

Subject: AUGUST NRSS REPORT

Apologies for lateness--in my rush to get this out before my last trip, I apparently reviewed it but forgot to post it. Thanks to a great group of effective division and other office coordinators who are assembling the report, it is now normally produced AND distributed in a very timely manner--Abby

ADNRSS MONTHLY REPORT
August 1998

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

NEW WORLD BUYOUT BECOMES REALITY On August 7 the two-year, \$65 million Federal buyout of properties associated with the proposed New World gold/silver/copper mine adjacent to Yellowstone National Park was finally accomplished, making those properties part of the Gallatin National Forest. The buyout was initiated because of government and conservation group concerns that the mine, if constructed, posed a significant risk to the park and ecosystem. The final step in the buyout process was the transfer of \$42.5 million to Crown Butte Mining and their associated companies and the payment of \$22.5 million to the New World Mining District cleanup account. The Park Service will remain involved in the cleanup phase, which is designed to mitigate impacts from more than 100 years of small-scale mining in the New World District.

UNIVERSITY PROFESSOR TO CREATE GEOLOGY TRAINING GUIDES FOR PARKS The Park Service's appreciation for his recent assistance to Crater Lake National Park prompted Dr. Robert Lillie, a geology professor with particular expertise in plate tectonics, to further assist the NPS during his sabbatical from Oregon State University. Dr. Lillie will create park-specific geologic training guides for resource and interpretation staff, assist with interpretation of park geology to visitors, and summarize recent research on plate tectonics for Blue Ridge Parkway, Gulf Islands, Sunset Crater, Mount Rainier, Olympic, and Haleakala. The ecological focus in the geology guides will show that geology is part of the ecosystem and will also enhance links to guides for other resources. Dr. Lillie's work will be funded by the Geologic Resources Division, with matching funds provided by the parks, park associations and the Southeast Regional Office. Dr. Lillie has expressed interest in assisting other parks in the future. Parks can also contact the Division for assistance through our Geologist-in-the-Parks Program.

FEDERAL REGISTER NOTICE FOR NEW NATIONWIDE PERMITS The Water Resources Division prepared comments in opposition to modifications to the Corps of Engineers' Clean Water Act Section 404 permit program. The proposal includes 6 new nationwide permits (NWP) and 1 new condition, and modifying 6 existing NWPs and 6 existing conditions. The NPS concerns were based on a large expansion of waters covered under the nationwide permit program, which has little or no review by other agencies. The current nationwide permit #26 (which the new NWPs

were designed to replace) will expire 12/13/98 with a probable extension to 3/28/99. When NWP #26 expires, the new nationwide permits will be implemented. (See related article below.)

NEW DEVELOPMENTS

SUMMER 1998 HIGH OZONE HIT LIST The summer of 1998 is shaping up to have the highest ozone concentrations since 1988. Seven parks already have the 4th highest 8-hour average concentrations of greater than 85 ppb. Great Smoky Mountains, Sequoia, Shenandoah, and Joshua Tree National Parks are having exceptionally bad years from a pollution standpoint. Several parks that had not previously been exceeding the 1-hour National Ambient Air Quality Standard (NAAQS) are now exceeding the 8-hour averages of 85 ppb. For more information, you can visit our web page at <http://www.nature.nps.gov/ard/gas/o3hitlst.htm> or contact John Ray at 303-969-2820.

NPS monitoring stations exceeding the NAAQS of 85 ppb O3 over 8-hours in 1998

May National 8-hr	June Park	July (ppb)	August count 8-hr O3	Season Total O3 count	Max 4th 8-hr count	max count	
(ppb)							
Great Smoky Mts							
	Cades Cove	2		1	3	86	
	Clingmans Dome		6	1	15	22	100
91							
	Cove Mountain		9	2	13	24	99
98							
	Look Rock	7	1	1	14	23	94
	Mammoth Cave	3			4	7	88
	Shenandoah	2	4	2	7	15	118
	Joshua Tree		1	8	5	14	85
	Rocky Mountain		1	1	1	3	87
Sequoia-Kings Canyon							
	Lower Keweah		1	17	7	25	85
	Lookout Point			2	6	19	27
99							
	Big Bend		1		1		
	Death Valley			1		1	
	Pinnacles		1	3	4	97	85
	Grand Canyon			1		1	117
	Craters of the Moon					1	1
Yosemite			3	4	7	100	90

IMPORTANT NOTE: This table is based on screened, raw data and is not final. There were no exceedances of either the 1-hr or 8-hr standards prior to May in 1998.

