

Associate Director for Natural Resource Stewardship and Science  
Monthly Report  
June, 2001

## NATURAL RESOURCE CHALLENGE

Cooperative Ecosystem Studies Units (CESU) National Network Meeting: The CESU National Network met in June to assess progress made in the two years since the CESUs first got started. Scientists, scholars, administrators, and procurement specialists from federal, state, university, and partner organizations representing all 10 current CESUs engaged in discussions to improve coordination and cooperation among CESUs. NPS representatives from all program levels participated. Topics included successes and challenges, strategic planning, managing agreements and projects, advancing the network through the Internet, developing funding strategies, involving minority institutions and students, and federal opportunities and needs. One highlight was seeing the National Aeronautics and Space Administration formally join the national network. Another highlight was a visit to Howard University that was hosted by Howard University as a partner in the Desert Southwest CESU.

Natural Resource Bibliography: A new Internet-based version of an integrated Natural Resource Bibliography is now available to NPS staff and their cooperators via login/password (contact [Marilyn\\_Ostergren@nps.gov](mailto:Marilyn_Ostergren@nps.gov)). This bibliography is one of 12 basic inventories under the Natural Resource Challenge. Core searching and editing functionality is now available and additional reporting and querying functionality are in development, as is public access. This bibliography is directly integrated with the NPS Species database. The old version of the bibliography is still available for public access. The Natural Resource Information Division has a new MS Access programmer on-board to develop an integrated PC-based version and it is anticipated that a permanent bibliography coordinator will be hired within the next few months.

Monitoring Network Information Management: The Intermountain Region, Natural Resource Information Division, Colorado State University (CSU), and ten park units in the Southern Plains Network are cooperating in a pilot project to build a network-level information management system. Students from CSU will visit the park units and local museums to collect pertinent inventory data and supporting quality assurance documentation. These data will be entered into appropriate NPS databases and all data will be accessible from the Synthesis Information Management System. The final product will provide each park unit with an efficient means to access and combine data from all units within the network.

USGS Geologic Mapping: The NPS Geologic Resources Inventory team participated in the USGS annual open house in Reston, Virginia, and displayed some of the joint NPS/USGS park mapping products, part of the Inventory and Monitoring program. USGS Director Chip Groat made a point of bring the Secretary of the Interior, Gale Norton, to visit the display and discuss the NPS/USGS partnership.

## ACCOMPLISHMENTS/SIGNIFICANT ACTIVITIES

USGS Honors NPSers: The Director of the U.S. Geological Survey recognized Dr. Gary Williams and Dr. Steven Fancy of the Natural Resource Information Division as "Ambassadors of Science" for leadership in promoting science and its use in sound decision-making, and honored recognized Great Smoky Mountain's I&M Coordinator Keith Langdon for his role in the I&M program and the All Taxa Biodiversity Inventory. Gary and Keith attended a ceremony in Reston, Virginia to accept the awards.

Servicewide Project Funding Results Announced: A June 22, 2001 memo from Associate Director Soukup to Regional Directors announced the results of this year's call for natural resource project proposals. The evaluation and ranking of the project proposals were completed by national review panels including the Natural Resource Preservation Program, Disturbed Lands Restoration/Abandoned Mine Lands, Threatened and Endangered Species, Biological Resources Management, and Water Resources. Based on these rankings and a WASO review, new projects for FY 2002 have been approved in anticipation of FY 2002 funding. Tables listing the approved projects are posted at <http://www.nature.nps.gov/Intranet/SCCRResults/index.htm>. Selected projects must complete and

approved detailed implementation plan by October 30, 2001, as a prerequisite to release of project funds. This is a change from the date in the memorandum, which indicated a September 30 due date. A formal change in due date will be forthcoming.

