

The Southern California Research Learning Center represented the National Park Service at the National Association for Interpretation Conference in Las Vegas, NV

By Kevin Schallert, Research Associate, Southern California Research Learning Center.

During the week of November 15th, staff from the Southern California Research Learning Center (SCRLC) represented the National Park Service at the annual conference of the National Association for Interpretation (NAI) in Las Vegas, NV. The SCRLC hosted LIVE programs and maintained an interactive booth in the central exhibit hall.

During the week-long conference, SCRLC director Susan Teel was awarded the National Park Service's Pacific West Region Freeman Tilden Award honoring her excellence in interpretation and education. It was

specifically awarded for her work in collaborating with partners and coordinating the Sea to Shinning Sea and LIVE programs. These distance education programs use low cost equipment to remotely connect the public with scientists and educators in parks. The LIVE backpack, developed by the High Performance Wireless Research and Education Network (HPWREN), has become a national model for use by distance education programs and has allowed parks to engage audiences who would not otherwise experience these national treasures.



National Park Service Regional Freeman Tilden Award winners and Julia Washburn, NPS Assistant Director for Interpretation and Education are all smiles following the award ceremony.

Regional awardees from left to right: John Kirkpatrick, Spirit Trickey, Susan Teel, Laura Hennig, Ingrid Nixon, Frank Barrows, Julia Washburn.

The SCRLC demonstrated the versatility of the Sea to Shinning Sea LIVE program by partnering with MGM Resorts International and collaborating with program sponsor HPWREN to broadcast a live interpretative program from Mandalay Bay Resort and Casino's Shark Reef Aquarium. SCRLC Research Associates and Shark Reef Curator Jack Jewel used a Remotely Operated Vehicle to broadcast an interactive program through the eyes of an onboard submersible camera in a 1.3 million gallon shark tank. Students from South Broward Marine Magnate School and NAI participants in the exhibit hall were able to converse with Jack as the ROV broadcasted live video during an active shark feeding. This demonstration showed the adaptability of the Sea to Shinning Sea LIVE programs, presented the research and education programs of the Shark Reef Aquarium and excited high school students and professional interpreters alike. Broadcast were also made from the shark reef aquarium to HPWREN Headquarters, Guadalupe Mountainous National Park, and Pepperdine University – Malibu Campus.

NAI Highlights



Nick de Roulhac, Karl Pierce and Susan Teel interact with NAI members at SCRLC Booth.



Guadalupe Mountains Chief of Interpretation Karl Pierce and SCRLC Director Susan Teel in front of SCRLC display.



SCRLC Research Associate Kevin Schallert coordinates LIVE broadcasts.



Shark Reef General Curator Jack Jewel in action as he interprets the aquarium by broadcasting his voice and monitoring video feed from the ROV and from his audience at South Broward Marine Magnet School.



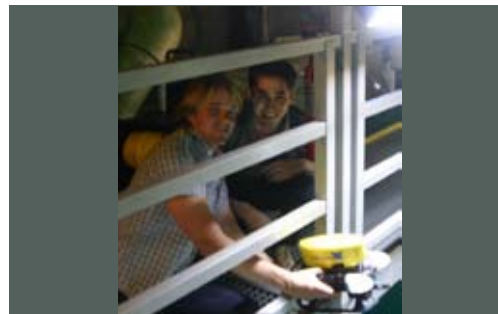
SCRLC's LIVE interactive portal at NAI.



Karl Pierce interacts LIVE with Shark Reef aquarium using low cost, portable equipment and a system developed by the Sea to Shining Sea team.



A shark and the NPS ROV inside the aquarium



Nick de Roulhac and SCRLC program assistant John Jimmo launch the ROV into the Shark Reef



SCRLC Research Associate Nick deRoulhac demonstrates radio telemetry to NAI members.

During the NAI conference, the SCRLC and Sea to Shining Sea project welcomed Guadalupe Mountains National Park (GUMO) as they successfully broadcast a program to the NPS booth. Staff at GUMO conducted an interpretive program highlighting scenic geological features and the natural vegetation of the park.

The SCRLC hosted a booth at NAI which afforded staff the opportunity to connect with over one thousand conference attendees. Programs and communication materials presented by SCRLC staff included; the LIVE Shark Reef ROV presentation from Mandalay Bay; updates from citizen science projects conducted at Channel Islands NP and Santa Monica Mountains NRA; Climate Change programs sponsored by Cabrillo NM; the inaugural LIVE program from Guadalupe Mountains NP; climate change outreach materials from a number of parks; advisement of lessons learned and best practices associated with citizen science projects; and information about starting up Sea to Shinning Sea LIVE programs.



Santa Monica NRA Interpretative Ranger Ken Low engages NAI members.