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Associate Director, Natural Resource Stewardship and Science Monthly Report

March 2003

Natural Resource Challenge

Exotic Plant Management Teams (EPMTs) to Take Advantage of New Mapping System: The Natural Resource Ecology Laboratory, National Institute of Invasive Species Science, Colorado State University held the Invasive Species Applications Conference on March 6, 2003 in Fort Collins, CO. The institute is composed partners from NASA, DOI, CSU, TNC and various other organizations and universities. The institute product, called "Ecological Forecasting" will integrate high-resolution remote sensing, environmental mapping, spatial and temporal modeling. This model is designed to depict species distribution and patterns of invasion with known precision and accuracy. Representatives from the Biological Resource Management Division made a presentation on the EPMTs which were funded through the Natural Resource Challenge. It is hoped that the EPMTs will be able to supply spatial and temporal information on invasive plants through the Alien Plant Control and Monitoring Database. In return the EPMTs will be supplied with maps for each team's top invasive species that can be used to locate potential pockets of invasion before it occurs.

New Developments

2002 Director's Awards for Natural Resources Announced Director's awards for natural resource stewardship are being announced. They will be presented at the George Wright Society's Biennial Conference in San Diego, California, on April 17, where the Director will present them. The recipients are:

- Director's Award Natural Resource Research - David Cole, Aldo Leopold Wilderness Research Institute, U.S. Forest Service, Missoula, MT (nominated by Intermountain Region)
- Director's Award for Professional Excellence in Natural Resources, George Dickison, Alaska Support Office, Anchorage, AK
- Director's Award for Superintendent of the Year for Natural Resource Stewardship, Steve W. Chaney, Great Sand Dunes NM&Pr, Mosca, CO
- Director's Award for Excellence in Natural Resource Stewardship Through Maintenance, Greg McGuire, Ft. McHenry M&HS, Baltimore, MD
- Director's Award for Natural Resource Management, Douglas W. Smith, Wolf Project Leader, Yellowstone NP, WY
- Trish Patterson Student Conservation Association Award for Natural Resource Management in a Small Park, Brian Carey, Lyndon B. Johnson NHP, Johnson City, TX

The awards include a monetary award and a bronze sculpture of a bison, sculpted by Chris Schiller, son of former NPS scientist, Bob Schiller.

Kimball Heads to Zion (Temporarily): Water Resources Division chief Dan Kimball will be serving as the Acting Superintendent at Zion National Park from April 1 through June 30. During this period of time, Acting Chief responsibilities in the Water Resources Division will be:

April 1-30: Mark Flora (303-969-2956)
May 1-31: Bill Jackson (970-225-3503)
June 1-30: Chuck Pettee (970-225-3505)

Announcements at U.S. Coral Reef Task Force Meeting: At the meeting on February 27, Secretary Gale Norton announced that regulations and General Management Plans would finally go forward for the new Virgin Islands Coral Reef National Monument (12,708 acres), and the expanded Buck Island Reef National Monument (18,135 acres). Created by Presidential Proclamations in 2001, these new marine reserves will provide full protection to coral reef ecosystems from extractive uses when implemented. The NPS Office of Policy and Regulations and NRSS staff worked closely on the interim rule and Notices of Intent for the new Monuments, and Virgin Islands National Park. Also, the NPS South Florida – Caribbean Vital Signs Network and NRSS staff helped coordinate activities and prepare for the U.S. Coral Reef Task Force meeting, organize two expert panels on coral reef science, management and recreational uses, and design a public exhibit on DOI coral reef activities.

Sierra Club Plans to Protest Oil and Gas Development at Padre Island National Seashore: The Texas Lone Star Chapter of the Sierra Club has announced plans to hold a “camp-in” at Padre Island National Seashore on March 29-30 to protest the drilling of oil and gas wells in the park and the “Bush Administration’s destructive public lands agenda.” The protest was organized following NPS approval of a proposal to drill two new oil and gas wells in the park, both requiring the transport of heavy drilling equipment on a portion of the Gulf of Mexico beach open to public vehicular traffic. The Sierra Club’s primary issue is the protection of endangered sea turtles, most notably the critically endangered Kemp’s ridley, which annually nest in the park. Private individuals and the State of Texas own the oil and gas mineral estate beneath the park surface lands, and the development of these mineral rights is subject to NPS nonfederal oil and gas regulations at 36 CFR Part 9B. NPS approval of the drilling project included many resource protection measures, developed in collaboration with the US Fish and Wildlife Service and the operator, to ensure protection of nesting sea turtles. In anticipation of the Sierra Club’s organized protest, the park requested assistance from the Geologic Resources Division in preparing a “feature exhibit” on oil and gas development for display in the Visitor Center. GRD provided the park with text explaining why and how oil and gas development can occur in the park subject to law, regulation, and policy, and recommended specific types of impact mitigation actions to highlight with supporting photographs and graphics.

