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Visual Resource Stewardship Conference

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### Visual Resource Stewardship Conference: Seeking 20/20 Vision for Landscape Futures Proceedings 2019

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# VISUAL RESOURCE STEWARDSHIP CONFERENCE: SEEKING 20/20 VISION FOR LANDSCAPE FUTURES PROCEEDINGS 2019

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Figure 1: Conference attendees

## PROCEEDINGS INTRODUCTION

At the National Association of Environmental Professionals (NAEP) meeting in In 2012 (Portland, Oregon), a number of key active visual resource professionals and academics together organized a track in Visual Resource Management as a major part of the conference. This group also presented a one-day preconference short course, which was attended by about 100 attendees. This was the largest gathering of visual resource management practitioners since the 1979 *Our National Landscape Conference* at Lake Tahoe Nevada (Elsner & Smardon, 1979). After the 2012 NAEP meeting, the same organizing group started monthly conference calls and followed up with visual resource presentation tracks organized for the 2013, 2014 and 2015 NAEP meetings. But there were fewer visual resource presentations and the content had to compete with the many other tracks within the NAEP meetings.

In early 2016 the visual working group decided that they needed a conference totally dedicated to visual resource stewardship was warranted. Robert Sullivan at Argonne National Laboratory, engaged in visual resource assessment methodology work for the USDI Bureau of Land Management, volunteered to host a conference at Argonne. The conference organizing committee worked for over a year to produce the program for this conference. The 2-1/2 day

Visual Resource Stewardship Conference took place in October 2017. The major sponsors were the USDI Bureau of Land Management, The USDA Forest Service, the USDI National Park Service, and SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry. In addition to the plenary speakers, technical papers and visual case studies, the conference program included guided discussion sessions, which had specific agendas and workshop like formats. Many of the technical sessions were focused on renewable energy development and western landscape management. The proceeding of the conference was published in 2019 as a USDA Forest Service General Technical publication, Gen. Tech. Rep. NRS-P-183 (Gobster and Smardon 2018).

Because the proceedings took a while to produce and the lead-time for organizing such a conference was formidable, the visual resource working group decided that it we could not produce a 2018 conference. They decided on a fall 2019 conference. Robin Hoffman and Richard Smardon from the SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry in Syracuse NY volunteered to be program co-chairs and Bob Sullivan agreed to host on site preparations at Argonne National Laboratory in Lemont, Illinois. Preparations began for planning the conference and the conference organizing committee came up with the five conference themes to recruit abstracts for presentations for the 2019 Conference.

1. Landscape scale and context;
2. Visual Resource benefits;
3. Visual analysis benefits;
4. Integrated visual resource planning and application; and
5. Skill building workshops

These themes were articulated in a call for abstracts. The organizing committee wanted to broaden the focus content to include non-western and urban landscape issues as well draw presenters from outside the United States. . Abstracts were reviewed as they were received; in some cases asked for revisions. Also early guidance for preparation of technical papers and visual case studies were sent out to avoid some of the problems encountered with some of the submissions for the 2017 conference proceedings.

The 2019 *Visual Resource Stewardship Conference: Seeking 20/20 Vision for Landscape Futures* was held in October 27-30, 2019 at the Argonne National Laboratory. Four technical training workshops were offered on the first day of the conference, which was the first time for that format. Seventy-five technical papers and visual case studies were presented over 2-1/2 days with single audience format in the mornings and concurrent sessions in the afternoons. Invited plenary speakers were Andrew Lothian from Australia and Martin “Mike” Pasqualetti from Arizona State University. Presenters were private practitioners, public agency landscape architects, and university faculty and students. The presenters were from the United States, Australia, United Kingdom, and New Zealand. The 2019 conference ended with a session devoted to the need to adequately train a future generation of visual resource practitioners, as this was recognized a was a major concerns of the planning committee while organizing the 2019 conference.