The National Ambient Air Quality Standard (NAAQS) for ozone is 0.8 ppm (≥ 85 ppb) over any 8-hr period in a day, using the 4th highest annual values averaged over 3 years. The table above counts the number of times that the max. daily 8-hr averages exceeded 85 ppb.

CAPULIN VOLCANO IS SLIPPING AWAY Geologic Resources Division staff visited Capulin Volcano National Monument to evaluate active erosional and sedimentary processes associated with the Mountain Road and to

identify possible actions to mitigate road-caused problems. This information will help the park set long-term direction for addressing erosion in the General Management Plan, which is currently being updated. The Mountain Road climbs around the volcano and is causing localized but significant acceleration of natural erosional processes on Capulin Mountain in four ways: (1) cutbanks undercut natural slopes and low-order stream channels, (2) surface runoff intensity and frequency is increased, (3) misplaced culverts direct runoff onto unsuitable slopes, and (4) diversion of surface runoff disrupts natural hydrologic patterns. To be successful, actions to mitigate the accelerated erosion will need to consider these four elements.

NEW CORPS OF ENGINEERS PERMITS PROCESS The Corps will be issuing new nationwide permits in spring 1999. These permits fall under the Clean Water Act Section 404 permit program for discharges into waters of the U.S. (e.g., wetlands, streams, lakes). The current proposal (Federal Register Vol. 63, No. 126, 7/1/98) means that more projects will fall under nationwide permits (quickly issued permits that allow for little or no review by other agencies or neighboring landowners). If your park is concerned with water activities upstream, downstream, or adjacent to your park, contact your Corps District office to be included in the development of their regional conditions (currently underway). All Corps Districts will develop regional conditions for the new nationwide permits (NWP) that can address: restricting the types of waters where NWPs can be used; prohibiting the use of NWPs in certain waters; prohibiting the use of NWPs in watersheds where the cumulative adverse environmental effects are more than minimal; reducing the acreage limit of a NWP; and adding notification requirements for work in certain waters. You can access the Federal Register notice at <http://www.usace.army.mil/inet/functions/cw/cecwo/reg/index2.htm> along with addresses and phone numbers for Corps District offices. For further information, contact Leslie Krueger via cc: mail or (303) 969-2815.

NPS RESEARCH AND COLLECTING PERMIT SYSTEM - PROPOSED REVISION Regional Directors have been asked to review a proposed revision of the NPS Research and Collecting Permit System with comments due by September 18. This proposal will create a uniform permit application, review, and approval system that will be the basis of an NPS submission to OMB for approval of a new research permit application form. The new process will take advantage of Internet technology and will simplify the process for applicants and make it consistent across parks. It will also result in improved management of park-based research, most of which is funded by outside agencies and organizations, including improved capture of information from research conducted in parks.

PROGRESS

COLORADO MAPPING PILOT PROJECT The I&M Geologic Mapping Pilot Project, conducted by the Information and Geologic Resources Divisions, met with staff from Rocky Mountain, Great Sand Dunes, Black Canyon, and Curecanti. The Project's recent findings and actions include:

- The Rocky Mountain National Park geologic map has been digitized and will be converted to ARCVIEW by the Natural Resources Program Center and the U.S. Geologic Survey.
- There is no report or publication dedicated to the overall geology of Rocky Mountain National Park.
- Great Sand Dunes National Monument geologist Andrew Valdez will compile the park's geologic map coverage into a single source and the Program Center will provide digitizing.

- The Program Center will assist in funding the preparation of an overall geologic report for Great Sand Dunes.
- A volunteer is currently digitizing the BLCA/CURE geologic maps, which are nearly complete. The Pilot Project will provide funding for the completion of the existing digitizing project and the compilation and digitization of the remaining pieces. Additionally, the volunteer will work on a digital Florissant Fossil Bed map.

GRD STAFF EVALUATE ACTIVE OIL AND GAS OPERATIONS IN BIG THICKET At the Superintendent's request, Division staff traveled to Big Thicket National Preserve to evaluate active and inactive nonfederal oil and gas operations. This evaluation was to determine operator compliance with NPS regulations and identify actions that operators can employ to further reduce adverse impact to park resources and values. An ongoing 3D geophysical operation assessed by the Division is employing state-of-the-art techniques; thus adverse environmental impacts should be short-term. After evaluating 26 oil and gas well sites, GRD staff advised park management that several active well operations located in the park only need improved site maintenance actions (e.g., removal of extraneous equipment, painting, tank battery firewall repair, etc.); operators of inactive wells should be required to improve maintenance practices or plug the wells and complete reclamation; and surface operations for directional wells drilling from outside the park are in very good order. GRD staff is preparing a report detailing results of the site inspections and specific management recommendations for each operation.

