



Estes Park Declaration

We, the 314 participants and Ranger Associations gathered in Estes Park, Colorado, in the 8th World Ranger Congress, May 2016, and representing rangers* from 62 countries on six continents,

Consider:

1. That the welfare of the human community is sustained by protected areas,[†] including other areas of natural and cultural heritage value, and the rangers and community partners that research, conserve and preserve critical natural processes, the cultural history of humankind, and help protect life on earth;
2. That rangers serving in protected areas are and should be key ambassadors to and with local and world communities, representing the importance of truthful interpretation and education about these areas;
3. That too often government support for rangers is lacking or inadequate in relation to the importance of the work rangers do;
4. That rangers should be recognized and considered as professionals in their sphere of work and be supported by their communities and governments by providing and supporting education, adequate training and remuneration; and
5. That Ranger Associations and individual rangers, both collectively through IRF and individually, are developing the capacity to be recognized by all as an essential profession for society to embrace, being equal to other unassailable professions in the human community;

* The IRF defines a Ranger as “the person involved in the practical protection and preservation of all aspects of wild areas, historical and cultural sites. Rangers provide recreational opportunities and interpretation of sites while providing links between local communities, protected areas and area administration.”

[†] Hereinafter, when used, the term “protected area” will be used as defined by the IUCN (1994) as “an area of land and/or sea especially dedicated to the protection and maintenance of biological diversity, and of natural and associated cultural resources, and managed through legal or other effective means.”

We, the Ranger Associations represented in the IRF, therefore resolve:

1. To assume the responsibility to help develop a clearly defined ranger career growth and action plan appropriate for each country, to be supported by adequate and accredited training, that will help lead to the recognition of the ranger profession by governments and communities as a necessary function for society to embrace;
2. To act as facilitators and enablers in partnership with local communities and others to invite and encourage shared protection of local natural resources and environments, recognizing that conservation is not only an environmental issue but a human survival and quality of life issue;
3. To share our principles, professionalism and declarations through respectful engagement with our communities and governments, realizing that while such communications may include many forms such as electronic and written documents, that continued personal invitations and connections with our communities and stakeholders is more lasting and sustainable;
4. To continually strive towards community and governmental trust and support by maintaining public transparency in our objectives, management and actions;
5. To express our on-going concern about the inadequate health and safety, remuneration, and other professional human life issues that continue to burden rangers and their families in many countries, including access to transparent and professional legal assistance; and
6. To document and share with the International Executive Committee, through the regional representatives, the actions taken and the progress made in these endeavors.

We, the International Executive Committee (IEC), therefore resolve:

1. To monitor the achievable goals for the IRF as presented in plenary session by the President, and report annually on their progress until the next World Ranger Congress;
2. To work actively with Ranger Associations in furthering their work;
3. To assist them in gaining support from their governments or employers as practicable;
4. To regularly share examples of challenges and progress through the IRF website, email to member associations, and other means of transparent sharing, including presentations at the 9th World Ranger Congress;
5. To consider re-establishing the International Ranger Federation Consultancy, or a similar entity, as a ranger training arm of IRF to provide for and/or conduct training under cooperative agreement and coordination with regional training centers;

6. To remain acutely aware of environmental crimes that significantly impact protected areas and their resources, and provide any support or advice possible, ideally through regional representatives, to those rangers entrusted with the investigation; and
7. To have an IRF presence at all relevant forums, in person if possible, specifically to include active involvement in developing the following motions applicable to rangers and the IRF for the 2016 IUCN World Conservation Congress in Hawai'i:

Motions for hearing in plenary session

- 026 Protected areas and biodiversity
- 065 Improving standards in ecotourism

Motions for discussion and voting on-line prior to Congress (by 26 June)

- 032 Establishment, recognition and regulation of park rangers' careers
- 042 Protected areas as natural solutions
- 089 Humanity's right to a healthy environment
- 092 Environmental education to connect young people to nature
- 093 Connecting people with nature globally

In conclusion:

We, the IRF, reaffirm our Climate Change Proclamation issued November 2009 at Santa Cruz, Bolivia, that climate change presents an imminent and serious global threat to human life, natural, cultural and physical heritage, and the protected areas we safeguard. We urge the governments of the world, who negotiated the 2015 Paris Agreement on Climate Change to swiftly take the next steps to ratify, approve and implement the agreement.