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Subject: Natural Resources Monthly Report

Associate Director, Natural Resource Stewardship and Science  
Monthly Report  
December 1999

NATURAL RESOURCE CHALLENGE

RESOURCE CAREERS IMPLEMENTED - Director Stanton signed the memorandum implementing Resource Careers on December 17, 1999, and has forwarded for distribution to the WASO directorate, regional directors, and superintendents. The memorandum and material on Resource Careers are available on the web at [www1.nrintra.nps.gov/careers](http://www1.nrintra.nps.gov/careers); digital versions of this information is being transferred onto CDs for wider distribution. Contact Abby Miller at (202) 208-4650.

DEVELOPMENT OF AN RMP DATABASE SYSTEM SOLUTION - On December 2 a memo was issued by the Associate Director for Natural Resource Stewardship and Science to convene a working group of park, regional, and WASO natural resource program managers for the collaborative development of a database system solution to replace the previous DOS-based RMP software approach and optimize integration with OFS, PMIS, and other existing NPS database systems. This working group will include cultural resource program managers from appropriate centers and WASO to insure the preparation of an interdisciplinary database system. The group begins its work in mid-January. Contact Gary Mason, NSMO, at 202-208-4632.

OTHER MAJOR ACCOMPLISHMENTS

MULTI-DISCIPLINARY EFFORT SHAPES FEDERAL PALEONTOLOGICAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT REPORT TO CONGRESS - In response to a request by Congress, eight federal bureaus and agencies (BLM, BOR, BIA, F&WS, NPS, USGS, Forest Service, and the Smithsonian) developed a report assessing the need for a unified federal policy on the collection, storage, and preservation of fossils. The report also suggested strategies for maximizing the availability of fossils for scientific study. The report concludes that fossils on federal lands often deteriorate or are lost through theft, vandalism, and other causes, while noting that this problem is exacerbated more by lack of personnel and resources than by inconsistent federal policies. The report advocates improving fossil assessment, management and protection through agency partnerships and the enactment of corresponding framework legislation while maintaining that fossil collection on federal lands for purposes other than science, education, or recreation is incompatible with the public

interest. NPS participation in the preparation of this report came from the parks, Geologic Resources Division, Ranger Activities Division, and Museum Management Program. Contact Julia Brunner at (303) 969-2012.

ARIZONA COURT DECISION ON GROUNDWATER RIGHTS - More than a decade after it was asked the question, the Arizona Supreme Court has ruled that the federal reserved water rights doctrine extends to groundwater that is not subject to prior appropriation under Arizona law. While not determining that any specific federal reservation has a reserved right to groundwater, the ruling points to the need for "fact-intensive inquiries" to "determine the purpose of a reservation and to determine the water necessary to accomplish that purpose". In handing down its ruling, the Court stated that, while previous Court decisions and Arizona law often separated surface and ground water, "federal law does not permit us that option in deciding the extent of federal reserved rights". Contact Chuck Pettee, WRD, at 970-225-3505.

#### HEADS UP

SUSPENSION OF CURRENT RMP REQUIREMENT THROUGH FY2000 - On November 30 a joint memo was issued by the Associate Director for Natural Resource Stewardship and Science, and the Associate Director for Cultural Resource Stewardship and Partnerships suspending the requirement for parks to continue to have a current, approved Resource Management Plan (RMP) in FY2000. The suspension provides time for the preparation of Director's Order 73 concerning to park RMP requirements, including coordination with Director's Order 2, the migration of NPS-77 to Director's Order 77, and the incorporation of new guidance into park RMPs. The requirement for a current, approved park RMP continues for project proposals previously submitted as part of the funding call and destined for funding in FY2000. The suspension does apply to project proposals that may be advanced as part of the upcoming FY2001 funding call. Contact Gary Mason, NSMO, at 202-208-4632.

#### PROGRESS

COMPETITION FOR USGSD/BRD PARK ORIENTED BIOLOGICAL SUPPORT - The call for proposals for Park Oriented Biological Support, using both USGS and NPS funding, resulted in 113 proposals. The USGS Biological Resources Division (BRD) convened a panel of USGS and NPS scientists to review the technical merits of the proposals. The panel recommended on technical merit more projects worthy of consideration for funding than available funds. BRD and NPS will review the technical recommendations and announce funding decisions before mid-January. Contact John Dennis at (202) 208-5193.

