

Evaluation Results for the
“In the Footsteps of Leopold Conference”

Held September 5-7th 2009, Nutrioso, AZ

The on-site evaluation of the conference was done in a number of ways. As you recall we collected evaluation forms from you at the Luna Lake Campsite on Monday morning after the conference was completed. . We also asked a observers to report back on their impressions of the individual sessions.

Unfortunately we didn't get as many surveys back from participants as we had hoped. In retrospect waiting until Monday morning to hand out and collect the surveys was probably a mistake. Many people left the campsite early and a number of people who did attend didn't stay overnight at the campground. Only about a quarter of those that participated in the event completed evaluation forms. Despite the low response rate we did learn some important information.

One of the first things we asked about was your impressions of each of the sessions with choices ranging from “Best Part” (which could be used for only one of the sessions) and “Loved it” on the positive side; to “Could have been better” and “Had a bad time” (no one said this about any of the sessions) on the negative side. “Liked it” made up the middle choice. Overall people were positive about all of the sessions (see table below). For every session except Sunday morning, a majority of people said that the session was either the “Best part “or that they “Loved it”. There were negative reactions to only two of the sessions, Saturday morning and Sunday morning and even these had relatively few negative ratings.

Perceptions about sessions

	Saturday am: Contributions of Aldo Leopold	Saturday afternoon outing	Saturday evening: Fierce Green Fire Returns	Sunday am: The Work Yet to be Done	Sunday afternoon outing	Sunday evening: Wilderness in the Southwest	Sunday evening: Luna Lake Campfire
Best Part	16%	11%	17%	9%	24%	26%	23%
Loved it!	36%	44%	52%	35%	41%	47%	46%
Liked it	44%	44%	30%	48%	35%	21%	23%
Could have been better	4%			9%			

The open-ended responses about the program were generally positive (see complete list of responses at end of this document). In particular people were impressed with the quality of the presentations:

- Appreciated the breadth and depth presented about Leopold!
- Campfire talk more related to my field of expertise but all talks were great and insightful.
- The setting and program were great. Well planned and presented with great speakers.
- All talks were enjoyable and informative...
- Workshops presented by inspiring and knowledgeable presenters.

The Sunday evening campfire was singled out for praise by a number of participants:

- Loved the campfire...
- Don & Myron’s talk!! It was interesting to hear their life progressions towards becoming wilderness protectors and servants.
- ... The campfire talk was very moving especially Myron’s journey.

However two criticisms were mentioned a number of times. People were frustrated with the failure to stick to the schedule and as a result, the lack of time for questions from the audience. Comments such as:

- Consistently late starts and overlong speakers, especially Sunday morning, cut into field trips. Sunday evening was over-scheduled – less would have been fine.

- My main concern is that speakers went over their allotted time and sessions did not start on time.
- Not enough time for audience questions in general, except for evening sessions.

This same criticism was evident from our observer’s reports. In session after session the observers reported little or no discussion. One of the observer’s comments on the back of their “Event Observation Tool” summed up the sentiments of many: “Start on time. Have speakers agree to (and) stick to designated time slots. ... (went) over time allotted, ergo NO time for community involvement which kind of defeats the purpose.”

Another criticism that occasionally showed up was of the readings. As you recall we had individuals read selections from Leopold’s writing at the beginning of many of the sessions. While one person expressly said they liked the readings, there were two who were more critical of them:

- The reading(s) were too long.
- Lengthy readings in general I didn’t enjoy.

We also asked people about the conference facilities. Here again in general people were quite pleased. In particular almost two-thirds of the people “Loved” the purchased meals and the remaining third liked them. There were similar reactions to the snacks. Half of the respondents “Loved” the setting for the conference at the Nutrioso Schoolhouse and the Luna Lake Group campsite was also popular. The tabling area inside the Schoolhouse was less popular and two people indicated that they wished we had a place where they could have purchased Leopold books.

