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Wilderness in Eastern North America: Research, Management and Planning

David L. Kulhavy

Arthur Temple College of Forestry and Agriculture, Stephen F. Austin State University,
dkulhavy@sfasu.edu

Michael Legg

Stephen F Austin State University, Arthur Temple College of Forestry and Agriculture

John H. Burde

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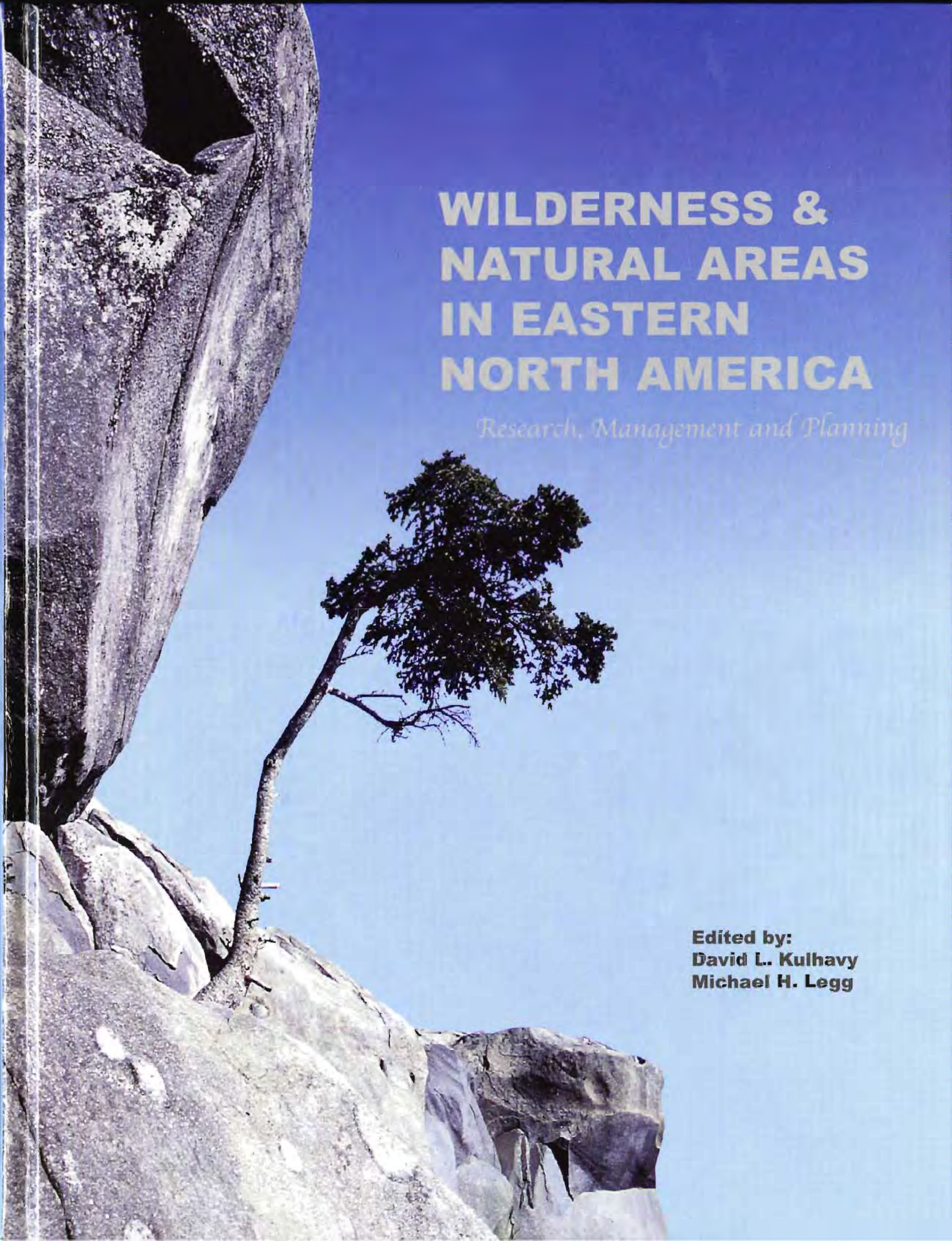
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Kulhavy, David L.; Legg, Michael; and Burde, John H., "Wilderness in Eastern North America: Research, Management and Planning" (1998). *Faculty Publications*. 399.

