

Natural Resources Weekly Report
Week of January 22, 1996

Since returning from furlough and the great blizzard, we have not had a very routine staff meeting with agenda items posted, from which we normally develop weekly reports for the field. I thought I would at least let those of you who might be interested know we are all back in business, or at least trying to get there, and pass on a few items that might be of interest.

NATIVE PLANT CONSERVATION FUNDING DEADLINE FOR PROJECT PROPOSALS EXTENDED TO FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 23, 1996. Peggy Olwell transmitted guidance to Field Offices for project proposals for the Native Plant Conservation Initiative's 1996 National Fish and Wildlife Foundation grant for plant conservation, with a request to distribute it to the appropriate natural resources and interpretation personnel within the parks. Proposals should go through the appropriate field approval channels and then be sent directly to the Foundation, with copies to Peggy so she can advocate for them.

RMPs. A memo requesting RMP updates by April 5 was signed this week and should be making its way to the field shortly.

NRPP and GIS FUNDING Memos requesting transfer of NRPP funds and GIS project funding, as well as distribution of the FY 1995 \$800,000 for GIS field technical centers should be completed this week. The Budget Office will be informing Field Areas of these planned distributions, but will not be making them yet. We await study plans for the new NRPP starts. Regarding Small Park NRPP, we will work on the allocation next week. We will be sending out a list of the RMP approvals we have to Field Area and SSO natural resource contacts, requesting an update. Then we will make the final calculations on the distributions for this year. The distributions cannot be met until the list of projects comes in, however.

INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY Mike Soukup and a team from Yellowstone are in Costa Rica this week discussing issues related to development of commercial uses from natural resources in parks and other areas.

SATELLITE DATA The NPS has been invited to participate in classified data activities at USGS facilities across the U.S. The Defense/Intelligence community is expanding its Civilian Applications Program to the NPS and many other federal land managers. We are represented by DOI (mostly USGS) at the Civilian Applications Committee (CAC) Meetings held once per month in the Washington D.C. area. Through this committee, we can request that classified imagery be acquired over specific areas on a routine basis for long term studies (Global Fiducials Program) or on an ad-hoc basis for short term projects. Through other channels emergency or crisis support requests can also be handled. At this time there is no cost to the NPS for data acquisition.

Classified imagery must be used in a secured environment and a Secret clearance is needed to attend meetings and work with the imagery. USGS is providing technical support and workstations (ArcInfo GIS and ERDAS Imagine- remote sensing software) for the NPS and others at certain sites. By-products such as survey control points, vegetation maps, high resolution elevation models, shoreline data and other data (digital or hard copy) can be taken out of these secure environments for use in parks. Imagery may not be removed from the secure facility at this time but there is a possibility that this may be declassified within the next year or so. At this time, users and producers of these data products may not release information about the source of the data (no metadata allowed) and it cannot be used in legal or law enforcement cases. In other words, a researcher could not defend his findings using or citing this data source and the NPS could not use it for law suits or boundary disputes etc.

Over the next year or two, the NPS will be exploring how this data can be used for long term monitoring of resources and ecosystem dynamics, vegetation mapping, revision of hydrography and other data layers, mapping and monitoring of sea grass beds/coral reefs and submerged cultural resources. If you have any other projects you would like to suggest for this program or if you would like to participate in this program, please let Leslie Armstrong know. (303) 969-2964

NBS/USGS MERGER A meeting between NBS and USGS is convened this week to discuss the merger. A panel for client agencies, titled "Hopes and Fears" was held on Wednesday. Abby Miller and John Dennis represented the National Park Service. They indicated that relationships with USGS had been much improving and that while many things were going right with NBS, relationships and processes have not yet gelled. It is hoped that this can be an opportunity to tinker with what is not working and to make the relationship serve both agencies. They expressed hope that progress could be made in the following areas:

- Maintenance (or a return to?) an identifiable program for park specific research, with limited points of contacts. The current diffuse and varied organization of former park-based and CPSU scientists has created problems for some of the scientists and for NPS in attempting to discuss programs, strategies, and issues. Consideration should be given--but not limited to--placing all or most former park-based and CPSU scientists in a single organization in NBS. However, it should be made clear that other units and types of research--including strategic research--are also critical to parks.

- Priority-setting processes that are predictable, compatible with client agency timing and processes, and with adequate lead time.

- Appropriate balance between tactical and strategic research, including protection of locality-specific, tactical research from direct competition with more "global" research and an appreciation for the importance of locality-based research.

The Director, John Reynolds, and John Dennis also attended a Science Board meeting at which the merger was discussed.