

Catalina Island hosts international delegation



Pictured above are the participants in this year's International Visitor Leadership Program. The Catalina Island Conservancy hosted the group of international guests early last month. Courtesy photo

Conservancy chosen by State Dept. program

FOR THE ISLANDER

Catalina Island expanded its worldview last month when a group of 20 professionals from countries all over the globe visited to learn about environment protection and biodiversity conservation.

The visitors, participants of the U.S. Department of State's International Visitor Leadership Program and hosted by the Catalina Island Conservancy, enjoyed a full day on April 6 of hands-on learning regarding the conservation

and environmental work of the Conservancy on Catalina Island.

The International Visitor Leadership Program is the U.S. Department of State's premier professional exchange program. Through short-term visits to the United States, current and emerging foreign leaders in a variety of fields experience the U.S. firsthand and cultivate lasting relationships with their American counterparts. The State Department selects each participant through a nomination process with the staff at U.S. embassies around the world.

The majority of IVLP exchanges are generally three weeks in length and focus on a particular theme.

This trip ran from April 2 to April 20 starting in Washington DC and focused on environment protection and biodiversity conservation at locations all over the country, including Catalina Island on April 6.

Conservancy President and CEO Tony Budrovich and Avalon Mayor Anni Marshall welcomed the group to the Avalon City Council chambers where they enjoyed the Conservancy's naturalist training by education staff. The visit continued with a stop at the Nature Center at Avalon Canyon and then all made their way up to the Airport in the Sky for lunch and discussions on best practices

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in biodiversity conservation, wildlife management and sustainable tourism. The afternoon was spent touring the interior of the Island, visiting the Conservancy's James Ackerman Native Plant Nursery and meeting with Conservancy plant, wildlife and trails managers to continue learning about the Conservancy's work in education, recreation and conservation. This is not the first time the Conservancy has hosted a group of international visitors through IVLP – they have participated for several years and have been honored to do so. "Having Conservationists from around the world learn about managing such a large and complex organization as the Catalina Island Conservancy provides an opportunity to showcase

The work of the Conservancy to an international audience," says Frank Galea, director of Conservation with the Catalina Island Conservancy.

Natalia Lvovich, Director of International Programs at the International Visitors Council of Los Angeles, organizes the IVLP visits to the Los Angeles area. "The International Visitors Council of Los Angeles creates international understanding and cooperation between the Los Angeles region and the rest of the world through Citizen Diplomacy," Lvovich says.