The 2019 conference end session began with an overview that included three objectives for the session, a summary of the literature about the need for formal education in visualization, and the process for the session. The three objectives were stated as:

1. the need for an educational program focused on visual resource stewardship,

2. the potential for this program to build capacity for professionals educated in visual resource stewardship and assessment, and
3. the ask of attendees to identify key components for such an educational program. Session attendees gathered in groups of five to seven people.

Groups were instructed to compile their ideas for curriculum content and teaching resources, (i.e., instructors, readings, etc.), in a program dedicated to the education of visual resource practitioners. Groups were provided with flip charts and markers to facilitate their conversation and record their ideas. The groups brainstormed ideas for 25 minutes. All attendees reconvened and a member of each group reported a summary of the group's ideas. A brief selection of ideas for content includes:

- cultural and historical significance,
- legal framework (ethics and litigation),
- visual impact assessment and methods,
- mitigation and BMPs,
- public involvement and advocacy.

Ideas for teaching resources includes:

- visual assessment methods developed by federal agencies (USFS, BLM and NPS),
- writings by leaders in visual resource stewardship (Litton, Daniels, Crowe), and
- on-line content to provide flexible scheduling.

Following the conference an on-line survey was sent to all attendees. Survey questions asked attendees for feedback on conference facilities, session content, and their input for speakers and content to be included in future conferences. This information has been shared with the 2021 conference planning committee.

## REFERENCES

Elsner G and R Smardon (tech coor) 1979: *Our National Landscape: A conference on applied techniques for the analysis and management of visual resource* (Incline Village Nevada April 23-25 1979) GTR PSW 35 US Forest Service Pacific SW Forest and Range Exp. Stn, Berkeley CA [online]<https://www.fs.usda.gov/treearch/pubs/27530>

Gobster P and R Smardon (eds) 2018. *Visual Resource Stewardship Conference: Landscape and Seascape in a Time of Change*. General Technical Report-NRS-P-183 US Forest Service Northern Research Station [on line] <https://doi.org/10.2737/NRS-GTR-P-183>

## BIOS OF KEY PARTICIPANTS IN 2019 CONFERENCE ORGANIZING COMMITTEE

**Chris Bockey** is an Environmental Planner - Visual Resource Specialist with SWCA Environmental Consultants. Chris has over a decade of experience. His areas of expertise include the inventory and analysis of visual and historic resources, as well as public and private land resource impacts associated with large-scale energy infrastructure and mineral extraction projects. Chris has worked extensively with the Bureau of Land Management to develop and complete 26 visual resource inventories for various field offices, resource areas, and national monuments. These inventories covered more than 170 million acres across Arizona, Colorado, Idaho, Montana, New Mexico, Oregon, Utah, and the Dakotas. His broad experience gives him a

unique understanding of the complex and dynamic landscapes throughout the intermountain west. He has a B.S. in Landscape Architecture from Arizona State University.

**Brent Chamberlain** is an Assistant Professor at Utah State University. His research and teaching combines elements of environmental planning, geo-visualization, GIS and environmental psychology to facilitate long-term planning and fundamental research on human-environment relationships. Brent's research has been funded by the National Science Foundation, US Army Social and Behavioral Sciences, and the Administration for Community Living. He is deeply passionate about ensuring that future generations get to experience beautiful landscapes and cities that promote health and welfare through ecologically grounded and value-based design. He has degrees from Pacific Lutheran University including a Bachelors of Computer Science and Bachelors of Business Administration and from the University of British Columbia an M.Sc. and Ph.D. Forestry; Postdoc in Computational Sustainability

**Lynn Crump**, PLA, ASLA is a registered Landscape Architect with a BLA and an MLA from Virginia Tech and has been practicing landscape architecture for over 30 years. Working for the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation, she is the Scenic Resource Coordinator for Virginia, administering the VA Scenic Rivers Program, working with the Virginia Department of Transportation on the Virginia Byways program and with Scenic Virginia on the newly developing Viewshed Register. Her experience covers a variety of landscape scales from detailed garden design to the statewide Virginia Outdoors Plan. She has been president of the Virginia Chapter of the American Society of Landscape Architects (ASLA) and has served on several national ASLA boards and committees.

