

**Associate Director
Natural Resource Stewardship and Science
Monthly Report--March 2009**

Heads Up

First Announcement for the 10th Biennial Conference for Research on the Colorado Plateau:

The 10th Biennial Conference for Research on the Colorado Plateau will be held October 5-8, 2009, at the High Country Conference Center, Flagstaff, Arizona. The announcement and call for papers is at: http://sbsc.wr.usgs.gov/cprs/news_info/meetings/biennial/2009/index.asp. The conference is being convened by the USGS-Southwest Biological Science Center and the Society for Conservation Biology; the Colorado Plateau CESU is a co-sponsor. For more information, contact Judy Bischoff, NPS, CP-CESU Research Coordinator, at 928-523-6638. Third National

Conference on Ecosystem Restoration (NCER III): Plans are underway for the July 2009 NCER III conference, sponsored by NPS, US Army Corps, USGS, NRCS, and private environmental consultants. For conference information see www.conference.ifas.ufl.edu/NCER2009/ or contact Greg Eckert at 970-225-3594.

New Developments

Suspension of Changes to the Endangered Species Act (ESA): On March 3rd, President Obama suspended a final rule that had become effective on Jan. 15, 2009. The rule amended regulations governing interagency cooperation under the ESA, revised several consultation definitions and would have required that federal agencies bear sole legal responsibility for “Not Likely to Adversely Affect” determinations. The President has directed the Secretaries of Interior and Commerce to review the ESA rule changes. Internal agency determinations are already permitted for projects covered under the National Fire Plan and the Healthy Forest Initiative using Alternative Consultation Agreement (ACA) procedures. BRMD staff worked with Fire Management Program Center and Intermountain Region T&E Coordinator staff to conduct the annual ACA training on March 26th. Since 2005, the trainings have certified 175 staff. Additional training is planned that will emphasize conducting proactive Section 7 consultation with US Fish & Wildlife and National Marine Fisheries Services. For more information, contact Peter Dratch at 970-225-3596.

Paleontological Resources Preservation Act Becomes Law: President Obama signed the Omnibus Public Land Management Act of 2009 (H.R. 146, P.L. 111-11) on March 30. Title VI, Subtitle D (Sections 6301-6312) requires the Secretaries of Interior and Agriculture to establish a comprehensive paleontological resource management program that includes: 1) writing regulations; 2) developing plans for fossil inventories, monitoring, and scientific and educational use; 3) using scientific principles and expertise to manage and protect Federal paleontological resources; 4) increasing public awareness about the significance of paleontological resources; 5) allowing “casual” collection of common invertebrate and plant fossils on BLM, USFS, and BOR lands, but *not* on NPS lands; 6) managing fossil collection via permits; 7) properly curating

Federal fossils; 8) implementing the Act's criminal and civil enforcement, penalty, reward and forfeiture provisions; and 9) protecting information about the nature and specific location of fossils where warranted. The NPS Geologic Resources Division will work closely with the BLM, USFS, USFWS, and BOR to implement the Act's provisions, including developing regulations. Fossils are found in 212 NPS units. For more information, contact Julia Brunner at 303-969-2012.

National Cave and Karst Institute Matching Fund Requirement Removed: When the Institute was established by the National Cave and Karst Research Institute Act of 1998, matching non-federal funds were required in order to spend any federal dollars. The matching fund provision in the original legislation hampered the Institute's ability to move forward as a viable national entity. Section 7305 of the newly enacted Omnibus Public Land Management Act of 2009 (H.R. 146, P.L. 111-11) removed this matching fund requirement. Now the Institute can pursue new projects and funding from federal agencies and programs, including the National Science Foundation, without the private sector funding match. Placed initially under NPS and overseen by the Geologic Resources Division, the Institute is now run as a non-profit organization within the State of New Mexico and managed through New Mexico Institute of Mining and Technology. The NPS retains a permanent position on the Institute's Board of Directors. For more information, contact Dale Pate at 575-785-3107.