	Luna Lake Campground, Group Site	Purchased Meals	Breakfast snacks	Tabling Area	Nutrioso schoolhouse
Loved it!	41%	64%	58%	14%	50%
Liked it	53%	36%	35%	71%	38%
Could have been better	6%			14%	4%
Had a bad time			8%		8%

The open-ended questions provided some additional information about what people liked and disliked about accommodations. People liked the setting of the conference in the White Mountains:

- I am inspired to return to the White Mtns for more hiking.
- ...Awesome location!
- ...great field trips (despite weather)...

While people appreciated the setting, holding the conference outdoors presented a number of problems:

- Sitting outside was great but it was difficult to see the presentation. The screen would have been easier to see if it had been bigger.
- ...Couldn't see video (mainly PowerPoint presentations) outside – great idea, but didn't work and was disappointing
- Meeting outside was a bit stressful with the cold weather

The two main goals of the conference were to increase peoples' knowledge and to inspire them to take action. On both of these it seems like the conference was a success. In terms of increasing peoples' knowledge, on the evaluation forms we asked people to rank their knowledge on five specific areas both before the conference and after it was completed. People could choose one of three responses "know a lot," "know some" or "know a little". This approach seemed to confuse people. While overall there was an increase in knowledge on all of the topics (see below), people seemed confused by the approach we took and often commented that they didn't understand what we were asking. A couple of people reported knowing less at the end of the conference than they did going in. Whether this loss-of-knowledge was due to confusion caused by sessions, people realizing that they didn't know as much as they thought, or confusion over the instrument is not known. Not surprising the greatest increase in knowledge was in the category "The contributions of Aldo Leopold" where three-quarters of respondents reported increasing their knowledge.

Increase in knowledge after conference

Knowledge Area	Average increase in knowledge (out of max of 2)	Percent reporting increase in knowledge
The contributions of Aldo Leopold	.76	76%
Environmental conditions in the Southwest	.33	37%
Environmental policy in the Southwest	.36	44%
Grass roots environmental groups	.54	48%

How to impact public policy	.28	36%
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The open-ended responses give perhaps a better sense of what people learned:

- Came with little knowledge but a lot of interest. Absorbed a lot. Great speakers.
- I had heard some about Aldo Leopold before the conference, but now I have learned a ton and will read A Sand County Almanac from cover to cover!
- Learned a lot about Leopold.
- I learned a lot from this conference
- My favorite part was learning about local ecology, geography, biology.

There was no specific closed ended question about how inspired people were by the conference but we got a lot of feedback from the open-ended question. The comments fell into three main groups; inspired to take more action, inspired to learn more, and inspired to get out into the environment. About a third of the respondents mentioned being inspired to do things in two or more of these groups. Most often mentioned was to take action. Over half of the respondents said they would be taking specific actions ranging from organizing events, writing to political leaders, volunteering, and many more. These comments included:

- As an environmental educator, this opens up MANY possibilities! I'm working with Karen Meyer (producer-Lords of Nature) to develop a secondary guide to accompany this great film. Leopold will definitely be featured! I also intend to take time to make sure my voice is heard by policy makers.
- I came here to be inspired and to brainstorm on ideas for the APRA Open Space Conference. I now believe I have the tools to plan an awesome, informative, and inspiring conference!
- Spread the words of Leopold into Mexico.
- To write to people in local/regional/and national public offices.
- Become more political. Save wilderness for the future. Be more open regarding my support for the wilderness. ...
- Get a copy of the Saturday PM movie (Lords of Nature) for showing at other places.
- I have a better understanding how much the land is for all and will do my part in taking care of it and spreading the word.
- I will seek out some volunteer work that helps in our quest to further wilderness. I will pay more attention to the political process and try to support representatives and legislation that is 'eco-friendly.'
- Join a conservation group and/or put in volunteer hours, get some of these remarkable speakers to come to our area (White Mountains).
- Look wider for allies in general (thanks to Doug Scott), conservation efforts, persist in pressing for preservation (thanks to Michael Robinson)...
- More effort on translation of ideas to a broader audience in terms of their values.

- More volunteer work, more financial support to supporting organizations.
- Volunteer more, support wilderness effort financially.
- ...Going to make a career change and stay active.

