

National ECR2005 Conference to Reflect on Progress in a Growing Field

Tucson, AZ (April 18, 2005)—Over 400 attendees are expected to gather May 24-26, 2005 at the fourth national conference on environmental conflict resolution (ECR) in Tucson, Arizona to ask, "How well is ECR working? Can we do it better?" ECR tools and processes have been developing over the past 30 years to improve the way we address environmental challenges, make sound decisions and forge enduring policy. Conference attendees will reflect on progress in the field.

The conference, hosted by the U.S. Institute for Environmental Conflict Resolution (U.S. Institute), is expected to generate lively debate among leading thinkers from diverse backgrounds, viewpoints and professional practices asking tough questions of themselves and their colleagues. This candid self-assessment will explore: What lessons have we learned? What challenges do we face? What are the potentials and pitfalls of ECR? Are there proven pathways to successful outcomes? Can ECR really impact national environmental policy?

The conference, "Pathways to Successful ECR", is designed to foster a better understanding of ECR principles and practices to enhance the overall effectiveness of ECR processes. Additional tracks will focus on engaging multiple governments, parties and affected communities, and encouraging innovation and new applications in the field.

ECR2005 features three days of cutting-edge training workshops, dynamic panel sessions, interactive roundtable discussions, and opportunities to attend agency-specific side meetings. More than 60 individual presentations and seminars on ECR principles, techniques and issues have been developed to appeal to industry experts and novices alike.

Pre-conference activities on Tuesday, May 24 include training workshops ranging from *How to Facilitate a Public Process* and *Consultation with American Indian Tribes* to topics on *Advanced ECR Process Design*, *Getting the Most out of Collaboration*, and *Joint Fact-Finding* among others. Members of the U.S. Institute's National Roster of ECR and Consensus Building Professionals, a group of 260 practitioners coast to coast, will share perspectives on working together with the U.S. Institute to add value to ECR processes and meet collective best interests.

Plenary session highlights include:

- A panel discussion among environmental conflict veterans—including attorneys, government officials, and environmental advocates representing opposing sides—of the value, essential ingredients, and limitations of ECR.
- A view of ECR beyond U.S. borders. Presenters will hail from Chile, Scotland and Thailand to offer a glimpse into how successful practices vary among different cultures, political landscapes and legal contexts.
- Discussion by leaders of Native communities on the environmental challenges in the coming decades and the application of ECR practices in dealing with issues related to water rights, land use and jurisdiction, protection of sacred sites and the fulfillment of the federal trust responsibilities.

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The conference will also feature report findings from a two-year effort conducted by a National Environmental Conflict Resolution Advisory Committee (NECRAC) made up of 29 members representing a wide range of interests, including ranching, farming, business, non-profit groups, environmentalists, government agencies and tribal nations. The committee looked at what role ECR can play in implementing the 1969 National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)--the so-called "Magna Carta" of U.S. environmental law. A dozen conference sessions will examine various committee findings and their potential implications.

Some of the more popular conference sessions, based on early registrations, reflect the interests of a broad array of parties and practitioners engaged in a dynamically growing and evolving field. Among them are:

- *Challenges to Establishing Collaborative Institutions*
- *Counting What Matters in Successful Collaboration*
- *Ground Rules for Working w/ Difficult Groups*
- *Is ECR Good for the Environment? How Can We Tell?*
- *Mediating Across Cultures*
- *NEPA Section 101 & Better ECR Outcomes*
- *Politics & ECR: Toward Consensus-Based Outcomes*
- *Practical Uses of Multi-Party Monitoring in ECR*
- *Surveying our Values and Considering Neutrality*
- *Theory & Practice in ECR: Do They Relate?*

Conference attendees will include representatives of federal, state, and local governments, Native American nations, non-governmental organizations, ECR practitioners, environmental advocates, community-based groups, science and technical experts, environment and natural resource attorneys, public lands managers, funders of ECR processes, and dispute resolution and consensus-building professionals.

For more information about the ECR2005 conference, including a detailed agenda and session abstracts, visit www.mediusevents.com/ECR2005 or call 1-877-ECR-2005 or 1-520-624-1921. Advance registration discounts are available through April 15, 2005. Registration continues online, via fax, email or postal mail through May 13, 2005. After this date, all registration will be conducted on-site May 23-26, with additional late-fee surcharges.

In addition to the U.S. Institute and Morris K. Udall Foundation, conference sponsors include the Udall Center for Studies in Public Policy at The University of Arizona, U.S. Department of the Interior, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service and the U.S. Department of Transportation, Federal Highway Administration.

The U.S. Institute for Environmental Conflict Resolution is a federal program established in 1998 by the U.S. Congress to assist parties in resolving environmental, natural resource and public land conflicts. It is a program of the Tucson-based Morris K. Udall Foundation, an independent agency of the executive branch overseen by a board of trustees appointed by the President. The Morris K. Udall Foundation was established in 1992 by Congress to honor the late Morris K. Udall's thirty years of service in the House of Representatives. For more information about the Udall Foundation, visit www.udall.gov

The U.S. Institute serves as an impartial, non-partisan institution providing professional expertise, services and resources to all parties involved in environmental disputes, regardless of who initiates or pays for assistance. For more information about the U.S. Institute, call (520) 670-5299 or visit www.ecr.gov.