Study Shows Resource Protection Works at Cabrillo NM: The average size of some marine snails and limpets along the Southern California coast has declined significantly over the past century and collection by humans appears to be the culprit, according to a study led by biologists at the University of California (UC) and National Park Service (NPS) marine biologist Bonnie Becker of Cabrillo National Monument, who is a doctoral candidate at the Scripps Institution of Oceanography. From specimens in the museums collected during the 1800s to the living gastropods, collected and measured at 14 field sites along the coast, the researchers showed that the average body sizes of four gastropod species declined significantly over time. The researchers examined the size distributions of the four species of gastropods at Cabrillo NM, the

only intertidal reserve in Southern California with portions that are not open to the public and where collecting laws have been strictly enforced over the last few decades. The average lengths of all four species were significantly greater than at the other field sites and large individuals were more easily found. For two of the species, specimens found at Cabrillo NM were actually larger than museum specimens. From these data, the researchers concluded that human activity, rather than environmental changes, has led to the diminished size of gastropods on the Southern California coast. The study indicates that aggressive management of the tidepools of Cabrillo NM is successful in protecting marine organisms including the snails studied. (from Cabrillo NM press release)

National Park Foundation Offers Park Flight Expansion Grant to Alaska Region -The National Park Foundation has announced the availability of a competitive grant which will expand the Park Flight Migratory Bird Program to include a project from the Alaska Region of the National Park Service. The funding comes from the NPS Office of International Affairs, a Park Flight partner. Proposals, which are due April 30th, are strongly encouraged to focus on conservation needs of Neotropical migratory shorebirds, though they may involve other Neotropical migrants as well. The Alaska Park Flight grant application is available on the National Park Foundation website at: <http://www.nationalparks.org/AboutUs/AboutUs-Programs/Grants-CGA.shtml>. Through a counterpart Request for Proposals, to be developed in cooperation with the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, the Park Flight Program will also be expanded to include a new South American project. Both new projects will remain independent of each other, but connections will be encouraged through international internship and technical assistance opportunities.

Significant Activities

National Park Foundation Selects Park Flight Continuation Grants : The National Park Foundation has announced the selection of continuation grants for 2003 to current U.S. Park Flight Migratory Bird Program grantees. The funding comes from American Airlines, a Park Flight partner, supplemented by the NPS Inventory and Monitoring Program and Volunteers in Parks Program. The selected projects include: Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks, North Cascades National Park, Bandelier National Monument, Pecos National Historical Park, New Jersey Coastal Heritage Trail Route, Cuyahoga Valley National Park, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, Golden Gate National Recreation Area, and Point Reyes National Seashore. These projects will include both monitoring and education components, as well as partnerships and international internships.

NPS Receives funding for Forest Health: Eighteen projects for control of forest insects and diseases will receive funding from the US Forest Service in FY2003. The Forest Service is transferring \$483,000 to NPS and has authorized expenditure of nearly \$25,000 carried over from FY2002. The funds will be used to control gypsy moths, hemlock woolly adelgids, Dutch elm disease and other forest pests. This is the second year in a row that the Forest Service has funded 100 percent of NPS proposals.

Workshop on Designing Education Programs for Natural Resources Held : The Natural Resource

Information Division and Geologic Resources Division cosponsored a two-day hands-on workshop March 25-26 in Philadelphia, PA. The workshop focused on successfully communicating and designing educational programs for NPS geologic resources by providing natural resource training for interpreters and tips and techniques for enhancing public stewardship based on science. The workshop preceded the 2003 National Science Teachers Association Conference.

NPS and Federal Lands Highways Program (FLHP) Eastern Office Holds Workshop: The workshop was held to work on resource related compliance issues. As a result of this workshop an action item list was developed in order to "streamline" compliance for FLHP funded projects. As a benefit, these efforts will provide a more consistent approach to compliance issues throughout the service. A demonstration of the prototype version of the NPS "Planning, Environment and Public Comment" web-based system was presented. This "electronic NEPA" tool for project scheduling, coordination and public review was favorably received by the FHWA personnel with a request for a demonstration to the joint Forest Service/FLHP meeting in April.

