

Subject: March Report

ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR, NATURAL RESOURCE STEWARDSHIP AND SCIENCE
MARCH 1998 REPORT

ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND MAJOR DEVELOPMENTS

PERMIT REQUEST WITHDRAWN AT SHENANDOAH Cardinal FG, a manufacturer of window glass, on 2 March withdrew its application to build a plant 27 km from Shenandoah National Park. The anticipated emissions of nitrogen oxides, sulfur dioxide, and particulate matter were of great concern to the NPS and the US Forest Service, which manages several Class I wilderness areas in the region. The issue was potential contribution to stream acidification and visibility degradation already documented to be adversely impacted by air pollution. A very effective grass roots campaign initiated by local citizens mobilized almost 1000 citizens at a public briefing by the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality, and they made clear their strong opposition to the plant. SHEN did not publicly oppose the plant, but worked with the Air Resources Division and the U.S. Forest Service to develop a scientific analysis of the air pollution effects. The local state senator and a majority of the county board of supervisors subsequently opposed the plant, and the company withdrew its proposal.

SANTA MONICA STREAM RESTORATION Santa Monica Mountains has completed the Lower Zuma Creek and Lagoon Restoration Plan. Seed money for planning from the Water Resources Division helped the park generate subsequent contributions from the Santa Monica Bay (CA) Restoration Project (SMBRP for completion of final grading plans, planting plans, and compliance requirements as well as for implementation of the restoration. The park reports that surveying, staking, grading, and construction will begin this spring, and wetland and upland plantings should be completed by the end of the year.

NITROGEN OXIDE EMISSIONS RULE The US Environmental Protection Agency recently proposed rulemaking for significant reductions in nitrogen oxide (NOx) emissions in eastern states and the NPS Air Resources Division supported the proposal on behalf of NPS. To benefit areas where the ozone national ambient air quality standards are violated because of transported ozone and ozone precursors, the rulemaking would require revisions of 22 state-implemented plans and the District of Columbia plan. NPS formally recognized the collateral benefits from widespread NOx reductions such as reduced visibility impairment and nitrogen deposition in sensitive areas of NPS units but also expressed concern about possible future emissions trading programs that may allow increased emissions and adverse effects locally for regional reductions elsewhere.

DIRECTOR AT NORTH AMERICAN WILDLIFE CONFERENCE The Director's talk on Maintaining Park Natural Resource Values in Challenging Times at the 63rd North American Wildlife and Natural Resources Conference was well received. The Natural Systems Management Office helped with funding this year's conference and with gathering information for the Director's speech.

NEW YORK BOTANICAL GARDEN PERMIT REQUESTS In a project with two pharmaceutical companies, the New York Botanical Garden has requested permits to remove plant material from parks and other public lands, with offers of a share in profits from any successful discoveries. NPS

is currently working with the Solicitor's Office on issues related to royalties from biota, raised recently in conjunction with Yellowstone's thermophilic resources. Parks have been advised via the Morning Report and the Natural Resources bulletin board, as well as through their Support and Regional Offices natural resources personnel, that no permits should be issued until there is further advice from WASO. Peggy Olwell, Natural Systems Management Office, is coordinating this issue with the Department and the U.S. Forest Service.

NEW STAFF Jared Ficker joined the WASO offices of the Social Science Program. He will conduct peer reviews, assist with obtaining approval of surveys, provide social science technical assistance to parks and programs, and develop partnerships to support new social science research. Ficker previously was with the NPS Office of Legislative and Congressional Affairs where he conducted research on NPS legislative issues. He has also worked for the Ranger Activities Division on wilderness issues. Ficker can be reached at (202) 208-6330.

ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE GUIDANCE The Council on Environmental Quality has released its final guidance on incorporating Environmental Justice evaluations under Executive Order 12898 and its accompanying Presidential Memorandum. This guidance will be incorporated into the field guide for environmental impact assessment and conservation planning. In the interim it will be distributed to the field when available from CEQ. The drafts of DO-12 on environmental impact analysis and conservation planning and its accompanying handbook are still under review by CEQ.

