

Subject: January Monthly Report from WASO Assoc.Dir Office NR

NRACers,

Here's the latest monthly report from Abby Miller's office.

Some interesting topics in this report you'll probably want to read:

- Heads up on FY 00 Unified Call (due out last of Feb),
- some blurbs on the NRI,
- identification of the NRI workgroup chairs (action plans done by March 1),
- increased funding in GS for water resources assessments in NPS units,
- lawsuit in Glacier NP for NEPA noncompliance (Joan!!),
- various items on NPS USGS cooperation, and
- notice of a recent panel on Ecological Integrity with Parks Canada (did anyone in Alaska know of or attend this?)

Alex

Forward Header

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

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

SETTLEMENT MONIES RECEIVED - A cashier's check for over \$3.6 million dollars has been received in the Department of the Interior's Natural Resource Damage Assessment Fund on behalf of the National Park Service (NPS) and other resource Trustees. The settlement is a result of the October 1996 Cape Mohican oil spill in San Francisco Bay. The settlement money will be used for natural resource restoration projects in affected National Park System areas as well as other impacted lands. Five NPS areas were adversely affected by the spill, including Fort Point National Historic Site, San Francisco Maritime National Historic Park, Point Reyes National Seashore, and portions of the Golden Gate National Recreation Area. The loss and diminishment of services to the public provided by these NPS areas resulted in a substantial claim for damages for lost use. Rick Dawson, Dan Hamson, Bruce Peacock and Tammy Angel from the Environmental Quality Division's ERPA unit all played key roles in obtaining this

settlement. Tammy Angel will continue her involvement in the restoration phases of this project; she currently serves as chairperson of the Trustee Council. Key legal advice was provided by Chuck McKinley of the San Francisco Office of the Solicitor.

GEOSCIENCE BULLETIN BOARD - The ccMail Geoscience Bulletin Board is now up and running. This location is a combination of two geology-related bulletin boards that previously existed on various ccMail systems - Cave Net and Geoscience. This bulletin board will be available to everyone on the Cave Net BB distribution list as well as to a broader NPS audience that had previously been set up for the Geoscience BB. Everyone is encouraged to use this location to post geology-related messages and to convene virtual discussions on caves and other more specialized geology concerns.

INSECT SUPPRESSION FUNDING APPROVED - The U.S. Forest Service approved transfer funding for forest insect suppression at 10 parks and initially denied funding for 3 parks. The NPS identified funds not spent in 1998 and excess funds that were allocated for one park for 1999. The Forest Service agreed to expenditures at two of the three parks that were originally denied funding. In the end, 12 or 13 proposals were successful. Approximately \$300,000 will be distributed. Pests to be treated are hemlock wooly adelgid, bark beetles, Dutch elm disease, mistletoe, and others. Virtually all work will be done in developed areas.

GEOLOGIC PARTNERSHIPS PRODUCING RESULTS - Efforts to work closely with the U.S. Geological Survey to meet park needs are paying off. A geology webpage developed for NPS interpreters and resource specialists was recently posted and project briefings presented to Associate Director Soukup and the USGS Science Council. The NPS is working with the USGS on an FY2000 budget proposal that would broaden this interpretive effort to biology and water resources programs at USGS. On another front, the USGS Cooperative Mapping Team brought together Federal, state, and university people interested in an accurate, accessible digital geological map of Yellowstone National Park. Discussion revealed the existence of a digital bedrock map, a variety of ongoing mapping and research projects, and within 48 hours an existing digital version for Yellowstone was made available for public distribution. Finally, the NPS funded USGS study of the dinosaur rich Morrison Formation has been completed and summary results are available on the NatureNet site. This formation exists in more than a dozen NPS units.

INCREASED SUPPORT FOR PARK WATER QUALITY ASSESSMENT PROJECTS - The FY-99 budget passed by Congress included a \$12 million increase in the USGS budget for water quality monitoring and assessment work as part of the President's Clean Water Action Program. Of this increase, \$2.5 million is earmarked for USGS water quality assessment projects in National Parks. As part of the FY-99 ADNRS Unified Project Call, 35 projects were selected for funding under this new program. All projects stem from needs identified in park Resource Management Plans and were developed cooperatively between parks and USGS District Offices. Selected projects fell into three classes: long-term monitoring studies; intensive/synoptic studies; and technical assistance. The Water Resources Division is coordinating servicewide implementation of this new program. For further information, contact Barry Long at (970) 225-3519.