**Paul H. Gobster** is Research Landscape Architect with the US Forest Service's Northern Research Station in Chicago. His work in visual resource stewardship includes applied studies on the visual compatibility of lakeshore development, perceptions of timber harvesting alternatives for national forest landscape management, and visual expressions of care in vacant lot stewardship; and other scholarly contributions in ecological aesthetics, urban natural areas restoration, and themes and trends in visual assessment research. Paul has degrees in regional planning, landscape architecture, and environmental studies from the University of Wisconsin. He has an adjunct lecturer appointment in the Environmental Policy and Culture program at Northwestern University and is a Fellow of the American Society of Landscape Architects.

**Robin Hoffman** is an associate professor in the Department of Landscape Architecture at the SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry. She has BS and BLA degrees from SUNY/ESF, and MLA Degree from the University of Illinois and a PhD degree from SUNY/ESF. She teaches courses in design, site construction and professional practice. She has done landscape research in the development of educational materials illustrating relationship between visual qualities, wildlife habitat, and silviculture systems as well as highway ROW visual analysis and management. She is a registered landscape architect in NYS and has worked with several private landscape architecture firms. She is heavily involved with Thousand Islands Land Trust in northern NY along the St. Lawrence River.

**John McCarty** works in the federal sector as a national level landscape architect. Mr. McCarty's responsibility with the USDI Bureau of Land Management includes; the development and

oversight of landscape management policy for visual scenic resources, designation of backcountry byways, and implementation of sustainable landscape architectural design principles for the built environment. He is also coordinates and instructs visual /scenic resource management and provides guidance regarding recreation planning, renewable energy development /transmission, transportation and land use planning. He holds a BLA from Colorado State University and has worked in the private sector before coming to the federal government.

**Mark Meyer** is a landscape architect with over 37-years of experience in land use planning, site design, and environmental planning. Prior to joining the Park Service in 2012 his experience included visual impact assessments for pipelines and transportation projects as well as visual inventories of BLM land. Currently he is developing a program to provide service-wide consistency in the management of NPS visual resources and provides technical assistance to parks to address potential impacts to views. He holds a B.S. in Design and Master of Natural Sciences from Arizona State University

**James Palmer** is Senior Landscape Architect at T. J. Boyle Associates, and Professor Emeritus of the State University of New York's College of Environmental Science and Forestry. He has been involved in landscape perception research for 45 years. Currently he is working on ways to evaluate and increase the validity and reliability of visual impact assessments.

**Melanie Peters** is a Natural Resource Specialist with the National Park Service, Air Resources Division. Melanie's background is in environmental science and geographic information science but she has spent most of the past nine years working in a communication role and spreading the word about the importance of clean air and clear views for national parks. Melanie has been part of the NPS visual resources team since 2014 and has trained NPS staff to conduct visual resources inventories from Denali National Park to Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area.

**Richard (Rick) Smardon** is a SUNY Distinguished Service Professor Emeritus at the State University of New York where has taught and done research for 36.5 years in environmental studies, environmental science as well as landscape architecture. He holds a PhD in Environmental Planning from the University of California Berkeley, and an MLA and BS in environmental design from the University of Massachusetts, Amherst. He has written or co-written seven books including the national award winning book *The Renewable Energy Landscape: Preserving Scenic values in our sustainable future* published by Routledge in 2017. He maintains a web site for visual impact assessment materials at <http://www.esf.edu/via>

**Bob Sullivan** is a Visual Resource Scientist in the Environmental Science Division at Argonne National Laboratory. Bob is currently working on developing visual impact assessment methods for the National Park Service, Bureau of Ocean Energy Management, and the Forest Service. He is also revising guidance for the BLM on visual impact mitigation for renewable energy projects, and developing guidance for mitigating impacts of artificial lighting at night.