UPCOMING EVENTS

CONGRESSIONAL BRIEFING ON EXOTICS The reprinted Pulling Together - National Strategy for Invasive Plant Management will be presented at the Congressional Briefing on 28 April. The briefing will be sponsored by the Federal Interagency Committee for the Management of Noxious and Exotic Weeds (FICMNEW), which the National Park Service (in the form of Gary Johnston) co-chairs, and by the Invasive Weed Awareness Coalition. A letter in support of the strategy-drafted by the Natural Systems Management Office-- was signed by the Vice President on 13 March.

PROGRESS

DAMAGE ASSESSMENT INFORMATION PRESENTED TO PACIFIC WEST Pacific West superintendents received a presentation on damage assessment recovery for NPS resources. Representatives from the Environmental Quality Division's Environmental Response, Planning and Assessment Unit and the Office of the Solicitor made presentations on this issue at the recent Pacific West Superintendents' Conference. As a result of the information presented, several parks have requested site visits for specific assistance. Several successful recovery actions are underway in the Pacific West Region.

IPM DIRECTOR'S ORDER Following up on the February meeting of IPM coordinators in New Orleans, a revised draft of the IPM Director's Order has been developed and is in the development review process.

SAMI WORKSHOP ON DEPOSITION EFFECTS ON BIOTA The Southern Appalachian Mountains Initiative (SAMI) developed a request for regional assessments of the effects of changes in acid deposition on aquatic resources in the Southeast. It was decided that regional assessments must focus on the two NPS and seven USFS Class I areas in the SAMI region. SAMI will request that (1) contractors use models and water

chemistry data to simulate changes in stream quality from projected changes in depositions of sulfur and nitrogen and that (2) the endpoints of the regional assessment must include the responses of recreational fish species (trout and small-mouth bass) and fish community composition to changes in deposition and water quality.

WATCHABLE WILDLIFE Representatives of 20 federal, state, and non-governmental agencies signed a memorandum of understanding to renew the Watchable Wildlife Program of 1990. The National Park Service was a signatory. The program fosters the conservation of wildlife and wildlife habitats by providing the public with opportunities (1) to view wildlife in natural settings on appropriate state and federal lands across the nation, (2) to participate in wildlife conservation and protection, and (3) to gain information about wildlife. Featured also are an annual conference, a national newsletter, and publications that already established the international constituency of the program. Goals include the development of partnerships, new sources of revenue, incorporation of wildlife viewing and habitat conservation into plans and budgets of the various agencies, and guidelines for the observation of wildlife without harm to the animals and their habitats.

NORTH CASCADES INVENTORY AND MONITORING PROGRAM WORKSHOP NOCA was selected to conduct prototype ecological monitoring in the system-wide Inventory and Monitoring Program. A workshop in Mt. Vernon, Washington, lead by Gary Davis (NPS-CHIS), was held to fine-tune the design for the I&M program for the park in advance of receiving funding from the Systemwide Program. The products of the workshop were a series of RMP project statements. Workshop discussion groups included the major natural and cultural resource components in the park

SNOW SAMPLING Snow chemistry data were collected recently in Colorado, including Rocky Mountain National Park, as part of a Rockies-wide survey to determine the loading of chemical pollutants to high elevation ecosystems in the park. Staff of the Air Resources Division and Rocky Mountain National Park assisted the US Geological Survey with the data collection. Data chemistry data have been collected at three sites in ROMO since 1993 as part of this USGS/NPS partnership. Analysis of the data for 1993-97 indicates that there is a differential loading of sulfur and nitrogen, with the sites on the western side of the Continental Divide having more chemical loading than sites located on the east side. These snow data, along with data from the year round deposition sites in the Rockies, will be used in an assessment of the relative contributions of different sources of air pollutants to the Rockies.

VISITOR SURVEYS Significant progress has been made on OMB approvals of park visitor surveys in the coming season. The Visitor Services Project (VSP) is conducting surveys in the following parks: Jean Lafitte NHP and Preserve (3/29 - 4/4); Chattahoochee River NRA (4/11-4/19); Netherlands Carillion/U.S.M.C. War Memorial and George Washington Memorial Pkwy. (5/30-6/7); National Monuments and Memorials and National Mall (6/21-6/27); Klondike Gold Rush NHP (7/5-7/11); Whiskeytown Unit of the Whiskeytown-Shasta-Trinity NRA (7/20-7/26); Acadia NP (8/2-8/8); and Cumberland Island NS (to be re-scheduled). In addition to the VSP surveys, several researchers will be conducting visitor surveys elsewhere. Contact Jared Ficker for more information (202-208-6330).

