

A Brief History of the National Association of Recreation Resource Planners (NARRP)

(Formerly the National Association of State Recreation Planners, NASRP)

Origins:

The organization now known as the National Association of Recreation Resource Planners (NARRP) began in the late 1970's with discussions among State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP) planners about concerns they had with differences among the various states in administration of SCORP planning, as well as overall administration by the federal Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service (HCRS). The first nationwide conference of SCORP planners was held in Kansas City, Kansas in August 1981. The consensus of those attending was that there was a need for a permanent national organization to deal with issues related to SCORP planning.

A follow-up survey of SCORP planners from all jurisdictions found that 34 out of 45 respondents supported the establishment of a permanent organization to represent their concerns. Various efforts to organize such an organization finally culminated in a 1983 National Recreation Planners Workshop in Arlington, Virginia. The planners proceeded to organize and develop bylaws for the organization, which they named the National Association of State Recreation Planners (NASRP).

Early Success

In the late 1980's, NASRP devoted major effort to seeking the modification of federal regulations related to SCORP planning. It was a key participant in an NPS sponsored study of the status and future needs of SCORP planning conducted in 1988-89 and helped draft new SCORP planning guidelines for consideration by the NPS.

During the late 1980's and early 1990's, NARRP strengthened its ties with the U.S. Forest Service recreation planners group by coordinating meetings of that group in conjunction with the annual conference.

A Necessary Transition

By the early 1990's LWCF funding had all but dried up. SCORP planning activity was affected as both state SCORP planning staff and NPS assistance staff were reduced in number or redirected to different priorities. Though SCORP related activities had decreased, the annual meetings had demonstrated the need and desire on the part of many outdoor recreation planners for a continuing forum in which to exchange information and ideas.

By 1994, when the organization held its annual meeting in Denver, Colorado, there was consensus that the role of the organization should be expanded to cover the broad range of outdoor recreation planning activities in both the public and private sectors. SCORP planning remained as one element of a much broader scope of planning topics to be addressed. In recognition of this, the name of the organization was changed to the National Association of Recreation Resource Planners.

Efforts were made to recruit new members from among state, federal, local, private sector, and academic outdoor recreation planners and researchers. In 1995, NARRP was a co-sponsor and participated in the planning for the Fourth International Outdoor Recreation and Tourism Trends Symposium in St. Paul, Minnesota.

Recognizing that the web was becoming an important tool for recreation professionals, NARRP established a website in 1999 to promote the association and share information with members.

NARRP in a New Century

In the early part of the 21st Century, NARRP focused on presenting its annual conference as the premier venue for professional development through education and networking. Partnering with other organizations, including the National Association of State Outdoor Recreation Liaison Officers, NARRP has been able to consistently increase the value and attraction of the annual conference.

The resulting increase in conference attendance delivered increased revenue, which enabled NARRP to conduct an annual face-to-face board meeting. The annual meeting helped hasten NARRP's continued evolution and maturity.

In 2002 NARRP started communicating with members and professionals via email, which allowed for more timely communication of job and training announcements, and the newsletter moved to an electronic format. The website was enhanced in 2003, featuring the ability to join and register for the conference online with a credit card payment. The resulting savings and efficiencies further solidified NARRP's financial status.

Perhaps the most significant outcome of NARRP's financial success was the decision to retain professional management assistance. The Board began to research "outsourcing" options in 2005. By 2006, after careful deliberation, NARRP was ready to seek bids for management services. NARRP's decision to retain an association manager resulted in better record-keeping and more efficient service to members. An added benefit to our volunteer board was relief from routine business tasks, enabling the association's leadership to fill a more strategic role.

NARRP recruited liaisons from the senior recreation planning staff within the Bureau of Land Management, Bureau of Reclamation, National Park Service, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the U.S. Forest Service in 2006 and 2007 to provide more direct communications with recreation planners in the federal sector. The liaison program has been very successful in promoting NARRP and making connections between recreation planners across all sectors of the profession.

NARRP Today

NARRP is pursuing 501(c)3 non-profit organization status, expanding its scholarship program, engaging more diverse partners for our conferences, and exploring additional membership benefits.

NARRP continues to offer the premier professional development forum for recreation resource planners: our annual conference. The 2008 conference will take place in Missoula, Montana. The 2009 conference is scheduled for Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

NARRP continues to look at the web as the ideal tool to connect planners with the resources they need. Robust enhancements to the NARRP website are underway which will provide additional tools to help planners do their job better.

As for the future, NARRP looks to you. Volunteer! Attend our conference, join a committee, or run for a position on our Board. We'll help each other succeed.