Yellowstone Volcano Observatory (YVO) Established: Representatives from the park, the Geologic Resource Division, the USGS, and partner academic institutions participated in the first meeting of the YVO steering committee, May 21-22. The newly established YVO is a "virtual observatory" that provides an interagency structure for research, monitoring, interpretation, and outreach for the Yellowstone volcanic system. YVO operations will be based from existing facilities at the University of Utah, Yellowstone National Park, and the USGS. The committee outlined the organizational structure of the YVO, and procedures for coordinating research, monitoring, and outreach. A website has been developed at <http://volcanoes.usgs.gov/yvo/>. The group is proposing a series of workshops to assess volcanic, seismic, and geothermal hazards in the park and the surrounding area.

## UPCOMING EVENTS

Annual Natural Resource Meeting: The annual NPS Natural Resource meeting is scheduled for October 2-3. A combined meeting with the Natural Areas Association is being planned in Cape Canaveral, Florida. Watch for information about logistics (location, agenda) in July.

## PROGRESS

American Public Attitudes Survey Available: The technical report on the NPS Comprehensive Survey of the American Public is now available through the Social Science Program. The survey, which included both park visitors and non-visitors, asked about public attitudes on National Park Service management of parks. (Contact [Gary\\_Machlis@nps.gov](mailto:Gary_Machlis@nps.gov)).

Partnership Meeting with Geological Society Of America Foundation Board: Natural Resource Program Center staff met with the Geological Society of America (GSA) Foundation to review of the Geologist-in-the-Parks program and GSA's related "GeoCorps America" program. The NPS is interested in broadening the program and partnership to address all physical sciences, including air and water resources. Discussions also included a potential on-line interpretive geology training course. The GSA Foundation Board and the acting director of GSA are eager to support the partnership and to broaden its placement of geoscientists. The Foundation is looking into increasing GSA funding beyond the 25 park-based positions supported this year.

Restoration Technical Advisory Group Meeting: The Restoration Technical Advisory Group (RTAG) comprised of specialists from the Geologic Resources, Water Resources, and Biological Resource Management Divisions met in June. This group works with park staff to support successful natural resource restoration projects. The June discussion largely involved the results of the Natural Resources rating panels and funding for FY2002. The group also discussed the continuing development of the RTAG, such as facilitating communication with the field and the rest of the NRPC. The next meeting will be October 23rd in Ft. Collins, CO.

Southeast Governors' Air Quality Summit: Staff from the Air Resource Division attended the third annual Governors' Summit on Mountain Air Quality, which was hosted by Tennessee Governor Don Sundquist. Governors Michael Easley (North Carolina) and Roy Barnes (Georgia) also participated in the summit. The theme of the summit was "Clearing the Air: A Regional Responsibility." Participants discussed the importance of working together to develop regional approaches to improving air quality in the southeast. The highlight of the event was that the three governors signed "Southern Air Principles", which include commitments from the three states to do their part to protect and improve air quality, as well as develop regional solutions to achieve that goal.

Air Quality in Great Smoky Mountains NP: The Air Resource Division provided an overview of current air quality data and trends in Great Smoky Mountains NP during a June briefing to staff of the House and Senate delegations from Tennessee, North Carolina, Virginia, and Alabama. Additional topics included current TVA efforts to clean up existing plants, health effects of ozone and particulate matter, and the recently released GAO report entitled "Air

Quality and Respiratory Problems in and near the Great Smoky Mountains".

Director's Order on Damage Assessment and Restoration: Natural Resource Program Center staff briefed the Acting Director in early June on the draft Director's Order (DO) for Damage Assessment and Restoration. The Associate Director's for Operations and Administration will also be briefed soon and we anticipate that the Policy Office will release the draft DO for 60-day review this summer. The companion handbook "Preparing Damage Claims under the Park System Resource Protection Act" has been drafted and will be released this fall after further review within the NPS.

