Ten years of dreams, proposals, negotiation, and debate culminated in 1980 with passage of the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA). With over 56 million acres (22.7 million ha) newly designated as wilderness, entire ecosystems were assured protection, a world standard for remote and wild opportunities for recreation visitors was created, and the sustainability of traditional relationships between rural and Native Alaskans and vast wilderness landscapes became more likely. Now, nearly 25 years after this designation, with spectacular wilderness resources legally protected, many issues that block full realization of the lofty intent of ANILCA remain unresolved. This special issue of the *IJW* is intended to provide a snapshot of some of those issues to help delegates to the 8th World Wilderness Congress (WWC), to be held in Anchorage, Alaska, from September 30 through October 6, 2005, understand the setting for this world event.

In this issue, we hear many voices beckoning from the Alaska wilderness. We hear the story of the Qikiktagrugmiut of Kotzebue about the Western Arctic Park lands and the meanings these Inupiat people attach to places in some of the wildest Alaska landscapes. They also tell us about some of the things that threaten this relationship. We learn about the relationships that students of the Wrangell Mountain Center develop with our nation’s largest national park and wilderness and how those relationships affect these students. The Wilderness Society expresses concern over lands and waters not protected as wilderness but that demonstrate outstanding wilderness character. Wilderness Watch, however, demonstrates more focus on the complexities of applying ANILCA to current Wilderness stewardship issues. The landscapes and the cultures of Alaska are constantly evolving. In this issue we also find a proposal for principles to guide us in stewardship of these constantly changing places, people, and relationships between the two.

People from many countries and cultures will come together in Anchorage, Alaska, in 2005 to discuss the array of human and wilderness connections. It is appropriate that we begin our analysis at home, with this special issue on Alaska, The Great Land. The wilderness and the people of Alaska have great things to offer. I only hope that WWC delegates find opportunities to come to know both.

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