No Consensus for Cape Hatteras Off-Road Vehicle (ORV) Management: On March 20, NPS received the final report from the mediation team for the Cape Hatteras National Seashore Negotiated Rulemaking Advisory Committee for Off-Road Vehicle Management. At the final committee meeting on February 26, after 10 two-day full-committee meetings and numerous sub-committee and work group meetings, the committee and mediators determined that the group could not reach a consensus recommendation for NPS. The final report, including addenda submitted by the members, can be viewed on PEPC at <http://parkplanning.nps.gov/document.cfm?parkID=358&projectId=10641&documentID=26580>. For more information, contact Sandy Hamilton at 303-969-2068.

Accomplishments

Coral Reef Restoration at Biscayne NP: NPS Environmental Quality Division (EQD) collaborated with Biscayne NP resource managers in managing recently completed coral reef restoration projects at the park. The coral reef injuries addressed were caused by groundings of the tug Allie B, along with the fully loaded barge it was towing, and the Igloo Moon, a 464-foot tanker. EQD staff oversaw the preparation of restoration plans and environmental assessments for both projects as well as the issuance of a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI). The coral reef restoration efforts at the Allie B and Igloo Moon grounding sites were performed concurrently. The work included filling fractures, reattaching displaced coral substrate, establishing topography, stabilizing and relocating rubble, reattaching living biota, and removing toxic material from the reef. The Project Completion Report is posted on the Natural Resources Program Center's SharePoint site under EQD/Restoration Documents/Restoration Project. For more information, contact Joe Carriero at 303-987-6999.

NPS Natural Sounds Program Enters into Cooperative Agreement with Global Explorers (GEx): The NPS Natural Sounds Program recently entered into a cooperative agreement with Global Explorers (GEx) to design acoustical experiments for students to conduct during GEx's "Leading the Way" trips; one will be to Grand Canyon NP. NPS is funding this cooperative agreement and expects to receive research information that will help park stewards better manage park soundscapes. "Leading the Way" program teams high school and college students who are blind, visually impaired, deaf, and hard of hearing. For more information, contact Lelaina Marin at 970-225-3552.

Congaree Supports Outstanding Young Scientists: Congaree National Park and the Old-Growth Bottomland Forest Research and Education Center presented six "Young Ecologist Awards", made possible by the Robert Charles Mitchell memorial fund, at the 53rd Annual Region II (central South Carolina) Science and Engineering Fair. The March 20 event was hosted by the University of South Carolina and featured both Junior (5th-8th grades) and Senior (9th-12th grades) divisions. This year 649 students submitted science fair projects. Several of these projects

will go on to represent South Carolina and the United States in the upcoming the International Sustainable World Project Olympiad in Houston, TX (April 15-20) and the International Science and Engineering Fair in Reno, Nevada (May 10-15). For more information, contact Theresa Thom at 803-695-0214.

Final Versions of Two Climate Change Films Available Online: Montana State University, Natural History Film program, produced two climate change videos through the Rocky Mountains CESU agreement with NPS cooperators in the Pacific Northwest. The two 15-minute films, *Cascading Effect* and *Rising Tide*, were presented during the poster session at the George Wright Society Conference in Portland, OR, *Rising Tide*, was also shown on March 8, 2009 at the Honolulu International Film Festival and received the Golden Kuhuna Award for Excellence in Filmmaking. To see these videos, go to <http://www.lifeonterra.com>, and search under the “Archives” button. For more information, contact Regina Rochefort at 360-854-7202.

Website Showcases the Place and Native Voice Project: The Place and Native Voice Project (PNV) is a Rocky Mountains CESU collaboration with the University of Colorado (UC) School of Public Affairs, Denver. Since 2004, the UC and the NPS Intermountain Region have offered a Native American internship. A new website for this project is found at:

<http://www.placeandnativevoice.org/> The PNV trains Native American college students to work as park interpreters. These are students whose family, clan, or tribe has a traditional cultural or historical relationship with NPS units in the Intermountain West. For more information, contact Christine Landrum, NPS Intermountain Region, at 303-969-2836 or Dr. Lloyd Burton, UC-Denver, at lloyd.burton@ucdenver.edu or 303-315-2482.

