designation of the El Carmen Wilderness Area on critical biodiversity habitat owned by the corporation in northern Mexico. A management plan was developed with CEMEX partners Sierra Madre, Conservation International, Birdlife, The WILD Foundation and others.

In what way are Mexicans involved in WILD9?

WILD9's Advisory Board includes nationally and internationally renowned Mexican professionals from multiple sectors including government, conservation, corporations, research, the arts, philanthropy and indigenous communities. The board members provide guidance to the Executive Committee in charge of shaping the program structure and defining its themes and content with an emphasis on highlighting issues relevant to the host country and region. The commitment of the members of the WILD9 Advisory Board is key to the Congress's success and goal of being a collaborative effort between many groups, with special focus on the region where the Congress is held.

In this same philosophy, WILD9's program will include a wide range of presentations on conservation initiatives and achievements in Mexico and the Yucatan region.

○ How much will WILD9 contribute financially to Mexico?

With approximately 1,500 delegates participating in the WWC, the host country receives an economic impact ascertained by experts in the range of USD \$15-\$25 million, from Congress planning and participation and associated tourism.

The WWC offers a wide range of professional opportunities (training, publishing, translation, best practices, etc.) and members of the host country government, private corporations and civil society are best positioned to capitalize on these opportunities.

Because of the unique, global reputation earned by the WWC over the last 30 years and rigorous selection process of the host country, Mexico joins a singular group of nations known for their forward-thinking approach to protected-area management and well-being of their citizens.

○ Is it dangerous to travel to Mexico now with the H1N1 (swine flu) threat?

All recent surveys and reports show that there is no undue cause for alarm to travel in Mexico. The reports confirm that while “swine flu” is clearly a virus that can spread widely, it is not currently prevalent in SE Mexico, and its worst effects are generally not as drastic as are those caused by the normal, annual flu cycle.

○ What is the principal theme of WILD9?

WILD9’s central theme, Wilderness and Climate Change, underscores the critical role of wilderness as carbon sinks absorbing CO₂ emissions, and as a key component of global strategy to mitigate and adapt to climate change. Scientific research has shown clearly that protecting primary ecosystems such as forests, wetlands, and peatlands keeps their carbon stocks intact and avoids emissions from deforestation and degradation. Deforestation contributes a whopping 25% of carbon emissions, more than all the cars, planes, busses and trains combined. Protecting wilderness and the carbon it stores is a very common sense approach to solving a big part of the climate problem. It’s fast, inexpensive, doesn’t require sophisticated technology, and of course, it has all the benefits associated with conservation such as clean water, clean air, and biodiversity protection.

Wilderness areas are particularly resilient, resisting the effects of climate change, giving biodiversity a better chance to adapt to and survive global warming, and providing a natural buffer to the effects of climate change, such as extreme weather patterns. The phrase “Wilderness, The Climate’s Best Ally” sums it up.

The role of wilderness in preventing climate change is not receiving nearly the attention from the international community that it needs to and WILD9 aims to raise this awareness and ensure its inclusion in international policy.

○ What are other important issues that will be discussed at WILD9?

- Ecosystem Services provided by wild nature which support human communities and all life on earth.
- Corporate models that sustain wilderness and biodiversity.
- Financial mechanisms to protect wilderness such as REDD and payment for ecosystem services.
- Wilderness vis-à-vis the Convention for Biodiversity and the UNFCCC.
- Agriculture – People, Food & Wilderness. How are we going to feed an expanding population without destroying wilderness areas and their ecosystems?
- Oceans – the 4th WWC in 1987 pioneered the concept of oceanic and marine wilderness. As our oceans become increasingly overfished and destroyed by climate change and other human activity, their protection is paramount.
- Freshwater, fire, transboundary and connectivity issues, human communities in transition.
- Traditional knowledge and management of ancestral wildlands.

- What are the challenges that the WWC faces to defend and conserve ecosystems, environment, flora and fauna?

Core issues such as greed, poverty and population growth have been with us a very long time, and are at the center of many environmental issues that face us today. The WWC espouses addressing and analyzing these issues along with their consequences such as deforestation, pollution and over-fishing.

Through presenting and integrating diverse perspectives and interests, the WWC agenda recognizes accomplishments when justified, calls for change where needed, and provides solutions where possible. The WWC of course won't change core issues in a flash, but by showing how it is possible to address complex environmental issues successfully through positive and collaborative debate, best-practice models, and solutions, we can move the world forward in this regard.

- Why is the private sector involved in WILD9?

Increasingly corporations understand that protecting wilderness is of great social value and furthers their goals of social responsibility. Some of the world's leading companies will be participating in WILD9 to share initiatives they have taken to ensure sustainable practices and protect wilderness.

- What is WiLD SPEAK?