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A photograph of a lone tree growing from a rocky cliff against a clear blue sky. The tree is positioned in the lower center of the frame, with its trunk leaning slightly to the right. The rock formation is dark and textured, with a large overhang on the left side. The sky is a uniform, clear blue.

WILDERNESS & NATURAL AREAS IN EASTERN NORTH AMERICA

Research, Management and Planning

**Edited by:
David L. Kulhavy
Michael H. Legg**

Wilderness in Eastern North America: Research, Management and Planning

David L. Kulhavy and Michael H. Legg, Arthur Temple College of Forestry, Stephen F. Austin State University, Nacogdoches, Texas
John H. Burde, Southern Illinois University, Carbondale, Illinois

The concept of wilderness and natural areas in eastern North America brings the challenges of research, management and planning that are unique to these areas. This conference examined these ideas in both a formal setting with papers and presentations and in an informal setting with conversation, recreation and musical interludes. The conference opened with Gray Reynolds of the United State Forest Service summarizing trends in wilderness management and visitor trends. Reynolds challenged the audience to seek out the non-traditional uses and expand the role of the wilderness users. Karen Wade, Superintendent, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, touched on the tangible concepts of the GSMNP, including the scenic grandeur, tourism, and the potential of the park for a wilderness experience. Ed Zahniser took us back to where eastern wilderness began. His constant reminder of the impact of "Zahnie," Howard Zahniser, Ed Zahniser's father. Howard Zahniser (1906-1964) was the primary architect of the 1964 Wilderness Act. In 1946, in the eastern U.S. wilderness of New York State's Adirondack State Park, Zahniser recognized a legislative model for wilderness protection in perpetuity—the 1894 "forever wild" clause of the New York State Constitution.

WILDERNESS AND NATURAL AREAS IN EASTERN NORTH AMERICA Research, Management and Planning

Since the passage twenty years ago of the "Eastern Wilderness Act," wilderness and other areas managed to preserve or enhance natural qualities have taken on increasing significance in the eastern portion of North America. Fragmentation of ecosystems, population pressures and past human influences combine to create a unique combination of research, planning and management issues in these areas.

The Wilderness and Natural Areas Conference examined five areas within the context of management:

- 1) Preservation of Natural and Biological Values
- 2) Management of Social Values
- 3) Administration Policy and Agency Coordination
- 4) Training of Agency Personnel
- 5) Public Awareness and Understanding.

Plenary addresses included:

- Gray Reynolds, Deputy Chief of the USDA Forest Service, on the value of wilderness to society;
- Ed Zahniser examining where wilderness preservation began, "Ah, Wilderness! Wilderness Areas in the East...where wilderness preservation began" quoting his father, Howard Zahniser, primary architect of the 1964 Wilderness Act.
- Karen Wade, Superintendent, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, noted "Eastern wilderness...sounds like a contradiction in terms to many people....We value wilderness because it is in sharp contrast to our Man-built landscape:"

•Tom Rillo, American Wilderness Leadership School, examining the role of wilderness in environmental education, offered "the goal of all outdoor environmental education programs is the development of an environmentally literate citizenry that is aware, articulate and activated with regard to environmental problems;

•Hubert Hinote, Southern Appalachian Man and the Biosphere Program, highlighted the public/private partnership focusing on the vision of the program: "promote the achievement of a sustainable balance between the conservation of biological diversity, compatible economic uses and cultural values across the Southern Appalachians."

•Christopher V. Barns, U. S. Dept. Interior, Bureau of Land Management, examined critical strategies for the 6th National Wilderness Conference with Implications for eastern wilderness management. "The need to educate a diverse array of publics is seen as even more critical in the East, with somewhat less emphasis on some biophysical management issues."

•Jon Roush presented "New Politics and New Opportunities for Eastern Wilderness" indicating "Policy decisions about wilderness management must respond to institutional changes taking place in the U. S. The arenas of action are shifting from federal to local, from public to private, and from piecemeal conservation to focus on the whole system."

•J. Dan Pittillo, Western Carolina University, presented "Geological and Vegetational History of the Southern Appalachians" describing geological events and interacting vegetational changes.

