

The Malibu Declaration

The five regions of the world that have Mediterranean-type climates are some of the most human-impacted environments on earth. This has serious consequences for the natural systems of these regions, and for the many millions of people who live in them.

Mediterranean-type climates have mild, rainy winters and hot, dry summers. They are found only in five widely separated parts of the world:

- Australia, in southern parts of the states of Western Australia, South Australia, and Victoria;
- California, with small adjacent sections of the U.S. state of Oregon and the state of Baja California, Mexico;
- Central Chile;
- The Cape region of South Africa; and
- A large area centered in the Mediterranean Basin that extends through thirty countries in North Africa, Southern Europe, and West Asia.

Ecosystems in Mediterranean-type regions are extraordinarily rich in biodiversity. For example, although they cover only 2.25 percent of the earth's land surface, they contain 20 percent of its named vascular plant species, including over 26,000 endemic species. Per unit of area, they face greater immediate threats than any other species-rich region on earth.

Rampant urbanization is the main threat to biodiversity in these regions. It is also a major threat to the health and well-being of the people who live in them. The favorable climates of Mediterranean-type regions make them magnets for migration and tourism. Although they include twelve of the world's hundred largest cities, most new development is in suburbs, smaller settlements, and resort and agricultural communities.

Problems related to urbanization include clearance of indigenous vegetation; spread of invasive alien species of plants and animals that displace indigenous species and disrupt natural systems; catastrophic fires along the urban-wildland interface and in forest settlements; air pollution; overdraw of groundwater; poor quality of fresh water; and marine pollution from urban runoff.

Mediterranean-type regions are particularly sensitive to climate change, which is likely to make their summers

even hotter and drier. In urbanized areas, this will mean increased levels of fine dust and ground-level ozone, both serious hazards to human health. Water supplies are likely to become less reliable. Semi-arid portions of these regions are subject to desertification.

Lifestyles in these regions often fail to take into account the limits of their natural systems, for example, in building in fire-prone woodlands, or wasting water. Public policies and education about the environment are often based on locations with very different climates.

Clearly there is a positive side to human intervention in Mediterranean-type environments. For example, there are some compact, well-managed towns and cities. Many traditional landscapes have been farmed or grazed sustainably for centuries. In some locations prime natural areas are carefully protected. However, degradation is the general trend.

Assembled in Malibu, California, for Med-5: A Workshop to Design an Intercontinental Program on Cities and Conservation in Mediterranean-type Ecosystems, we resource managers, scientists, and planners from the five Mediterranean-type regions:

CALL ON political leaders, governments at all levels, citizens, and the private sector to:

- Expand and improve systems of protected areas to safeguard and restore remaining fragments of Mediterranean-type ecosystems in the face of urban sprawl and climate change;
- Provide urban residents with access to nature; and educate citizens who live in Mediterranean-type regions about the distinctive character of their surroundings and the many benefits they derive from natural resources;
- Promote sustainable cities and adopt a comprehensive approach to decision-making that recognizes the interdependence of cities and larger environments.

SUPPORT the organization of an intercontinental program on cities and conservation in Mediterranean-type ecosystems to facilitate exchange of information and experience; train leaders; develop improved policies and tools for management and public education; and provide a voice for these regions in the international conservation community.

REGARD this program as an opportunity to find more effective ways of bringing together conservationists with urban officials, managers, and planners to work toward common goals.

URGE the Third World Conservation Congress, meeting in Bangkok, Thailand, in November 2004, to recognize the importance of, and threats to, Mediterranean-type ecosystems, and call on governments and intergovernmental organizations to proclaim a Decade of Action to protect them.



The Malibu Declaration was adopted on 13 April 2004 on behalf of workshop participants by the Organizing Committee for an Intercontinental Program on Cities and Conservation in Mediterranean-type Ecosystems:

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Med-5: A Workshop to Design an Intercontinental Program on Cities and Conservation in Mediterranean-type Ecosystems was hosted by the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy (a unit of the Resources Agency of California) at its headquarters in Ramirez Canyon Park, Malibu, California, USA, on 21-24 March 2004.

The workshop was organized by the California Institute of Public Affairs for the World Commission on Protected Areas of IUCN - The World Conservation Union.

