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Latin American Committee on National Parks
of the International Commission on National Parks,
International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources

Background

The First World Conference on National Parks, which was held in Seattle, Washington, U.S.A., in 1962, recommended the formation of a Latin American Committee on National Parks of the International Union for Conservation of Nature. The delegates of the Latin American countries, in the course of a field trip to Yellowstone National Park, constituted themselves into a founding group to assist in every possible way in furthering the establishment of such a committee. Following a year of informal contacts and correspondence, the Executive Board of the Union at the Eighth General Assembly in Nairobi, 1963, approved a recommendation that the International Commission on National Parks should continue its efforts to activate a Latin American Committee.

After drafting by-laws, objectives, and prospective recommendations, the Latin American Committee on National Parks was established, and the first meeting held in Quito, Ecuador, on 5 March 1964. The significance of this meeting was enhanced by the presence of His Excellency, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Ecuador, who welcomed the meeting, and in his closing remarks officially recognized the need of cooperation in the field of Latin American conservation. Among the special messages received and read were those from the Secretary of the Interior of the United States and the Director of the U. S. World Wildlife Fund offering and asking for cooperation.

The Committee is referred to as CLAPN, the abbreviation of the Committee's name in French, Portuguese and Spanish - official languages in the action range of the Committee.

Objectives

The objectives of the Latin American Committee on National Parks as approved by the meeting are:

1. The Committee will encourage and advise, on request, Latin American governments or appropriate organizations in the correct maintenance and management of national parks and equivalent reserves, and will encourage the establishment of new national parks or equivalent reserves in Latin America to carry out the stipulations in Articles 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6 of the Convention on Nature Protection and Wildlife Preservation in the Western Hemisphere (Washington, 1940).
2. The Committee will encourage and advise individuals or interested groups in forming associations for the protection of nature in the Latin American countries.
3. The Committee will encourage the preparation and dissemination of scientific and interpretative publications concerned with national parks, equivalent reserves, or nature protection in Latin America.

4. The Committee will, on request, promote visits of scientific, technical, administrative, or training personnel of Latin American national parks or equivalent reserves to member states or others. The Committee will act as Latin American intermediary and information agency, to provide, on request, Latin American governments with all the necessary information concerning training courses for national park specialists or other park personnel.

5. The Committee will promote the dissemination of information concerning the national and international significance of national parks, equivalent reserves, and nature protection in educational institutions at all levels, universities and centers of adult education, using for such purposes all adequate means such as radio, television, film strips, bulletins, etc.

6. The Committee will assist the Secretariat of the International Commission on National Parks of the IUCN in the interchange of information, publications, and data based on Latin American experiences concerning national parks, equivalent reserves, and nature protection, thus acting as a Latin American information and dissemination center.

Membership

Membership in the Latin American Committee on National Parks is made up of two representatives of each country; one a founding member or an individual proposed by the founding member, and the other a representative of the respective government, being the highest ranking official concerned with renewable natural resources or his representative. This official, or his representative, may not be President or Vice-President of the Committee.

The Committee can appoint observers who are eminent conservationists, staff members of international organizations, or other persons who have special knowledge in the field. Observers can voice their opinions and participate in the meetings of the Committee, but will not have voting rights.

The President and the two Vice-Presidents of the Committee are selected by the IUCN from those nominated by the Committee, and the Executive Secretary appointed by the Committee.

Progress Report

To comply with the objectives and point out some specific needs in Latin America, seven recommendations were made at the Quito meeting, and an additional ten made at the time of the second annual meeting, which was held in Ann Arbor, Michigan, in May 1965.

Officers and Members of the Committee are making every possible effort to follow up these objectives and recommendations. Due in part to their activity, legislative bodies of most member countries of the Committee have passed, or are dealing with law projects concerning the legislation, administration, and the establishment of national parks or equivalent reserves and wildlife refuges.