•Mike Link, Executive Director, Audubon Center of the North Woods, presented poignant testimony, "Risk—An Essential Element," sharing "I love wilderness and because I lost my son in a kayak accident...Let me share with you ideas about wilderness, risk and management."

•Jerry Stokes, U. S. Dept. Agr, Forest Service, Director, Wilderness and Natural Areas Program, convened an interagency panel that examined values and issues in wilderness and natural areas management in the United States.

•Rita Cantu, U. S. Dept. Agr. Forest Service, interspersed musical interludes with provocative vignettes on the values and spiritual epitaphs gleaned from wilderness.

•Tom Kovalicky, U. S., Dept. Agr., Forest Service, retired, summarized the conference offering "the issues on their Eastern wildlands are complex and are kept that way by the deep seated cultural, traditional and spiritual values of a very large and growing population.

Within the five working sessions, panels, research presentations, interactive sessions and discussion groups tackled the issues surrounding wilderness and natural areas in eastern North America focusing on research, management and planning. The setting adjacent to the Great Smoky Mountains National Park, provided an ideal location to examine the significant issues in management of these sensitive areas. The conference proceedings will be available from the Arthur Temple College of Forestry, Stephen F. Austin State University, Nacogdoches, Texas 75962 in early 1998. Please address inquires for copies to the above address; phone 409 468-3301; FAX 409 468-2489; email mlegg@sfasu.edu or dkulhavy@sfasu.edu.

Trends in Wilderness Management and Visitor Characteristics

Gray F. Reynolds, National Forest Systems, Davidsonville, MD

INTRODUCTION

1994 saw the 30th anniversary of The Wilderness Act. After 30 years of battles over allocation, more than 115 laws for designation, and agency attempts to "manage" the National Wilderness Preservation System, what can we say about our management strategy, the character of the wilderness, and the people who use it? Do we view wilderness differently now?

TRENDS IN WILDERNESS MANAGEMENT

No we do not view wilderness differently, but there continues to be more demands on the wilderness resource which challenge the integrity and wisdom of our wilderness managers. At the First National Wilderness Management Workshop in 1983, at the University of Idaho, Chief Max Peterson made the following predictions and challenges when asked, "Where do we go from here?" He challenged the University of Idaho to take the lead in developing an interagency wilderness management plan. He felt that each agency should elevate wilderness management to doing the job on the ground rather than committing too much of our energies to the question of which areas should be designated as wilderness.

Chief Peterson suggested that we needed consistent principles in valuing wilderness, but these principles may not lead to identical practices. What we do in a high alpine area in Montana to deal with certain problems probably will not fit the Everglades in Florida. He felt a need to look at basic principles, though, so that any practice is designed to perpetuate the naturalness and the values of wilderness."

Chief Peterson went on to say that we needed to use our money more efficiently, finding better ways to do things and using educational information more effectively. We needed to look to the user to help pay some kind of fee for use of wilderness. We needed to go

farther in using volunteers to helping us in the wilderness. We must deal with the issue of fire in wilderness and look at use of planned ignitions. We must find better ways to pull together the collective wisdom of those with field experience. As we reflect on Chief Peterson's charge, we are still committed to achieving those actions, and have accomplished many over the past 13 years.

As a consequence of the Chief's request, a national steering committee, composed of members from all the wilderness management agencies and user groups, was established and a 5 year wilderness management action plan was developed. The action plan had five priority guidelines: educate the public; educate and train managers; wilderness capacities and user concentrations; interagency coordination and consistency; and consistent wilderness management practices.

Since this first National wilderness conference in 1983, all wilderness conferences have built on these guidelines. As of this month all of the four wilderness management agencies have signed off on a strategic action plan that addresses critical wilderness management issues that were identified by the participants at the 6th National Wilderness Conference in Santa Fe, New Mexico, November 14-18, 1994. Chris Barns from the BLM will discuss the Strategic Plan Wednesday morning. In fact the concurrent sessions of this conference are built on the critical issues that the plan identified: preservation of natural and biological values; management of social values; administrative policy and agency coordination; training of agency personnel; and public awareness and understanding.

The regional wilderness program leaders of the Forest Service are developing an action plan that will define the purpose and focus of the wilderness program within the Forest Service. This plan will tie in with the National strategic