DESERT WATER RIGHTS The Water Resources Division and Death Valley National Park provided the Director of the Pacific West Region with a written brief about threats to park water rights and resources from

near-park groundwater development in Nevada, NPS protests of applications for groundwater upgradient from DEVA and LAME, responses by the Nevada State Engineer to NPS protests, federal water rights coordination, and technical studies by NPS to demonstrate adverse effects, specifically on Devils Hole in DEVA and on park springs and streams. WRD presented estimated costs for high priority technical work in DEVA as recommended by experts for the refinement of current groundwater flow models.

WILDLIFE-RELATED TRAINING Twenty trainees from three parks and USGS-BRD attended the Wildlife Capture and Chemical Anesthesia training course. The course was held in Olympic National Park on 24-26 February and was cooperatively sponsored by the Columbia Cascades Support Office, the Natural Systems Management Office, and Olympic National Park. Employees of Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore received formal and hands-on training in aerial eradication as part of a continuing effort by the park to locate and remove a small number of white-tailed deer on the 5000 acre South Manitou Island, where the deer are considered exotic. Eight employees of the park also received training in Basic Aircraft Safety, provided jointly by the Office of Aircraft Services and the Natural Systems Management Office. Fifteen employees of Cuyahoga Valley National Recreation Area received required aircraft safety training to conduct aerial surveys of white-tailed deer and Natural Resource Management staff also received training in line-transect-distance sampling with laser range finders to determine deer density. The USGS-BRD Unit at the State University of New York, Syracuse supplied assistance with this training. Mike Coffey of the Natural Systems Management Office conducted the training.

DEVILS HOLE WORKSHOP The seventh annual Devils Hole Workshop was held in Amargosa, Nevada. The Workshop is designed to gather scientists to address the hydrology of Devils Hole and the cause of the recent decline of the pool level and to discuss completed and proposed scientific investigations. It was attended by representatives of Death Valley National Park, the NPS Water Resources Division, , USGS-Geologic and Water Resources Divisions, US Fish and Wildlife Service, the DOI Office of the Solicitor, Department of Energy-Yucca Mountain Project and Nevada Test Site Offices, Department of Justice, Nevada Division of Water Resources, Las Vegas Valley Water District, Southern Nye County Conservation District, Amargosa Water Committee, Inyo County, California, the Desert Research Institute, and other interested private parties.

SAC MEETING The Science Advisory Council to the Associate Director and the Regional Directors met at the Presidio to discuss the relation of the National Park Service with the Biological Resources Division (BRD) of the US Geological Survey. In addition to general matters, the council addressed the biological research component of the Natural Resource Preservation Program and the park vegetation mapping program that are conducted by BRD. The council requested follow-up information on the vegetation mapping that is to be developed in a workshop in early September. The council also began to develop a recommendation for its charter and discussed aspects of the NPS scientific information program that could contribute to any natural resource management rejuvenation program that NPS may choose to adopt. The council was taken on a brief but informative field trip to learn about scientific aspects of the park's ecosystem restoration. Contact John Dennis for more information (202-208-5193).

IUCN WORKSHOP ON EXOTICS The regional representatives of the International Union for the Conservation of Nature held a workshop to develop an international strategy for managing invasive species. The

Natural Systems Management Office represented the National Park Service in the workshop. information (202-208-5193).

HEADS UP

PROJECT FUNDING CALL The ADNRSS Unified Budget Call was signed by the Associate Director and distributed to regional directors, natural resource leads, and support offices on 20 March. Deadlines for responses vary by programs; responses from NRPP, WRD, and GRD are due on 29 May; responses from I&M are due on 15 April and 18 May. Requests for technical assistance are to be submitted by 4 September. Regions, however, set their own deadlines and procedures for parks to follow; parks should be on the alert for instructions from their regions. A summary of all programs in table format is available by cc:mail from Debby Peck, NR Program Coordinator.

RESEARCH FUNDING INFORMATION CALL A request for NPS funding of research and funds to states (colleges, universities, non-profit organizations) in FY 1997 {collected annually for the National Science Foundation} was made to the NPS regions. The data will be assimilated by the NR program coordination office of Quantum Research, NSF contractor.