A number of people were also inspired to learn more both about Leopold and other topics. Comments included:

- Learn more about the Southwestern issues (I am from PNW – visiting and touring SW.) Studying Leopold’s ideas and way he incorporated them into his local conservation work.
- Read more Leopold.
- Re-read Aldo’s writings and examine my own beliefs and philosophy, keep asking, “What would Aldo do?”
- Take more anthropology, to further appreciate the SW.
- Talk with my friends about Aldo, educate myself,
- Read more Leopold. Learn more about my local ecology.

Finally, a few people mentioned wanting to get out into the environment:

-come to White Mtns more often
- To do a huge backpacking/overnight trip.
- I am inspired to return to the White Mtns for more hiking.
-get out on the ground in wilderness more.

One of the expectations that we had was that participants would get exposed to, and perhaps join, some different environmental organizations. In fact only two of the respondents reported not belonging to any group. Of those that did report membership in an environmental group, the average number of groups they belonged was over 3. There were a total of 29 different groups mentioned. The most often cited groups were Audubon (national and local chapters) that was mentioned by almost a third of respondents; the Sierra Club, Nature Conservancy and Sky Island Alliance that were each mentioned by 20%-25% of respondents; and Wild Earth Guardians, New Mexico Wilderness Alliance and Defenders of Wildlife each being mentioned by over 15% of participants.

In reading over the responses to the open-ended questions, one common theme was that people enjoyed the mix of people activities perspectives etc. that the conference provided. While there was no specific question about this mix, some sample comments include:

- The diversity of participants (age, gender, geographic ‘point of origin’, presenters, groups represented). TERRIFIC! This kind of hybridization can only make our purpose and case (for decision makers) stronger.
- The hikes up Escudilla, talking with locals, throwing ideas around with like-minded people, and the camp fire talk with the wilderness rangers.
- Meeting friends and talking about conservation, Aldo, the land, and our common love for it all.

- The mix of talks, field trips, food, music and all the great people in attendance.
- As is often the case, it's a combination of the energy one gets from the presentations and the great networking opportunities.
- ...all these people getting together that love to do and talk about things I do. Love being outside really was worth remembering to know other people are out there with my same values and love.
- I liked the mix of topics-history, policy, ecology. Great!
- ...Intensive mix of people, both presenters and attendees.

Finally there were a number of comments thanking the organizers and expressing gratitude for the conference. These comments included:

- Enjoyed it – thank you for getting it together! Great job.
- The event itself is a good example of the impact that a few dedicated people can accomplish.
- IT WAS GREAT.
- Excellent conference...
- Great job! Thanks.
- Thank you for your efforts.
- This was a very well organized conference.
- Superb conference! Thanks to all!

While there were some problems overall the results were very positive. Certainly the problem with late starts, going over time limits, and lack of time for audience engagement were problems. The bad weather also detracted from people's enjoyment. On the other hand there were many things people really enjoyed. The mix of people, presentations and activities was particularly popular. It also seems that people were inspired to take action wither that was to take political action, learn more about Leopold, or get out into the environment.

These are the results from the at conference portion of the evaluation. We are working on the post conference follow-up. Thanks to you we have a good response rate to our online participant survey. We are analyzing these results now and will have a report soon. We will also be conducting phone surveys with some of the leaders of environmental groups that help sponsor the conference to see what lasting impact, if any, the conference had.

Again thanks for all your help and keep walking "In the Footsteps of Leopold."

Russ Winn, Conference Organizer

Full list of Participant Comments

Please comment on any or your responses related to activities.