WiLD Speak is a Conservation Communications Symposium being held over the course of WILD9 and organized by iLCP, the International League of Conservation Photographers. During the largest gathering of conservation photographers ever, world-renowned photographers such as Art Wolfe, Jim Balog, Frans Lanting and Brian Skerry will show and discuss their work and the role of art to document nature and realize conservation action. WiLD SPEAK will also comprise a writers workshop, and Wildscreen, a tour of conservation-themed films in several Mexican cities, ending with a grand finale in Merida during WILD9. See www.ilcp.com.

- What is the Yucatan RAVE?

The iLCP initiative RAVE (Rapid Assessment Visual Expedition) conducts visual and media assessments of conservation issues and threats in a very short period of time to create a comprehensive portrait of an area. RAVEs comprise multi-disciplinary teams of specialized iLCP photographers (landscape, wildlife, macro, camera trapping, portraiture), writers and videographers. Conducted during the months prior to the Congress, the Yucatan RAVE will focus on documenting the threats posed by deforestation, tourism, and forest fires on existing protected areas, important unprotected areas (i.e. corridors) and specific flagship species (i.e. Jaguar) throughout the Yucatan. The results will be presented at WILD9. See www.ilcp.com.

- What are some of the concrete conservation objectives realized by WWC?

- Developing the concept of a "World Conservation Bank," leading directly to the creation of the World Bank's Global Environmental Facility (GEF), which has provided \$12 billion for biodiversity and sustainability;

- Prompting the first private sector wilderness area in Africa and first wilderness designation in Latin America (northern Mexico);
- Conducting the first global inventory of wilderness and wild rivers;
- Including “wilderness” as a distinct classification of international protected areas under the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) framework;
- Establishing the International League of Conservation Photographers (iLCP).

A more complete list of accomplishments is at
www.wild.org/main/world-wilderness-congress/

Objectives already are being worked on for WILD9, including international agreements regarding wilderness policy and new protected areas.

- What do you expect WILD9 to achieve?
 - For wilderness to encompass a more recognized role in the global strategy to combat climate change
 - The first international agreement on the necessity of wilderness protection
 - A Corporate Commitment to Wilderness by numerous multinational corporations
 - New protected areas

And more!

- What are the challenges that the WWC faces to defend and conserve ecosystems, environment, flora and fauna?

Core issues such as greed, resource consumption per capita, poverty and population growth have been with us a very long time, and are at the center of many environmental issues facing us today. The WWC espouses addressing and analyzing these issues along with their consequences such as deforestation, pollution and overfishing.

Through presenting and integrating diverse perspectives and interests, the WWC agenda recognizes accomplishments when justified, calls for change where needed, and provides solutions where possible. The WWC won't change core issues in a flash, but by showing how it is possible to address complex environmental issues successfully through constructive debate, best-practice models, and solutions, we can move the world forward in this regard.

- Where and when will WILD10 be held?

The location and date of each WWC is determined by global trends, conservation hotspots and input from international advisors. After potential host countries and organizations make requests, site evaluation trips are conducted, partnerships are established, and a host locale is selected. Numerous possibilities are under discussion for WILD10, but no decision has been made, as is normal at this point in convening the current WWC.

- What is the role of the U.S. Federal agencies in WILD9?

The 9th WWC has a significant focus on the North American region – Canada, United States, and Mexico – as the first three major countries in the world with adjoining borders that have a legislated national wilderness category of protected area, once Mexico announces its law at WILD9.

The U.S. federal land management agencies – USDA Forest Service and USDI National Parks Service, Fish and Wildlife Service, and Bureau of Land Management, are key participants in the International Government Advisory Board for WILD9, responsible for significant parts of program planning including:

North American Governmental Advisory Board – This board is comprised of the four federal land management agencies that oversee the National Wilderness Preservation System in the United States, plus CONANP in Mexico, and Parks Canada. It is responsible for promulgating the North American Statement of Mutual Understanding (to be possibly renamed the Memorandum of Understanding) on Wilderness, to be signed using the public platform of WILD9.

Working Groups – The Intergovernmental Working Group on WILD9 was formed in 2008, and joins U.S. agencies with their Mexican and Canadian counterparts, as well as other interested government agencies in the U.S. and around the world. In 2009 it was deemed practical to split the Group into six topical Working Groups: Valuing Ecosystem Services; Marine Wilderness; Public-Private Partnerships; Recreation & Visitor Experience; Fire; and Wildlife. The Working Groups are participating in the organization of workshops on these topics during WILD9, and also advise on plenary planning as appropriate.

Plenary Program – In Working Group capacity and otherwise, U.S. government officials are either participating on the plenary platform or are advising WILD on:

- Global Wilderness Forum for Government Agencies – Undertaken by a Forum Planning Committee with representatives of the four U.S. federal land management agencies plus CONANP and Parks Canada, the planning of the Forum is intended to recruit and engage the largest participation of government officials from around the world in a two-day session (field trip and working session) to take place two days prior to the start of WILD9. The Forum theme relates to climate change and its implication for government managers of wilderness, with eight topics to be discussed in tandem.
- Wilderness Management Training – Agency personnel are cooperating with international trainers to conduct a three-day certificate course for international delegates in wilderness management, to be held in Mexico prior to WILD9.