PARKS CANADA PANEL ON ECOLOGICAL INTEGRITY - NPS participated in the first full meeting of the Parks Canada Panel on Ecological Integrity January 25-31. Parks Canada has a mandate to incorporate ecological integrity into its management programs for 39 national parks and has

convened a year long effort to identify what ecological integrity means in a park context and to develop strategies for incorporating it into park management programs. Parks Canada has welcomed NPS partnership in this effort, which will culminate in a national workshop in Jasper NP in October 1999.

HEADS UP/NEW DEVELOPMENTS

PROJECT CALL IN FEBRUARY The unified call for various WASO Natural Resource Stewardship and Science projects, as well as related externally-funded projects, will be sent to regions by the end of February.

GLACIER NATIONAL PARK ENJOINED - On January 19, 1999, the District Court for the District of Montana enjoined the Department of the Interior and the Federal Highway Administration from implementing the FONSI/Decision document and from any tree removal or other site preparation in connection with road access and parking lot construction at Avalanche Campground in Glacier National Park until such time as an Environmental Impact Statement is prepared in conjunction with the proposed activity. The case arose from an action brought by the Coalition for Canyon Preservation and the Wildlands Center for Preventing Roads. It challenged the EA/FONSI issued on the construction of a parking lot on the east side of the Going to the Sun Road. As stated by the court "The heart of the controversy is the impact the parking lot might have on the vegetation at the site where the proposed alternative is to be constructed. It is a forest classified as cedar-devil's club habitat with trees dating to the year 1517. It is an area with vegetation that the Environmental Assessment admits is rare and vulnerable to extinction. It is significant in other ways because it marks the eastern-most location of cedar-devil's club habitat in the North American continent. Defects in the NPS's proposal were detailed by the Court. The Court especially noted that the estimate of trees slated for removal was under estimated by the NPS in the EA and FONSI. The FONSI stated that only 9 trees greater than 12" dbh would be removed. In actuality the number of trees directly removed from the construction were 47 with estimates of the number of hazard trees that would have to be removed at approximately 200. The court also noted that "The Administrative Record is replete with references to significant impacts that would be caused by the Preferred Alternative, and yet the NPS issued a Finding of No Significant Impact. The categorical findings of significant impact on the wealth of this biologically rare and diverse area is incongruous with the Finding of No Significant Impact." The court also criticized the mitigation measures proposed by the NPS. It stated that "There is insufficient scientific analysis that the area to the west will regenerate, or that its regeneration is sufficient mitigation to the loss of the habitat to the east. The NPS conclusion that it will regenerate is speculative. Finally, there is no dispute that the regeneration, if successful, would take centuries. The measure of mitigation would be nearly half of the next millennium." In dicta (that's lawyer speak for commenting) the court waxed eloquent on the resources involved: "In considering what is contemplated both by the proposed project and the purposes of the environmental laws in question the historical stage needs to be set. (T)he area of this project has some vegetation, not all of course, that existed in the Renaissance period. Some of the trees involved in the area existed shortly after Columbus landed in America. They stem from the time of Machiavelli and the Mona Lisa. They are part of the crown jewel of the national parks, parts that should not be dealt with except in precise conformance with congressional mandate as manifested in the National Environmental Protection Act."

PROGRESS

DEER EIS AT GETTYSBURG SURVIVES COURT CHALLENGE (TWICE) - Federal district judge has ruled in favor of the park's deer management program, permitting it to be reinstated at both sites. A lawsuit opposing the park's deer reduction program was filed by three animal rights organizations and six local citizens in February of 1997; that suit put the program on hold. The court's ruling, released on December 31st, states that "the Park Service acted consistently with the Organic Act and its implementing guidelines and that it complied with the procedures of both the National Environmental Policy Act and the National Historic Preservation Act," and adds that the "Park Service considered a full range of reasonable alternatives and was within its discretion." The Service conducted more than ten years of research and completed an environmental impact statement which examined alternatives for reducing white-tailed deer populations at the two parks. Studies concluded that the parks have many more deer than the natural and historic landscapes can support. Intensive deer browsing is preventing tree seedlings from becoming established, and is preventing the perpetuation of historic woodlots. Historical crops are destroyed before harvest because of deer browsing. The condition of these landscapes is very important for interpreting the historic sites to park visitors and maintaining a viable and healthy ecosystem.