- Appreciated the breadth and depth presented about Leopold!
- Campfire talk more related to my field of expertise but all talks were great and insightful.
- Consistently late starts and overlong speakers, especially Sunday morning, cut into field trips. Sunday evening was over-scheduled – less would have been fine.
- My main concern is that speakers went over their allotted time and sessions did not start on time.
- Not enough time for audience questions in general, except for evening sessions.
- Saturday sessions good, including evening. Sunday am – first session way too repetitive (two presenters or 10 minutes each would have been enough) – 2nd panel on policy was marvelous but short on time.
- The setting and program were great. Well planned and presented with great speakers.
- Sitting outside was great but it was difficult to see the presentation. The screen would have been easier to see if it had been bigger.
- The work yet to be done talk really opened my eyes to the positive things that are happening and made me realize to not focus on what we've lost or can't change.
- All talks were enjoyable and informative. I would have enjoyed being able to purchase some of the speakers' books and some of Leopold's writings that I don't already own. Suggest a book table next time.
- Couldn't see video (mainly PowerPoint presentations) outside – great idea, but didn't work and was disappointing, someone to time and notify the speakers when their time is up. Could you post presenters' PP on your website? PDF files?
- Enjoyed the content of all talks and the choice of speakers – good information. Regret that allocated time schedule was not adhered to – and consequently, discussion basically nil – especially disappointing when I thought one goal was to mobilize the troops/community.
- It was a great learning experience for living up here full time.
- Liked Linda Lu. Appreciated the HISTORY not only Leopold but the development of the Wilderness Act and its impact since passage.
- Loved the campfire, some lectures were a little lengthy.
- Movie was stimulating, panel less so although Q & A was good. Saturday am talks were great. All the reading were great except I had to leave after the panel Saturday night. Keeping on time and starting earlier would have been even better.
- Saturday a.m. lectures were too long and repetitious. The reading were too long. The Saturday p.m. movie was too late and too long. I went home on Sunday morning. The lectures were boring to me, an AWC volunteer. I was out of my league there.
- Warren's reading vs. speaking I found boring. Other speakers were good. Lengthy readings in general I didn't enjoy.

- Workshops presented by inspiring and knowledgeable presenters.

What are you now inspired to do?

- As an environmental educator, this opens up MANY possibilities! I'm working with Karen Meyer (producer-Lords of Nature) to develop a secondary guide to accompany this great film. Leopold will definitely be featured! I also intend to take time to make sure my voice is heard by policy makers.
- I came here to be inspired and to brainstorm on ideas for the APRA Open Space Conference. I now believe I have the tools to plan an awesome, informative, and inspiring conference!
- Learn more about the Southwestern issues (I am from PNW – visiting and touring SW.) Studying Leopold's ideas and way he incorporated them into his local conservation work.
- Read more Leopold.
- Re-read Aldo's writings and examine my own beliefs and philosophy, keep asking, "What would Aldo do?"
- Spread the words of Leopold into Mexico.
- To write to people in local/regional/and national public offices.
- Become more political. Save wilderness for the future. Be more open regarding my support for the wilderness. Read more Leopold. Learn more about my local ecology.
- EVERYTHING
- Get a copy of the Saturday PM movie for showing at other places.
- I am inspired to return to the White Mtns for more hiking.
- I have a better understanding how much the land is for all and will do my part in taking care of it and spreading the word.
- I will seek out some volunteer work that helps in our quest to further wilderness. I will pay more attention to the political process and try to support representatives and legislation that is 'eco-friendly.'
- Join a conservation group and/or put in volunteer hours, get some of these remarkable speakers to come to our area (White Mountains).
- Look wider for allies in general (thanks to Doug Scott), conservation efforts, persist in pressing for preservation (thanks to Michael Robinson), get out on the ground in wilderness (more).
- More.
- More effort on translation of ideas to a broader audience in terms of their values.
- More volunteer work, more financial support to supporting organizations.
- Mostly keep on truckin'.
- Take more anthropology, to further appreciate the SW.
- Talk with my friends about Aldo, educate myself, come to White Mtns more often (I understand this is undesired by locals.)
- To do a huge backpacking/overnight trip.
- Volunteer more, support wilderness effort financially.

What from the event is most worth remembering?

