

Background Paper

A More Inclusive and Representative Organization

The purpose of this paper is to briefly explain the rationale for why the Board of Directors of the National Association of Recreation Resource Planners has recommended that it change its name to the Society of Outdoor Recreation Professionals. The name change, as well as accompanying changes to the Vision, Mission, and Objectives requires a membership vote to finalize.

Brief History of the Association's Name

In 1983, the predecessor to NARRP was formed by the name of the National Association of State Recreation Planners (NASRP). The focus of NASRP was on statewide comprehensive outdoor recreation plans as required by the Land and Water Conservation Act (1965).

In the late 80s and early 90s, there was a decline in LWCF funding and support of statewide comprehensive outdoor recreation plans. Concurrently, as the result of a number of major federal planning laws, outdoor recreation and natural resource planning was required and commonplace at this time among the federal resource agencies. In response, in 1995 after the first 13 years of the association, NASRP made a strategic move to become more inclusive of all local, state and federal outdoor recreation planners by changing its name to the National Association of Recreation Resource Planners (NARRP).

In November, 2011, at NARRP's annual work session the Board had a lengthy discussion about its role, mission, changing external environment, and name. It was decided to engage the membership in a discussion through a series of email communications, web-surveys, consultation with state and federal liaisons, several Board meetings, and a poster session discussion at the 2012 annual conference in

Baton Rouge. After a very deliberate and transparent process, the NARRP Board unanimously passed a motion on April 17, 2012, to recommend to its membership a change in the name of the association to the Society of Outdoor Recreation Professionals.

Why does the Board recommend the change?

1. Planning is not an isolated activity separate from management, policy formulation and research. These four professional activities are synergistic and interdependent. Planning is a bridge to bring the best available research into management and policy decision making. As such, the Board and many members felt the exclusive focus on planning was no longer practical or effective.
2. Planning is no longer the domain of solely “planners,” but rather planning engages multi-disciplinary teams including managers and researchers with different expertise, responsibilities, academic backgrounds and professional experiences.
3. Membership in NARRP has increased 150% in five years since 2006, along with increased professional diversity in the type of members (e.g., planners, managers, academics, students, policy makers, senior executives, consultants, resource specialists, recreation industry). The NARRP name, with the focus on planning, is not inclusive of the many disciplines and job responsibilities reflected in the current membership.
4. The annual conference is more than a planning conference, but rather includes sessions, exhibits and poster displays on important management, research, and policy topics.
5. There is no professional organization that adequately provides the necessary leadership and services to advance the outdoor recreation profession. The Board sees a professional need and opportunity to expand its mission, vision, objectives, name and thus become more inclusive of diverse professionals.

6. The name National Association of Recreation Resource Planners is long and cumbersome; some feel that the acronym NARRP lacks professional appeal.
7. The outdoor recreation profession is a global profession. There are many examples where the state of the art is outside the United States. Thus, the Board and many members felt the use of the word “National” does not recognize our worldwide colleagues and discourages international membership and participation in the annual conference.
8. The name NARRP continues to cause confusion among some. A prevalent perception remains that NARRP is simply an association of state SCORP planners and others involved with the Land and Water Conservation Fund Act. The Board felt a new name was necessary to effectively communicate the association’s mission, vision, objectives, and diverse professional membership.