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The appreciation of natural values and the enthusiasm for their preservation are growing vigorously in Latin America. The need for basic ecological research is acknowledged and discussed by politicians and development planners. The Principles of the Inter-American Specialized Conference to deal with Problems Relating to the Conservation of Renewable Natural Resources in the Western Hemisphere (Mar del Plata) state clearly the role and the importance of national parks and their place in the bioecologic complex.

The greatest need in the conservation movement is to gather and distribute conservation information, and to encourage action along the lines of the recommendations made by the various conferences. It is the pleasure and duty of the Committee to do this.

Cooperation with Other Organizations

To attain the objectives of the Committee it is essential to have the help and cooperation of individuals and agencies whose interests are related, coincide or overlap with those of the Committee. This is true both in the short range and long range planning. To initiate or implement some of its plans, the Committee often needs assistance on very short notice to deal with conservation emergency situations. To comply with future needs, close cooperation at the budget planning stage was established with agencies which are, or are going to be, involved in the use of natural resources.

It is with great satisfaction that the Committee acknowledges the cooperation and/or contribution of the following organizations. For obvious reasons the list contains only international agencies and those of countries outside the Latin American region. Alexander von Humboldt Foundation, American Conservation Association, FAO, Inter-American Development Bank, Inter-American Tourist Congresses, International Biological Program, National Park Association (U.S.A.), Old Dominion Foundation, Pan American Development Foundation, Pan American High Congresses, Pan American Union, Philadelphia Conservationists, The Association for Tropical Biology, Inc., The Conservation Foundation, The Nature Conservancy, The Sierra Club, United States Department of the Interior, United States Forest Service of the Department of Agriculture, University of Michigan, and World Wildlife Fund.

Special reference should be made to The Nature Conservancy, as this organization is the host of the Secretariat of the Latin American Committee on National Parks. Its members have in many ways generously contributed to the successful handling of affairs.

It is gratifying to state that press, radio and television are continuously promoting the news administered by members of the Committee, and often request additional information. Animals, Americas, Bioscience, Ciencia Interamericana have requested and published articles on the conservation movement in Latin America. The National Geographic is preparing, in consultation with the Committee, an article on South American National Parks.

Highlights

- 5 March 1964 Latin American Committee on National Parks established in Quito, Ecuador.
- 10 - 12 December 1964 Arequipa meeting of Bolivian and Peruvian officials of the Servicios Forestales de Caza y Pesca of Bolivia and Peru to discuss the vicuña problem.
- 23 April 1965 Agreement signed between Philadelphia Conservationists and Instituto de Tierras y Colonizacion of Costa Rica to safeguard the El Cabo area.
- 9 May 1965 Second annual meeting of Committee in Ann Arbor, Michigan.
- 10-29 May 1965 Short Course on Administration of National Parks and Equivalent Reserves held in Ann Arbor, Michigan, followed by field trip. 16 high ranking forest and park officials and/or noted conservationists attended from Latin America.
- 15 July -
15 September 1965 International Game Warden Course held in Peru. The wardens who were natives of the area were trained to protect and manage the vicuña range. Plans for similar international courses in other ecological regions of Latin America were made.
- July-August 1965 Reconnaissance expedition of the program planning commission made to proposed Cutibireni National Park in Peru.
- 26 August 1965 Brazil deposited Instrument of Ratification of Convention on Nature Protection and Wildlife Preservation in the Western Hemisphere.
- August 1965 At the suggestion of Committee, Department of Scientific Affairs of Pan American Union published a preliminary directory of conservation organizations dealing with renewable natural resources in Latin America.
- September 1965 Creators of Patriot Uniforms donated uniforms for the attendants of the warden course held in Peru.
- 18-22 October 1965 Inter-American Specialized Conference to deal with problems relating to Conservation of Renewable Natural Resources in the Western Hemisphere held in Argentina.
- 16 December 1965 Panama deposited the Instrument of Ratification of the Convention on Nature Protection and Wildlife Preservation in the Western Hemisphere.
- January 1966 At request of Committee, Secretariat of Interamerican Travel Congresses and Pan American Highways compiled all recommendations of previous congresses which refer to the preservation and maintenance of renewable natural resources.