Bureau of Land Management, National Park Service, US. Geological Survey Holds Desert Lands Workshop: The Biological Resource Management Division and Joshua Tree NP provided technical and program leadership and financial support for the workshop held in Palm Springs CA, March 3-7. The workshop provided a wealth of information on science related to the recoverability and vulnerability of desert restoration methods and approaches. Of the over 200 people in attendance at the workshop members of the California Exotic Plant Management Team, the California I&M network and approximately 10 national parks were represented.

American Geological Institute Meeting: Representatives from the American Geological Institute (AGI) met with the Director and Associate Director, Michael Soukup on March 20 to discuss strengthening AGI's partnership with the NPS. AGI is a consortium of more than forty geoscience societies, which support programs such as Geoscientists in the Parks (GIP) and Earth Science Week. Almost 300 GIP interns and volunteers have been placed in more than 100 parks since the program began in 1996, and more than half of those were funded by geoscience societies. Park requests for interns has grown to more than double the number who could be funded, so AGI will explore opportunities for increased partnership support. A more prominent NPS role in AGI's Earth Science Week is expected in 2005, when its theme will be geology of the National Parks. AGI provided seed money for a proposal that would develop 3-dimensional computer-animated geologic histories of ten parks for use in visitor centers and websites. AGI is also exploring development of a textbook for geology of National Parks courses taken by tens of thousands of students annually at more than 100 universities. Thanks to AGI and its member societies, students inspired by these courses may begin their park work experience as GIP interns, and then be attracted to careers with the NPS or to future research projects in parks.

The Gulf Coast Cooperative Ecosystem Studies Unit hold its strategic planning workshop: The workshop held at Texas A & M University on March 17-18, 2003 included federal and on federal partners. John Yancy participated representing the NPS. Gary Machlis participated via conference call representing the CESU Network National Office.

The Rocky Mountains CESU visits University of Wyoming: In March 2003 a delegation of representatives from the Rocky Mountains CESU visited University of Wyoming, Laramie, to inform faculty, students and administrators about the activities and opportunities available through the CESU. Perry Brown, chair of the Rocky Mountains CESU at University of Montana led the group that included, Lisa Gerloff (University of Montana), Kathy Tonnessen (NPS-University of Montana), Zach Bowen (USGS-FORT), Terry Terrell (Rocky Mountain NP) and John Tolliver (USFS-RMRS). The group spent two days collecting information about the University of Wyoming expertise in areas as diverse as natural resource protection, GIS technology, and cultural resources management.

Paleontological Resources Preservation Act Reintroduced in Senate: Senator Daniel Akaka (D-HI) reintroduced the Paleontological Preservation Act on March 5. If passed, the bill would discourage fossil theft and vandalism from federal lands, including NPS lands, by imposing criminal and civil penalties similar to those levied under the Archaeological Resources Preservation Act. It would also provide various agencies with a clear direction for planning, inventory and monitoring, and public education associated with fossils.

Professional Meeting Attendance

National Science Foundation workshop on Assessing Global Glacier Recession: Geologic Resources Division staff attended the National Science Foundation workshop in Boulder, CO in March. Other attendees came from Australia, Canada, Chile, China, France, India, Norway, Switzerland, Russia and the U.S. The goal of the group ultimately is to monitor every single glacier in the world. Currently, about 40 percent of the world's glaciers are being monitored. China leads the world's efforts and is monitoring every one of their 46,000+ glaciers in detail. The effort has taken them 25 years with 20 full-time glaciologists. There are between 70,000 and 90,000 glaciers just in Alaska (nearly twice the task that China undertook), and most of the Alaska glaciers are contained in National Park units. The main reasons to monitor glaciers are: 1) water supply losses as glaciers melt; 2) glacial lake outburst floods; 3) global sea level rise as glaciers melt; and 4) ecosystem changes as glaciers melt. The workshop provided an excellent chance to discuss options for monitoring and partnering with Drs. Bruce Molnia (USGS), Andrew Fountain (USGS and Portland State) and Mark Meier (INSTAAR). Their help will be invaluable as GRD goes forward with its pilot NRPP project to map and monitor glaciers at three parks.

Staff News

Anne Poole joins the Geologic Resources Division as a physical science technician. With a background in geology and GIS, Anne will be working with the Geologic Resources Inventory by digitizing geologic maps. For the past three years, Anne has been working with the Geologic Resources Inventory at other locations, including Mesa Verde and the Albuquerque Intermountain Support Office. She now joins the Geologic Resources Division in Denver in order to work with the rest of the Inventory team more efficiently. Anne has a Bachelor of Arts in Geology from Bryn Mawr College in Pennsylvania and a Masters of Geology from Rice University in Texas. She can be reached by e-mail at anne_poole@nps.gov.

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