The 1995 EIS described and considered all feasible options for meeting park objectives, including public hunting, relocation, and the use of sterilization and contraception. Hundreds of people participated in the public review of the EIS and many commented on it in writing. The NPS decided to reduce the number of deer in the parks through shooting. Hunting is not permitted inside the two parks - only Federal employees do the shooting. A deer density goal of 25 deer per square mile of forest was established. Deer reductions began in October, 1995. Between October, 1995, and March, 1997, 858 deer were removed from the parks. All venison was donated to area food banks. Annual population surveys, conducted in consultation with Pennsylvania State University, found deer densities as high as 447 deer per square mile of forest in 1991. After the two-year reduction program, the densities were 31 deer per square mile of forest. They rose to 63 deer per square mile of forest in 1998, after the program was stopped due to the lawsuit. Population surveys and studies continue so managers can keep the deer density at a level where management objectives for long-term maintenance of forested landscapes and the agricultural program can be reached. After this decision, the plaintiffs requested a re-hearing on two points. After briefings were field by the DOJ and plaintiffs, the district judge who ruled that the park could reinstate its deer management program last month has decided to stand by his decision. At the request of the plaintiffs, the judge had agreed to consider two procedural points in his original ruling. On January 25th, however, the court dismissed the plaintiffs' motion for reconsideration. The NPS may resume the deer management program two weeks from now unless the plaintiffs are successful in obtaining an "emergency stay pending appeal" from the federal circuit court within that time period.

NATURAL RESOURCE INITIATIVE On January 5, despite weather difficulties and on short notice, 21 of 24 work group co-chairs met in Washington to initiate their work on developing a detailed action plan for the initiative, including contributions to formulating out-year budget strategies. I was pleased that all except three of you were able to come, even with the weather difficulties. The work groups and co-chairs are as follows:

GROUP	SPECIALIST	SUPT/ASS'T SUPT
Inventory	Gary Williams (WASO I&M)	Bill Supernaugh (BADL)

Monitoring Gary Davis (CHIS)	Phil Francis (GRSM)
Collaboration Bruce Freet (NOCA)	Don Neubacher (PORE)
Resource Planning Kathy Jope (CCSO)	Kevin Brandt (CHOH)
Science in Parks Gary Machlis (WASO SocSci)	Randy Jones (ROMO)
Professional Staff Kathy Davis (SOAR)	Dale Engquist (INDU)
Exotic Species Gary Johnston (WASO/NSMO)	Alan O'Neill (LAME)
Native/End. Sp. Bill Schreier (GLCA)	Mike Murray (CACO)
Env. Stewardship Shawn Norton (WASO/FMD)	Marc Koenings (ASIS)
Air Quality Chris Shaver	Ron Switzer
Water Resources Dan Kimball	Sheridan Steele
Parks for Learning Dan Sealy	Connie Rudd

The groups are to complete draft action plan elements by March 1 that will be assembled into a draft action plan for Deny Galvin's steering committee on March 19.

"THOMAS BILL" The text of P.L. 105-391 is available on the web at <http://thomas.loc.gov>. To find it from the Thomas home page, select "Public Laws" (previous), then 105th Congress, then select for appropriate Public Law numbers.

NAS COMMITTEE MEETS - The National Academy of Sciences Committee to Review Ungulate Management in Yellowstone NP held its first meeting January 14-15. This 13 person committee is reviewing the science regarding ungulate management and the northern range of Yellowstone NP. It will provide an evaluation of strategies for ungulate management and recommend directions for future research. NPS presented two talks to the committee, representing the Service view and the park view. Further information about the committee can be found in two different parts of the NAS home page (www.nas.edu).

STAFF NEWS

NEW PETROLEUM GEOLOGIST AT NATURAL RESOURCES PROGRAM CENTER- Lisa Norby has joined the Geologic Resources Division as a Petroleum Geologist. Lisa worked for the Denver Service Center for five years as a natural resource specialist in planning and compliance, assisting with several controversial environmental impact statements such as Yellowstone's Bison EIS. Previously, Lisa worked 12 years for Mobil Oil as an exploration geophysicist, exploration geologist, and senior production geologist. She holds two advanced degrees: an MS in Geology and a Master of Environmental Policy and Management. Lisa's field experience in environmental compliance and mitigation and oil and gas exploration and development will be a great asset to the Division.