

Native American Sacred Lands Forum — March 19-22, 2002 — Washington D.C.
DRAFT—2/20/02

Introduction

There are many places across America that are holy to native people. These sacred places are critical to the revitalization and continuity of hundreds of living cultures. Individuals and organizations who have been active in the movement to protect sacred lands are as diverse as the sites and the communities who tend them. Over time — as with many movements for social change — actions have come about as a result of renewed partnerships and catalytic events, such as critical threats to a particular area, new legislation, or the infusion of new resources. It can be said that the recent release of the documentary film, *In the Light of Reverence*, has helped provide a needed spark to re-energize this important movement. The film is a catalyst for dialogue, and dialogue can lead to action. Individuals and organizations —some new to the cause and some part of the original movement to amend the American Indian Religious Freedom Act — have come together to form an ad hoc “planning committee” with the goal of focusing attention on a pressing issue in Indian country: There exists no comprehensive, effective policy to preserve and protect sacred lands and resources.

Some recent history:

In April, 2001, Seventh Generation Fund convened the Sacred Earth Conference in Seattle, Washington. Four hundred individuals and organizations gathered to share their perspective on the movement to protect sacred lands and to tell stories of places lost, saved, and threatened.

In August, 2001, *In the Light of Reverence* aired nationally on PBS and provided a wake-up call to the general public about the destruction of sacred lands. Three million people watched the film.

In October, 2001, a Native American Sacred Lands Forum was held in Boulder and Denver, CO to develop a new strategy for sacred lands protection. The planning committee for the Forum included federal agencies, academic institutions and non-profit organizations. All federally-recognized tribes in the states of CO, UT, WY, ND, SD and MT were invited, as the Forum was co-hosted by EPA Region 8 and the Natural Resources Law Center of the University of Colorado, Boulder.

Participants in the Sacred Land Forum helped draft a resolution that was passed at the National Congress of American Indians annual meeting in Spokane, WA in November, 2001. Titled “Sacred Lands Protection, including Zuni Salt Lake and Quechan Indian Pass” Resolution #SPO -01-162, called for the creation of a Sacred Lands Protection Coalition, including but not limited to tribal representatives, NCAI, Native American Rights Fund, Seventh Generation Fund and the Association on American Indian Affairs.

Attention is now shifting to Washington D.C. and the East Coast and the planning committee has grown significantly. Ad hoc and grass roots in nature, the “planning committee” is inclusive and open. The central focus will be to launch and support the Sacred Lands Protection Coalition called for by the NCAI resolution, to develop educational tools and other strategies, to build momentum and lay the foundation for the expansion of the coalition, to get publicity for threatened sites, and to make protecting sacred lands a Congressional priority once again.

Several members of the planning committee are sending invitations and developing an agenda for the organizing meeting of the Coalition on March 19 in D.C. This is an opportune time for tribal leaders to step forward and shape the goals and strategies of the Sacred Land Protection Coalition.

Other goals of the planning committee for the week of March 18-22 include:

- connecting native people who attend the initial meeting of the coalition with land managers, agency representatives, members of Congress and staff;
- linking coalition members with media to help get national publicity;
- arranging for the delegation to meet with Senators Inouye and Campbell, Representative Rahall and Hansen, and Congressional staff to discuss language of proposed legislation and to request both oversight hearings and hearings on any proposed legislation.

A second week in Washington (tentatively set for May 13-16) will continue the process with a coalition meeting, a policy summit between tribal leaders and federal officials, possible introduction of sacred site protection legislation sponsored by Rep. Rahall, and, we hope, Congressional hearings.

Our tentative agenda follows:

Tuesday March 19, 9 AM - 5 PM

Initial organizing meeting for the establishment of the Sacred Lands Protection Coalition at the National Congress of American Indians, 1301 Connecticut Ave. NW - Suite 200, Washington DC; Coordinators: Chris Peters, Seventh Generation Fund, Lillian Sparks, NCAI, Jack Trope, Association on American Indian Affairs, Pemina Yellow Bird, Cultural Resource Representative, Three Affiliated Tribes, Bill Day, United South and Eastern Tribes, John Echohawk, Native American Rights Fund.

Tuesday March 19 at 7 PM

Screening of *In the Light of Reverence* at American University, Ward 1 auditorium (4400 Massachusetts Ave. NW) sponsored by United Nations Associations Film Festival, A.U. School of International Studies, and Environmental Film Festival.

Wednesday morning, March 20, 10 AM

Meeting between coalition members and Congressman Nick Rahall (D, West Virginia) and staff of the House Natural Resources Committee to discuss draft language of sacred land protection bill, and dates for a hearing (currently proposed for May 14-16, 2002).