REPORTS

INVENTORY AND MONITORING ANNUAL REPORT Printed copies of the 1997 Annual Report of the Inventory and Monitoring Program were mailed to all NPS units with significant natural resources and to regions, divisions, and various individuals in sundry governmental and nongovernmental agencies. The electronic version of the report may be viewed at <http://www.aqd.nps.gov/pubs/97I&M/97I&M.htm>. A hard copy may be requested from Gary Williams, Manager of the I&M Program (970-225-3539). For further information contact the editor, Elizabeth Rockwell (970-225-3541).

PROFESSIONAL MEETING ATTENDANCE/PAPERS

NATIONAL SPELEOLOGICAL SOCIETY CONVENTION Twelve Park Service cave specialists attended the NSS Convention and participated in a variety of meetings and sessions. Bobby Camarra (HAVO) led a special session on current speleological work in HAVO. Joel Despain and Greg Stock (SEKI) were recipients of the NSS Cartographic Medal Award for their maps of Crystal Cave. Mike Wiles (JECA), Rod Horrocks (GRBA) and Stan Allison (CAVE) all presented speleological papers covering work from South Dakota to Mexico. In addition, NPS cave specialists were speakers at the National Cave Management Symposium Steering Committee meeting and a special session on research and exploration in Lechuguilla Cave, and fielded questions and comments regarding use of NPS caves in a proposed large format film.

VENEZUELAN VISITOR Mr. Luis Ramirez of INPARQUES, Venezuela's National Park Service, attended the ESRI GIS Conference and toured several western parks for an NPS GIS orientation. He was escorted by Leslie Armstrong (GIS) and Dave Best (Redwoods NP GIS). NPS has a Memorandum of Understanding with the Venezuelan national parks institute and is supporting its efforts to build up and modernize its infrastructure and park management and to implement GIS. INPARQUES has a 95M World Bank loan for these developments over the next several years. For further information contact Leslie Armstrong

UPCOMING CONFERENCES/TRAINING

THE MAN AND THE BIOSPHERE PROGRAM The Southern Appalachian Man and the Biosphere Cooperative's (SAMAB) 9th annual fall conference is scheduled for November 4-6, 1998, in Gatlinburg, TN, at the Days Inn-Glenstone Lodge. The conference theme is "Think Clean, Think Native, Think Sustainable." The SAMAB WEB Page is samab@ix.netcom.com.

THE NATURAL AREAS ASSOCIATION The 25th Annual Natural Areas Association Conference will take place October 6-10, 1998, at Mission Point Resort, Mackinac Island, Michigan. The WEB Site is http://wildlife/dnr.state.mi.us/HomePages/Meetings/Natural_Areas_1998. The theme of the conference reflects the Native American tradition. Telephone number for the Natural Areas Association is 517-241-2974. NPS NNL Program Regional Coordinators will be attending.

THE GEORGE WRIGHT SOCIETY The George Wright Society's 10th Conference on Research and Resource Management in Parks and on Public Lands will take place March 22-26, 1999, at the Great Smokies Holiday Inn SunSpree Resort, Asheville, NC. The conference theme is "On the Frontiers of Conservation: Discovery, Reappraisal, and Innovation." The conference WEB Site is <http://www.portup.com/~gws/gws/99.html>. Abstracts are being accepted until October 15. The Society can be contacted at gws@mail.portup.com or 906-487-9722.

ECOSYSTEM MANAGEMENT/REGIONAL PLANNING TRAINING OPPORTUNITY BLM may offer another training course in "Community-Based Partnerships and Ecosystems for a Healthy Environment" in 1998 during October-December, but only if there is sufficient interest. A location in the West has not yet been selected. If you are interested, send an NPS e:mail message to [Shafer, Craig]. The course would be appropriate for Superintendents, Assistant Superintendents, Natural Resources Management Specialists, and others with significant responsibilities in local community outreach. There are two other times in 1999 BLM will offer this training: Pinedale, Wyoming (2/9-2/11) and Tonapha, Nevada (3/9-3/11). The tuition for any of this training would be covered by WASO.