Scientific Research in Parks: Since January, over 1900 applications to conduct natural resource or social science research in parks have been received in the new NPS Research Permit and Reporting System (RPRS). The system enables the scientific community to learn about permit requirements and submit research applications via the Internet. Recent courses at Albright and Mather Training Centers reviewed NPS procedures on the administration of scientific research and collecting permits. Parks have used RPRS to process over 1400 applications into approved permits. Park research coordinators are reminded to maintain a current "profile" in RPRS so the application process flows smoothly. The RPRS profile also enables posting of the various types of research parks are interested in attracting from the scientific community to better understand resource issues and help formulate resource stewardship decisions.

Expedited Approval of Visitor Surveys: The Social Science Program received a total of 31 submissions for the expedited approval of visitor surveys within the National Park System. All NPS contacts are reminded that submissions for expedited approval must be received a minimum of 45 days prior to the first day a principal investigator wishes to be in the field.

Oregon Visibility Advisory Committee: The NPS Air Resources Division participated in the final meeting of the Oregon Visibility Advisory Committee on June 20, 2001 in Portland OR. After a year of regular meetings, a number of recommendations were developed for the State Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) for improvements to its Phase I visibility protection plan. All committee members supported eight of the 10 recommendations. The DEQ will decide internally, with justifications, which of the recommendations it will propose to adopt and will hold public meetings to take comments on proposed changes to the visibility plan.

2001 Canon National Parks Science Scholars Program: The NPS received a total of 34 applications for the 2001 Canon National Parks Science Scholars Program. Academic review of the applications was held at the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) meeting in June and scholarship awardees will be announced in early August.

Minnesota Proposed Smoke Management Program (SMP): The final draft of Minnesota's proposed SMP was reviewed and comments were provided to NPS staff at Voyagers NP. The plan contains all essential elements of a basic smoke management program as provided in EPA's Interim Air Quality Policy on Wildland and Prescribed Fires and designates the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources' Commissioner as the authority for implementing provisions of the program. As written, the plan appears deficient with respect to coordination with the State's Pollution Control Agency in the routine evaluation of program effectiveness.

Fish and Wildlife Service Considering NPS EPMT Model: The Biological Resource Management Division Exotic Plant Management Team (EPMT) for the National Capital Region presented a program to USFW Region 5 Invasive Species Working Group. Topics of discussion were the history of the concept of EPMTs based on the Wildland Fire Management Program, Executive order 13112, funding, logistics and planning for the role of EPMT.

Abandoned Mine Assistance Provided to Australia: The Department of Natural Resources and Mines in Australia requested technical assistance from the NPS Geologic Resource Division on the use of polyurethane foam to close 500-800 mine shafts of varying depths in the Australian Outback. The contact resulted from the NPS website containing the Natural Resource 1999 Year in Review. Division staff easily transferred the information by responding to specific technical questions and attaching additional reports that are in electronic format. The Australian team is looking at all options to effectively close existing shafts that do not serve as faunal habitats.

## PROFESSIONAL MEETING ATTENDANCE/PAPERS

Birds of the Rocky Mountains Seminar: The Park Flight Migratory Bird Program Coordinator co-taught a field seminar at Rocky Mountain National Park as part of the Rocky Mountain Nature Association's Field Seminars program. This program focused on bird identification, behavior and ecology, and included a presentation on the contributions made by NPS and the Park Flight Program to the broader Partners in Flight bird conservation initiative.

Canadian Biosphere Reserves Association Annual Meeting: NPS staff participated in this annual meeting on June 9, 2001. The discussion included coordinating U.S. migratory bird projects with Canadian biosphere reserves and developing joint efforts regarding place-based migratory bird monitoring and education programs. Representatives from 9 of Canada's 10 biosphere reserves and several of the 5 proposed biosphere reserves discussed their activities and their national program. Each of the reserves presenting reports showed impressive progress including encouraging sustainable development, educational programs, mechanisms for community and cultural conflict resolution, developing biosphere reserve project funding, educating stakeholders about sustainable techniques for their activities, identifying ways to enhance the marketability of local products, eco-tourism opportunities, and developing monitoring and research activities

Attachment: Minutes of the May Natural Resource Advisory Group are attached.