

Summary - Outdoor Ethics Workshop
Jan. 28, 29, 1982, Boise, Idaho
by Marty Morache

Dr. Chalker commented on the progression of human ethics via magic, astrology and ultimately the scientific method. He indicated ethics emerged from the goals, aspirations and felt needs of humans in concert with searching for the meaning of life. The major religions generally hold that humans are a part of the natural world belonging to the fleshly realm, and that land is essential to the survival of this community of living things. We must be compassionate to the land that supports the community. The land is the trust; we are the stewards. In Idaho we meet human needs by utilizing the land. We also use the land for recreation which is one of our legitimate concerns.

Region 6 of the USFS showed an excellent slide/tape presentation on no trace impact on wilderness. The slides follow the evolution of the fragile high country ecosystems, and the development of no trace techniques that can minimize human impact on the environment.

Morache - Commented on the fact that limited entry is a reality and we need to broaden the no trace or minimum impact philosophy to our non wilderness environments. Agency personnel need to convey minimum impact by example, by written communications, and by teaching teachers.

Barns - Reviewed the results of public meetings and regional workshops that were conducted to identify issues in outdoor recreational activities. Outdoor ethics ranked high in the listing of issues by the respondents (general public and resource managers). These concerns took many forms ranging from the need for a code of outdoor ethics, protection of the environment and facilities, and the need for education relative to environmental awareness.

Little - Senator Little was concerned on how to educate that ½ of one percent that abuse private lands. He's not had much trouble with the organized recreators, particularly if communications are maintained with these groups. Cited the creation of a cycle park near Emmett as helping solve the trespass problems with cycle users. Need to teach the "public" about gates - if down leave them down - if up then close it. He indicated that, with rest and rotation of use, land can heal itself.

Graban - speaking from the corporate viewpoint - we all talk a lot about educating the recreating public but nobody does much. He indicated that landholder/hunter relations emerged in the late sixties with "operation respect" but lost its momentum. There has been no real commitment in dollars and people to the program. Property damage is the biggest concern relative to the use of private property. He indicated that provincialism plays a role in the management of recreational activities on Boise-cascade land. Road closures on B.C. lands in Oregon preserved quality elk hunting and attracts the more innovative hunter. In the south most hunting is on private property and most folks join hunting clubs that lease access. Vandalism is minimized and the largest problem is litter (outright dumping of garbage) It is important to keep communications going with user groups.

A Series of outdoor clubs commented on the existence or non existence of a code of "outdoor ethics". The high profile users (jet boats, trail bikers, Outfitters and Guides Association, snowmobilers) all have a code. The low profile groups (fly anglers and Mtn. west) did not sense the need as their members are generally quite sensitive to outdoor ethics. The codes were quite similiar in expressing concern for respecting the rights of others, assisting others in trouble, and protecting the outdoor environment and wild creatures.

Greenwalt - Use of natural resources has progressed rapidly since WWII. Some indication of users conflicts in the 50's and accelerated in the sixties. Decade of the seventies highlighted the user conflicts and reflected a lowering of the confidence level in the National Government. Major natural resource acts (NEPA, T&E, cleanair, and others) were passed to protect creatures and the environment. Conflicting ideals and ethics were apparent. Current recession has caused retrenchment in ideals and ethics - more preoccupation with survival now - conservation organization and the administration rather silent on what to do. It is "eerily quiet" at the national level. People tend to change their ethics to survive. We need to look at the big picture and view the management of natural resources in the long run. Ethical standards should be looked at in a matter of probable consequences. Certain users groups need to improve their image (hunters, trail cyclist, snowmoblies). Increase the rate of dialogue among the users. Place emphasis with those who will be affected but who are not committed.

Boy scouts - Many leaders forget to implement the wilderness ethic - need to gear teaching to the age groups within scouting - use the layered teaching approach (club - boyscout, out post program) and teach fundamentals at each level. Reinforce minimum impact concepts with field experience. Rules vary from wilderness to wilderness - let the users know what to expect at the portals - locals councils stand ready to assist on local problems.

Faast - Since 1962, teaching young hunters gun safety has paid off in reduced accident rates even though hunter numbers have increased. Started teaching hunters safety responsibility in 1974 and one hour of hunter ethics is in the course. However, the hunter safety program cannot shoulder the whole load. The general public perceives the hunter as poorly disciplined and abusive to wildlife. Some states are attempting to educate the adult hunting publics. Colorado started with educating elk hunters and were overwhelmed. Nevada has seminars on antelope and big horn hunting. Nebraska started with turkey seminars and broadened their approach to over 60 seminars on a wide spectrum of outdoor activities. Hunters and the public need to know what Fish and Game agencies are all about. Need to educate hunters so they know that hunting is a management tool.

Benson - The available data varifies what has been suspected all along - the general image of hunters is not good. Hunters envolved in various stages from 1) shooters (let fly at most anything) to 2) limiting out, to 3) homeing in on trophy hunting, to 4) specializing in method of taking to 5) mellowing out and seeing the big pictures. At Colorada Stat University they teach instructors, develop manuals and go outside the school to the teach the user public. Hunters need help in learning how to improve their image.

Nichloson - Citizens Against Poaching (CAP) has been in existence for one year. Based on reward for information on poaching - toll free number available - the identity of the caller is protected. There is a reward schedule depending on species involved. Main point is it involves members of the public that are concerned about non ethical hunting activity.

General concensus was that outdoor users need image upgrading. User publics need guidance and help. Agencies and organizations need to put money and people into the educating process. The outdoor ethics concept need to be imparted early in the users life.