

GREDOS DECLARATION of the 1st Congress of Mountain Professionals working in Protected Natural Areas

The 1st Congress of Mountain Professionals working in Protected Natural Areas took place in the Regional Park of the Gredos Mountains (Ávila) from 16th to 18th May, 2008. It was attended by representatives from mountaineering federations, managers of protected natural areas, mountain refuge wardens, entrepreneurs involved in active tourism and mountain guides, from the autonomous regions of Andalusia, Aragon, Asturias, the Canaries, Castilla y León, Catalonia, Valencia, Madrid, Murcia and the Basque Country.

Those attending the Congress agreed to release the following conclusions drawn from the ensuing debates, in a desire to convey such ideas to all those agents interested in mountaineering in natural areas:

The playing field for mountain sports is the natural environment and, in many cases, protected natural areas. All those present agree on the need to work together on ways to reconcile conservation and enjoyment of nature in protected natural areas so as to achieve logical regulations that are the product of consensus and effective scientific research.

The organisations involved in sports activities in the mountains should be given a voice and should contribute to drawing up logical regulations governing these activities. Current systems of participation in the management of protected natural areas should be strengthened by on-going mechanisms of cooperation that foster participation in both the processes leading to the adoption of decisions that affect them and in carrying out scientific studies designed to offer them support, along with the procedures for drawing up planning and management documents for these areas (PORN (Spanish acronym standing for *Planes de Ordenación de los Recursos Naturales* – Natural Resource Development Plans) and PRUG, (Spanish acronym for *Planes Rectores de Uso y Gestión*, or Master Plans for Use and Management)).

Sportsmen and women, professionals and instructors who carry out their activities in these protected natural areas must be familiar with the values that inspired the declaration of the region as a protected area and include these in their code of practice. There is a need for communication and cooperation between those who conduct their work and leisure activities in the protected areas and the authorities if this goal is to be achieved effectively. Such collaboration should also cover training processes regarding the environment so that, with the help of professionals and volunteers from the clubs, a greater knowledge is gained of the values of the environment concerned and responsible attitudes are spread more widely.

The levels of communication obtained show the convenience of holding more meetings to encourage joint reflection on issues, the regulation and management of which are of interest to various social organisations that are willing to cooperate with the public authorities to obtain a consensus of opinion regarding the type of sports activities that are conducted in the protected natural areas. Such agreements should also be obtained on an individual basis in each protected natural area.

Navarredonda de Gredos, 17th May 2008