Wednesday afternoon, March 20 - 1 to 5 PM

Screening of *In the Light of Reverence* at the Department of the Interior,

Sidney Yates Auditorium, 1849 C St. NW — hosted by NCAI

- Tex Hall, NCAI has invited Interior Secretary Gale Norton, Asst Sec. Neal McCaleb, Sen. Inouye, Sen. Campbell, Rep. Rahall, Rep. Hansen and Rep. Kildee to participate in the dialogue.
 - Welcoming remarks by Jacki Johnson, Exec. Dir., NCAI.
 - Lakota scholar Vine Deloria Jr. will deliver a keynote speech, right after the film, on the history and status of sacred land protection.
 - “Overcoming the Challenges” panel to include: Assistant Secretary of the Interior Neal McCaleb (invited) or Jim Pace, DOI Office of the American Indian Trust; Tex Hall, Pres. of NCAI; Eddie Tullis or Bill Day of United South and Eastern Tribes; Raynard Soon of the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation (invited); Pemina Yellow Bird, Cultural Resource Representative, Three Affiliated Tribes; and Vine Deloria Jr., author, addressing the questions:
 - Why and how should federal agencies protect sacred lands?
 - How well do existing laws and agency regulations protect sacred lands?
 - Discussion of NEPA, NHPA, AIRFA, EO 13007 and EO 12898, etc.
 - How can people who care about these sacred sites access decision makers?
- Questions from the audience after each panelist speaks for ~ 5 minutes.

• Satellite uplink of keynote speech and discussion to DOD, DOE, EPA, USDA
Coordinators: Toby McLeod, Sacred Land Film Project, Emogene Bevitt, DOI National Park Service, Kevin Tennyson, DOI Office of American Indian Trust, Pemina Yellow Bird, Cultural Resource Representative, Three Affiliated Tribes, Danny Gogal, EPA Office of Environmental Justice, Suzy Hudak, DOI Office of Surface Mining.

Wednesday evening at 5:30 - 7:30 PM

Reception sponsored by United South and Eastern Tribes and the National Trust for Historic Preservation; at the South Penthouse and Roof Terrace Room at the main Interior building, 1849 C St. NW.; Coordinators: Anita Canovas, National Trust for Historic Preservation, Bill Day, United South and Eastern Tribes, Pemina Yellow Bird, Cultural Resource Representative, Three Affiliated Tribes, Scott Jones, Cultural Preservation, Lower Brule Sioux Tribe.

Thursday, March 21 (time and place tba) (TENTATIVE)

Press conference to release the NCAI resolution, announce the formation of the Sacred Land Protection Coalition, release the report from Colorado Sacred Lands Forum, October 2001, and call for oversight hearings in May 2002.

Thursday, March 21, 11:30 AM - 1 PM (TENTATIVE)

Congressional staff and press screening of *In the Light of Reverence*: Room HC9 (in the basement of the Capitol on the House side). Coordinator: Kathryn Seck, Press Secretary, House Committee on Resources, Democratic staff.

Thursday afternoon (TENTATIVE) (alternative time: late Tuesday afternoon)

Meeting between coalition members and Pat Zell, Karen Atkinson, Paul Morehead to discuss draft language of sacred land protection bill, and dates for a oversight hearing (currently proposed for May 14-16, 2002). Coordinator: Jack Trope, Association on American Indian Affairs.

Thursday March 21, 1 - 4 PM

Meeting with coalition members, planning committee and the American Indian and Alaskan Native Task Force of the Interagency Working Group on Environmental Justice; Where do we go from here? De-brief on week's events. Planning for summit meeting in May. Discuss other potential May 13-16 events. At either National Trust for Historic Preservation, 1785 Massachusetts Ave., N.W., or the Department of Justice Main Building at 950 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW, (Archives Metro Stop - Yellow or Green Line, or Federal Triangle Metro Station). Note: photo ID required at DOJ. Coordinators: Danny Gogal, EPA Office of Environmental Justice, Pemina Yellow Bird, Cultural Resource Representative, Three Affiliated Tribes, Valerie Hauser, Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, Bill Day, United South and Eastern Tribes, Deldi Reyes, EPA Region 8 Environmental Justice Program, Lori Windle, DOI Office of Surface Mining.

Friday March 22, 10 AM - 12 NOON

Screening of *In the Light of Reverence* at the Pentagon, with a discussion afterwards with Caleen Sisk-Franco (Wintu) and Chris Peters (Pohlik-lah/Karuk). Coordinator: Stacey Halfmoon, DOD Office of the Deputy Undersecretary for Environmental Security.

Saturday March 23rd at 3:30 PM

Panel on "Using Films for Social Change" at the Center for Social Media. School of Communications at American University, Weschler Auditorium Mary Graydon Center - 3rd floor - 4400 Mass. Ave. NW, Pat Auferderheide, moderator, panelists include filmmakers Toby McLeod, Matthew Test and John Sorenson

film screenings:

Road to Yucca Mountain - with filmmaker John Sorenson - 12:30 PM

Buffalo War - with filmmaker Matthew Test - 2 PM

May 13-16, 2002

possible events:

second meeting of the Sacred Lands Protection Coalition

Policy summit between tribal leaders and federal officials

Environmental Justice and Cultural Resources Module planning meeting

Oversight Hearings (Senate)

Press conference introducing Cong. Rahall's legislation.
Hearing on draft legislation (House)

Contact Information for Planning Committee, DC Sacred Lands Forum and Events
Revised 2/5/02

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