- The amazing work that all the volunteers and organizers did in putting this event together. Great job.
- The diversity of participants (age, gender, geographic 'point of origin', presenters, groups represented). TERRIFIC! This kind of hybridization can only make our purpose and case (for decision makers) stronger.
- Don & Myron's talk!! It was interesting to hear their life progressions towards becoming wilderness protectors and servants.
- The hikes up Escudilla, talking with locals, throwing ideas around with like-minded people, and the camp fire talk with the wilderness rangers.
- Meeting friends and talking about conservation, Aldo, the land, and our common love for it all.
- The mix of talks, field trips, food, music and all the great people in attendance.
- Several side conversations with new friends.
- What one individual (and individual organizations) can accomplish. Our values do matter and should make a difference in what we do and how we work in society, to facilitate needed change.
- As is often the case, it's a combination of the energy one gets from the presentations and the great networking opportunities.
- Being able to experience the Apache area with great guidance from the presenters.
- Biodiversity – how much there is to learn and keeping the integrity going!
- The genuine energy and passion that inspired it. Content.
- How Leopold lived.
- Learning about Leopold.
- Lords of Nature and the GIS materials had strong impact. The campfire talk was very moving especially Myron's journey.
- Meeting new people, hikes, all the WMCL folks were very friendly, very helpful, very welcoming. I could feel the great amount of effort that went into this superb event, food was excellent and plentiful, tasty and presented beautifully. I'm sorry I won't be here for the 200th anniversary!
- Not only was Aldo Leopold's contributions and ideas to us and the education about the wolves. But just all these people getting together that love to do and talk about things I do. Love being outside really was worth remembering to know other people are out there with my same values and love.
- That it's all worth it.
- That natural predators are necessary for a healthy eco-system.
- To continue to strive for progress.
- The wilderness effort has a history of success and is a bipartisan effort.
- We should expect to encounter inflexibility from institutions. Broaden the coalition beyond environmentalists. Respect the ways of people who think differently. Permeability rather than corridors. Power of the Wilderness Act.
- While we have hover between hope and despair at times, despair is NOT an option.

Please comment on any of your responses related to what you learned at the conference.

- Came with little knowledge but a lot of interest. Absorbed a lot. Great speakers.
- I had heard some about Aldo Leopold before the conference, but now I have learned a ton and will read A Sand County Almanac from cover to cover!
- Learned a lot about Leopold.
- Public policy: there's so-o-o much we need to know...
- Superb conference! Thanks to all!
- I keep up fairly well with developments in public policy.
- I learned a lot from this conference.
- I liked the mix of topics-history, policy, ecology. Great!
- My favorite part was learning about local ecology, geography, biology.
- Not enough about activities of groups.
- Please continue opportunities for these presenters and workshops – so much the public needs to be exposed to.
- The slides for Ms. Flader's talk were well suited to make her points.

What else would you like the organizers of this event to know about your experience?

- Excellent conference; reading worked well with panels; rich yet relaxed; great field trips (despite weather); needed better time guidelines (in advance) and control (at conference).
- Feet got wet and cold.
- Great job! Thanks.
- I saw very little (actually, NO) participation from agencies such as AZ Game & Fish (my contacts in the Region 1 office hadn't even heard about this until I inquired 3 weeks ago), AZ State Parks (who have planned an entire year of Leopold special events at various parks), and many others. I had expected seeing some of them on the program.
- I think everyone at the conference had very open minds and were willing to listen to and consider everyone's ideas.
- I thoroughly enjoyed this celebration event of Leopold! Leopold and our reflections on his legacy have been inspirational – especially his emphasis on community – we are all part of a larger land community.
- It's good to schedule unstructured time for social interaction.
- It would be nice to have a contact info sheet for all the attendees and posting presentations on the website would be a great service.
- Meeting outside was a bit stressful with the cold weather – but don't know how you could accommodate everyone. Awesome location!
- Book table!
- Enjoyed it – thank you for getting it together! Great job.
- The event itself is a good example of the impact that a few dedicated people can accomplish.
- IT WAS GREAT.
- Make available Lords of Nature to large numbers of group, schools, organizations-you can't miss the interconnectedness of life.
- More of these events will help the public of what's going on in this area.
- Please keep me on the mailing list for the next one.
- Thank you for your efforts. Speakers were excellent. Intensive mix of people, both presenters and attendees.
- There should have been more exchange with the audience throughout the lectures. Interaction.
- This was a very well organized conference.
- Would have liked more Q & A. Keep the presenters to their schedules. Afternoon schedules rocked.
- Would have been better to schedule field trips in a.m. My impression was that some of the speakers ran too long.