Two Graduate Students Awarded Jerry O’Neal Fellowships to Conduct Research in Glacier NP:

The Jerry O’Neal Fellowships, funded through the Crown of the Continent Research Learning Center at Glacier NP, were announced for summer 2009. The competition was facilitated through the Rocky Mountains CESU and was open to students at all RM-CESU universities. The winners this year, both from the University of Montana, are Alison Dimond Kardos, a Ph.D. candidate in the College of Forestry and Conservation, and Blake Hossack, a Ph.D. student with

the Division of Biological Sciences. Alison is conducting social science surveys in the park to determine the public's perception of climate change and how the free shuttle system affects visitor hiking preferences. Blake is studying the genetics of boreal toad populations in the park and the role of disease and fire in genetic selection and habitat connectivity. For more information, contact Tara Carolin, Glacier NP, at 406-888-7919.

Natural Sounds Program Hosts a Brown Bag on Noise Impacts to Wildlife: Dr. Jesse Barber, a Colorado State University Postdoctoral Research Associate with the NPS Natural Sounds Program, presented a brown bag talk on March 11 and 12 in Fort Collins and Denver on noise impacts to wildlife. Dr. Barber discussed how increased noise levels can significantly reduce the distance and area over which acoustic signals can be sensed by an animal receiver. He also provided a summary of research findings on the subject of wildlife and noise. Recent studies document substantial changes in foraging and anti-predator behavior, reproductive success, and density in response to noise. For more information, contact Kurt Fristrup at 970-267-2102.

CESU Fact Sheet Available on NRPC Sharepoint: There is a new flyer about the Cooperative Ecosystem Studies Units (CESU) network available on the Sharepoint site <http://nrpcsharepoint>. It is posted at *CESU – Shared Document – CESU promotional material- CESU_Handout2009_2page.doc*. The fact sheet was prepared for distribution at archeological meetings and conferences, but it also is suitable for a wide range of audiences. If you cannot easily access the Sharepoint site, contact Barbara Little, WASO cultural resource representative to the NPS CESU network at 202-354-2130.

Progress

Geological Resources Division Coordinates NPS Comments on Mississippi Coastal Improvement Program Draft Programmatic EIS: The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) EIS assesses alternative actions to protect the Mississippi coastal area from future hurricane damage. An alternative developed with the NPS would restore the sediment transport system that maintains the Mississippi coastal barrier islands of Gulf Islands NS, because significant land loss

over the past 100 years has been exacerbated by navigation channel dredging. NPS recommended monitoring of project effectiveness; establishing an interagency science team to steer monitoring; including data analysis and adaptive management; evaluating potential effects of projected sea level rise; complying with NPS wetlands and floodplains requirements; and analyzing potential impacts to T& E species. A supplemental EIS will be required to further assess barrier island restoration alternatives. Natural Resource Program Center comments were combined with those from the NPS Southeast Regional Office and Gulf Islands NS. They were then forwarded under the Regional Director's signature to DOI for transmission to the Corps. The final document will go to Congress. For more information, contact Jim Woods at 303-969-2635.

Storm Vulnerability Project Webpage: A project to assess the storm vulnerability of natural and cultural resources in coastal parks now has a website:

<http://www.nature.nps.gov/geology/coastal/storms/> . This project was funded by the NPS Recreation Fee program. For more information, contact Rebecca Beavers at 303-987-6945.

Geologic Resources Division Assists Death Valley NP With Compliance Issue: Death Valley NP staff recently requested the Division's advice on whether the State of California must comply with an existing state statute in order to use the Towne Pass Material Site #218 on Federally owned land within the park to help maintain portions of State Road 190. In consultation with the DOI Field Solicitor's Office in Oakland, NPS helped ascertain that the California Department of Transportation (CalTrans) must indeed comply with California's Surface Mining and Reclamation Act. This determination will assist the park in formulating a special use permit for CalTrans' activities. For more information, contact Ed Kassman at 303-969-2146.

Conferences, Symposiums, Workshops and Meetings

Partners in Flight and State of the Birds: BRMD staff chaired the Partners in Flight Implementation Committee meeting in Springfield, Virginia, March 15-16, prior to the 74th North American Wildlife and Natural Resources Conference. During the week of the conference, Secretary Salazar announced the release of the first ever *U.S. State of the Birds* report available

at www.stateofthebirds.org which documents the decline of bird populations in many habitats due to habitat loss, invasive species, and other factors. For more information, contact Carol Beidleman at 970-586-3776.