DAM REMOVAL PROJECT PLANNING AT FLORISSANT - 44 dams originally constructed in the 1940's and 1950's at Florissant Fossil Beds National Monument are being assessed for removal. Responsible for increased erosion and sedimentation the dams will be used to develop a model that will set removal priorities through assistance from Colorado State University. The results of the assessment and modeling will provide the basis for a draft work plan to be supported through Disturbed Lands Restoration project funds. Contact David Steensen, GRD, at 303-969-2014.

PECOS RIPARIAN RESTORATION PROJECT PROCEEDING - The restoration of a five-acre riparian-wetland on Glorieta Creek at Pecos National Historical Park has completed its first phase. Earthmoving at the former sand and gravel mining site recently included within the park is supporting the restoration of local hydrologic, topography, and vegetation. Revegetation with native plant species will follow in the spring of 2000. Contact Dan Kimball, WRD, at 970-225-3501.

PUBLIC MEETING ON DRAFT FLAG REPORT - Some 50 industry, State/federal regulators, and environmental consultants attended a public meeting hosted by the NPS and the air quality offices of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and USDA, Forest Service, to receive

public comments on the draft FLAG Phase I Report. The Federal Land Managers' (FLMs) Air Quality Related Values Work Group (FLAG) was formed to develop a more consistent approach for the FLMs, i.e., NPS, FWS, and FS, to evaluate air pollution effects on their resources and will consider all comments received and revise the draft report accordingly. Based on requests made at the meeting, FLAG has extended the public comment period by 30 days until February 7, 2000. Contact John Bunyak, ARD, at 303-969-2818.

NATIONAL NATURAL LANDMARKS - The U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) is issuing formal guidance to assure that National Natural Landmarks (NNLs) are adequately assessed in conjunction with DOE NEPA processes. In separate matters, a Section 9 report on surface mining at Cinder Cones NNL, San Bernardino County, California, is undergoing WASO review, and responses to several FOIA requests, numerous Congressional inquiries, and other requests for information were prompted by misinformation placed on the Internet by a non-NPS third party. Contact Craig Shafer, NSMO, at 202-219-8934.

PROFESSIONAL PAPERS PUBLISHED ON NPS ANIMAL MANAGEMENT POLICIES - The George Wright Society has published the papers from an NPS-sponsored 1997 symposium at a meeting of The Wildlife Society designed to explore existing NPS animal management policies. Together, these papers provide from both bureau and park standpoints perspectives that emphasize that there are more types of animals in parks than the large, charismatic "wildlife"; discuss the importance of considering vegetation, ecosystems, and past events in considerations of animal management in parks; explore the relationship of values and science in policy formulation and discuss who makes policy and in what manner; and emphasize the need for partnership between park animal management and animal management in the larger landscapes that contain the parks. These papers appear in Vol. 16, No. 3, of the George Wright Forum. Contact John Dennis, NSMO, at 202-208-5193.

NPS JOINS STAY OUT-STAY ALIVE PROGRAM PARTNERSHIP - The NPS has joined 31 partners through the Office of Surface Mining and Mine Safety Health Administration's Mine Hazard Awareness Campaign in the development of a plan to alert school-age children, their parents, and outdoor enthusiasts to the dangers of abandoned mine property. Contact Philip Cloues, GRD, at 303-969-2148.

PROFESSIONAL INFORMATION EXCHANGE WITH CHINESE OILFIELD MANAGERS - NPS representatives recently met with a group consists of engineers, geologists, economists, and managers associated with the Shengli Oil Field in China States attending a short course in oilfield economics at the Colorado School of Mines. A slide show entitled "Soft Footprints" contrasting the adverse impacts of poorly planned and operated oil and gas operations with more environmentally sensitive approaches was presented to the Chinese group and provided an opportunity for international sharing of information relating to environmental impact mitigation techniques. Contact Pat O'Dell, GRD, at 303-969-2013.