

**RITA COLWELL** urged conversations with the American Association for the Advancement of Science regarding a Fellows program. **DIRECTOR JARVIS** suggested she might be interested in early conversation with the new Administration in support of these issues.

## **OPPORTUNITY FOR PUBLIC COMMENT**

**CHAIRMAN KNOWLES** introduced Sara Taylor, Executive Director of the Citizen's Advisory Commission on Federal Areas, invited by the NPS and Board to speak about the relationships between communities and the National Park Service.

### **■ Sara Taylor, Executive Director, Citizens Advisory Commission on Federal Areas.**

Sara Taylor said the Citizens Advisory Commission was created by the Alaska State Legislature after the passage of the 1980 Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA) to monitor and advise the state on implementation of the statute. The Commission tries to represent the diversity of users and uses of all the public lands. Humans were a thriving, vital part of the landscape in 1980 when 51 million acres of the state became part of the National Park System through ANILCA. They've known these lands for 10,000 years. The National Park System was meant to celebrate, cherish, and conserve the American story. Unfortunately, some distinctive Alaskan histories, traditions and cultures are not necessarily being cherished/conserved, and are disappearing incrementally and systematically. Alaska's historical presence on this land is viewed with everything from suspicion to contempt. The Commission has accumulated decades of history and evidence on this. Alaskans love their parklands, and that is a love that comes from familiarity and the perspective of being so connected and tied to the land. Alaskans have a culture of responsible and sustainable management of their lands and resources. Often, many Alaskans feel like they're trying to survive a culture war where they are the enemy against an abstract, ideological ethos about nature and wilderness that can't rationally include people. They feel like they're frequently informed, not always explicitly but very effectively, that they don't belong here. For every story like *One Man's Wilderness*, about Richard Proenneke's relationship with the Lake Clark National Park and Preserve, there are stories like *A Land Gone Lonesome*, which is Dan O'Neill's chronicle about how difficult it was to find accommodation from the NPS for the people who lived on the land that was to become Yukon-Charley Rivers National Preserve in 1980.

She said calls were received all year from members of the public, from commercial service providers, having problems or issues with the NPS, and they ask for help. When trying to earn a living, or needing access across parklands to one's property, or a parent wishing to pass on traditions or a connection to the land, it is challenging and intimidating to work with federal agencies, and not without risk. These fears are not baseless. She said she did not want to disparage the majority NPS employees in Alaska who truly care and have been accommodating of Alaskan concerns. The NPS has come to Commission meetings, well-prepared, presenting plans, projects and regulations, listen carefully to questions, and provide answers promptly. There have been genuine benefits from these interactions. But the commission is not just a forum, it is also a resource, made up of legislators, biologists, hunters, miners, guides and trappers, with a wealth of knowledge and perspective. The NPS can ask how these people can help fulfill its mission in Alaska. Too often, however, people feel blindsided or ignored, sometimes even lied to, which begs the question how legitimately interested the NPS is in cultivating the knowledge and experience of Alaskans, which can be integrated into national policies and regulations. When Alaskans present

opposing viewpoints, it is done with a desire to reach consensus, to promote the guarantees and promises made in 1980 and before parks were established and expanded. She asked the Board to help, particularly at the institutional level. She said Alaskans have many recommendations and that she had had great conversations with the staff here at the Alaska regional office about ways to improve relationships between the Alaskans and the NPS, which she would be happy to share with the Board.

**CHAIRMAN KNOWLES** thanked Sara Taylor for her willingness to present to the Board and assured her that this group appreciated the perspectives she had offered. He advised her that the NPS Director, present to hear her, was a superintendent of Wrangell-St. Elias for 10 years back in the early 1990s when there were still some pretty raw feelings at that time. He said the NPS wants to consider the feelings of communities and people who think that they may not be getting a straight deal.

**DIRECTOR JARVIS** complimented Sara Taylor, saying he appreciated her honesty. He said that Alaska is different than the lower 48, and everybody who has worked here over time begins to understand that. It is particularly different in its relationship with the Alaskan people. When the parks were established in the lower 48, with few exceptions, perhaps Canyon de Chelly, there was not a recognition that indigenous people or people of the area had certain rights that were retained and respected in the establishment process. Subsistence, access for traditional activities, hunting, fishing, gathering, all were embraced and promised as a part of the establishment of these new park units. For the NPS it's been a bit of a learning curve to figure out how to not just allow that, but to embrace it; that it adds value to these places because of that relationship, rather than looking at it as just an activity to be managed. It is important that there are employees in Washington who have Alaska experience. Currently, there are few who have worked or lived in the state. Access and utilization are part of this establishment, and in some ways the models for our Alaska national parks are not in the lower 48, but in other parts of the world where the indigenous people had thousands of years of relationship with their lands and this has been embraced in their national park models. He said he has always felt that there was perhaps better park communities than there is in the lower 48 here. As retirements occur and a new secretary gets a start in the next administration, ensuring good representation in Washington that understands the complexities of Alaska is very important.

#### ■ **Jerryne Cole, Public Lands Alliance (Denali National Park)**

Jerryne Cole said she had over 40 years of experience in Alaska and since ANILCA passed in 1980, she knows for a fact that the NPS had tried exceptionally hard to reach out to communities and to be a better steward of that relationship. She said she was a retired business owner, who has worked as a concessions contractor with the NPS, currently board president of the Public Lands Alliance, formerly known as the Association of Partners for Public Lands. Its over 100 member organizations include all sizes of friends' groups, cooperating associations and educational institutes. Over 80 percent of the matching funds for the Centennial challenge in 2015 and '16 came from Alliance members. She applauded Board work which was informing the current revision of DO-21. The Alliance provided a series of educational sessions to its nonprofit partners about the revision, and ultimately crafted a community response that was signed by over 70 friends' groups. The Board's Education Committee has greatly enhanced the stature of the NPS as a leader in lifelong learning for all Americans. The Alliance and its membership were active participants in the Board's learning summit. She urged the Board to call on the Alliance for assistance as it related to