

Ninth World Wilderness Congress in 2009

BY VANCE G. MARTIN

Merida in Mexico's Yucatan is the venue for WILD9, the 9th World Wilderness Congress (WWC). From 6–13 November 2009, up to 1,500 international delegates will convene in *El Mundo Maya* (the Mayan World) to consider, celebrate and act on the important role of wild nature in a prosperous and healthy human society. WILD9's tagline—*Feel, Think, Act* (*Siente, Piensa, Actúa*)—conveys both the Latin flavor of this global congress and its emphasis on “getting things done”.

Planning for this fully bilingual program is well-advanced. Science, business, media, policy, education, and the arts will address the irreplaceable role of wildlands in generating and maintaining the fundamental building blocks of life—carbon, clean water, fresh air, biodiversity—and essential to our economy and health. While the climate negotiators accept that destruction and degradation of forests contribute some 20–25% of global carbon emissions, there is unfortunately a lack of consensus on wild nature in general. Clearly, there are significant carbon implications in the entirety of wild nature—underground, in peat lands, grasslands, and other places. This, combined with the irreplaceable range of ecosystem services provided by wildlands, constitutes a compelling rationale



for *wilderness as a critical element in the global response to climate change*.

The WILD Foundation (www.wild.org)—founder and steward of the WWC process—is working with WILD9 co-host Unidos para la Conservación (www.upc.org) to coordinate a diverse group of partners and senior advisors from government, science, corporations, communities, education, and the arts. WILD9 will be chaired by Dr. Ezequiel Ezcurra, a well-known and respected ecologist in Mexico, and currently the director of the San Diego Museum of Natural History.

The first two days of WILD9 are the Global Wilderness Forum, composed of plenary sessions focused on geographic reports from around the world; an in-depth look at the Mayan world, its history, and what we can learn from it; major announcements on wilderness objectives by leaders from all sectors; and a cultural program presenting indigenous and contemporary arts, music, dance, photography, and more.

Following a day of exploration and experience in the jungles, beaches

and archeological sites of *El Mundo Maya*, delegates reconvene for five days of Wilderness Working Sessions. With wild nature and its essential services at the center of the action and practical outputs, the latest models, programs, research and ideas will be presented through plenary sessions in the morning, numerous concurrent sessions in the afternoons (Symposium on Wilderness Science and Stewardship), and an ongoing cultural program.

The WWC is the world's longest-running, public environmental forum, and focuses on the partnership between *wilderness and people* (*tierras silvestres y el hombre*). WILD9 continues this tradition, keeps respect for the spirit of wild nature at the center of the program, and expands numerous program areas such as the emphasis on youth and young professionals, and the integration of contemporary and traditional conservation knowledge and practice.

For all general information and to register as a delegate, visit www.wild9.org and contact info@wild9.org

For consideration as a participant in the concurrent sessions of the Symposium on Wilderness Science and Stewardship, contact: symposium@wild9.org

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