NPS Midwest Region Workshop on Forest Health: BRMD staff participated in a teleconference on assessing ecological integrity and defining meaningful desired conditions for the NPS Midwest Region's forest health workshop. The workshop promoted a strategic, integrated approach to forest management issues that allows for prioritization of actions and accommodates specific park unit needs. For more information, contact Greg Eckert at 970-225-3594.

NPS Natural Sounds Program to Chair Bioacoustics Committee: The bioacoustics committee will focus on developing standards for the "Description and Measurement of the Ambient Sound in Parks, Wilderness, and Other Quiet and/or Pristine Areas.", a work task that was accepted by the American National Standards Committee in late-March. The following questions will be answered: a) what constitutes the ambient in a park, wilderness area, or other quiet and/or pristine area? b) what metric should be used in various situations? c) what time weighting and/or measurement interval(s) should be used in various situations? d) how should the data be measured or predicted in various situations? e) how should the data be recorded and reported? For more information, contact Randy Stanley at 970-267-2194.

Conceptual Modeling Workshop for Socioeconomic Monitoring: The NPS Social Science Program convened a conceptual modeling workshop in Tucson, AZ, March 24-26 as part of its planning for socioeconomic monitoring. Fourteen participants from NPS, USFS and academia participated in the facilitated meeting. The attendees identified critical indicators of the socioeconomic condition of parks and region around parks, as well as their hypothesized interrelationships. A highlight of the workshop was a discussion of socioeconomic issues facing Saguaro NP and a tour of the Tucson Mountain District of the park that focused on urban development and its impacts on the park. For more information, contact Jim Gramann 202-513-7165.

Reports

Book Chapter on Governance and Public Participation: BRMD staff contributed to a chapter for an edited volume Leong, K.M., D. J. Decker, T. B. Lauber, D.B. Raik, and W.F. Siemer. 2009. Overcoming jurisdictional boundaries through stakeholder engagement and collaborative governance: Lessons learned from white-tailed deer management in the U.S. *In* : K. Andersson, E. Eklund, M. Lehtola, and P. Salmi. *Beyond the Rural-Urban Divide: Cross-Continental Perspectives on the Differentiated Countryside and its Regulation. Research in Rural Sociology and Development* 14: 221-247. For more information or for reprints, contact Kirsten Leong, 970-267-2191.

Natural Resource Condition Assessment for Sleeping Bear Dunes NL: *The Assessment of Natural Resource Conditions : Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore Natural Resources Report NPS/NRPC/WRD/NRR-2009/097* is available on line at:

http://www.nature.nps.gov/water/watershed_reports/WSCondRpts.cfm This science-based condition assessment of ocean and coastal parks measures the status of marine, estuarine, and Great Lakes resources and identifies threats to their health. Assessments have been completed for 27 ocean and Great Lakes parks and are underway in 19 others. For further information, contact Mark Flora at 303-969-2956 or Eva DiDonato at 970-267-7291.

Staff News

New EQD Chief Named: On March 15, Tammy Whittington became the new Chief of the Environmental Quality Division (EQD). Tammy has 22 years of federal experience in project and program management, 10 of them with the FWS's Engineering Center where she managed environmental remediation projects as well as projects for the design and construction of visitor centers and other facilities. Tammy has worked in the EQD since 1997, when she opened the division's Colorado office in Lakewood. She served as EQD's first Restoration Program Manager and, more recently, as Deputy Division Chief. Tammy has managed or overseen all of the restoration projects EQD has handled and has been a leader in establishing NPS restoration

procedures and protocols. She has represented NPS as chair on many multi-agency Trustee Councils, facilitating public meetings, and providing project management and NEPA expertise to assist parks with their restoration needs. For more information, contact Tammy Whittington at 303-969-2073.

NPS Natural Sounds Program Acoustic Technician Takes New Job at Statue of Liberty:

Dave Stack, an Acoustic Technician with the NPS Natural Sounds Program, will be taking a new position as an Interpretative Ranger with Statue of Liberty NM starting in April. Dave always brought a great deal of enthusiasm and passion to his work that will surely be missed. For more information, contact Karen Trevino at 970-225-3563.