



May 2003 ADNRSS MONTHLY REPORT

Natural Resource Challenge

Flyers Updated one-page flyers describing key Natural Resource Challenge components have been completed. A new flyer is also available concerning the Natural Resource Damage Assessment Program, which received a \$500,000 increase as part of the Challenge. Copies will be mailed to regions and will be available on the web and (in limited quantities) from Carrie Ellen Gauthier in the Natural Resource Information Division.

Heads Up

CESUs The Third National Meeting of the Cooperative Ecosystem Studies Units (CESU) Network will be held in Washington, DC 24-25 June 2003. The National Meeting provides significant opportunities for representatives from CESU-affiliated universities and other institutions to share their expertise and capacities with federal managers and decision-makers. For more information, please visit <http://www.cesu.org/cesu/network/03meeting.html>.

Post-Doc Grants The Ecological Society of America (ESA), the National Park Foundation and the National Park Service have announced the National Parks Ecological Research Fellowship Program for FY 2003. Three post doctoral research fellowships for \$50,000 per year for 3 years will be awarded for research on the flora of national parks; they are funded through a generous grant from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation. Applications are due between September 1 and October 1, 2003. Information can be found on the ESA web site, <http://esa.org/nper/>.

New Developments

U.S Army Corps of Engineers Abandons 30-year-old Jetty Proposal at Cape Hatteras NS: In 1970, Congress adopted the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' proposal to deepen the existing navigation channel and to construct dual jetties and a sand bypassing system at Oregon Inlet, located within Cape Hatteras National Seashore in North Carolina. The Departments of Commerce and the Interior strongly opposed the Corps' jetty proposal, concerned about the Corps' engineering designs and economic and environmental analysis. In response, the Corps issued three supplements to its original environmental impact statement and modified the project design, although these efforts did not resolve the other agencies' concerns. Because it became clear by October 2001 that the agencies were at a standstill, the Department of Commerce officially referred the project to Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) for resolution, with supporting documentation from the Environmental Protection Agency, the Interior Department, taxpayer protection organizations, and environmental organizations. While CEQ deliberated upon the referral, the General Accounting Office issued a report concluding that the economic and environmental issues surrounding the jetty project were still unresolved. On May 1, 2003, CEQ, the Corps, and the Commerce Department agreed that the jetty project would be dropped in favor of a better dredging program and up-to-date navigational aids. Meanwhile, the NPS plans to continue its development of a programmatic EIS for the management of the inlet.

Natural Resources Education Project: Partners in the Rocky Mountains CESU kicked off an educational project this month called Tehabi, "sharing through teamwork". The BLM and NPS provided funding to Utah State University to recruit, train and then send to the field undergraduates in natural resources management from universities throughout the country. Their shared "field camp" began May 10 at Grant Kohrs Ranch NHS. Each of the 15 interns will spend two weeks with the group before going to assignments in NPS and BLM units in Montana, Idaho,

Utah and Nevada. This experience is designed to train the future cadre of natural resource managers.

Assistant Secretary Visits Point Reyes Park Flight Project: On April 26th, the Assistant Secretary for Fish and Wildlife and Parks in the U.S. Department of the Interior, Craig Manson, who oversees the National Park Service and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, made a site visit to the Park Flight project at Point Reyes National Seashore, hosted by Superintendent Don Neubacher. Point Reyes staff were joined by staff from Golden Gate National Recreation Area, which co-manages this Park Flight project, and the project partner, PRBO (Point Reyes Bird Observatory) Conservation Science. The Secretary was able to release two birds which PRBO Education Director, Melissa Pitkin, had extracted from a mist net. The project at Point Reyes and Golden Gate focuses on the conservation of Neotropical migratory birds in riparian habitat.

New Ozone Monitoring: Ozone and meteorological monitoring stations have recently been installed at Lake Mead National Recreation Area near Meadview and at a north rim site in Grand Canyon National Park at Tuweep. These stations employ the new "portable ozone monitors" that are self-contained units consisting of a tripod framework with solar collectors, weather sensors, and instrument boxes for the attached ozone analyzers. A similar unit was re-installed at Isle Royale National Park on a fire tower for the 2003 summer season. Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Park and Big South Fork National River and Recreation Area are scheduled to receive the next two monitoring stations in June.

Integrated Fire Workshop: The Biological Resource Management Division and the NPS Fire Program co-sponsored the first presentation of a workshop to integrate fire, cultural and natural resource planning and management at the Albright Training Center, May 5-9, 2003. The workshop focused on the common development of desired future conditions related to the role of fire in resource management, and to allow parks to progress with Congressionally mandated Fire Management Plans.

FOIA Request at Big Thicket National Preserve: The Sierra Club recently sent a FOIA request to Big Thicket National Preserve, the Intermountain Region, and the Geologic Resources Division requesting documents concerning the NPS's handling of Davis Brothers Oil Producers, Inc.'s request for an exemption from the 9B Regulations at 36 CFR Part 9, Subpart B. Davis Brothers is proposing to drill multiple directional oil and gas wells from one surface location outside the park boundary. The bottom hole for each well will be inside the park. Under current regulations, the Regional Director can grant an operator an exemption from the 9B's plan of operations requirement if the operator can demonstrate that its operation will not pose a significant threat to park resources. Within the past two years, the WASO Solicitor's office examined §9.32(e) and clarified the scope of the NPS's jurisdiction. According to the Solicitor's office, the NPS's jurisdiction under §9.32(e) is limited to only those operations occurring inside the park, i.e., the subsurface area from the point where the drill bit crosses the park boundary to the bottom hole location. Previously, the NPS had viewed §9.32(e) as giving the NPS jurisdiction over both surface and subsurface activities inside and outside the park. Because NPS's §9.32(e) jurisdiction is narrower than previously thought, Sierra Club is interested why, when and how this most recent interpretation arose. Responses to this FOIA request are due at the beginning of July 2003.

Accomplishments/Progress

NRPC Divisions Combine Efforts at Restoration Sites at Golden Gate and The Presidio: Staff from the Water Resources Division, Geologic Resources Division, and Biological Resources Management Division met to review several restoration sites in the San Francisco Bay area during the week of May 19. The Restoration Technical Advisory Group (RTAG) decided it would be best to combine site visits where multidisciplinary restoration is a goal. Golden Gate and Presidio personnel agreed that one NRPC group visit was preferable to individual visits by division experts. The group visited the many individual sites and issues at Tennessee Hollow (PRES), several waste dump sites (PRES), Fort Cronkite erosion & drainage/wetland restoration sites (GGNRA), Rodeo Valley wetlands (GGNRA), and the South Stinson Beach potential wetland restoration site (GGNRA).

Planning, Environment, and Public Comment tracking system: Representatives from parks and regions met in Denver on May 21-22 to begin testing the "Planning, Environment and Public Comment" (PEPC) Servicewide tracking system. The Environmental Quality Division sponsored the "beta" testing session. Testers were generally

pleased with the utility of the system and recommended deployment by September 03. Follow-up testing, Servicewide rollout, and user training is to follow this summer.

Water Rights Actions Milestones have been reached in several key water rights activities. The State of Colorado Water Conservation Board (CWCB) declared its intent to appropriate an instream flow water right for the Gunnison River through the Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Park, the next step in CWCB's process of securing protection for instream flows through the park as outlined in the agreement between the State of Colorado and Department of the Interior made on April 2, 2003. The CWCB right, when perfected, would protect the annual spring snowmelt flows which are important to protect park resources. In addition, the Upper Colorado River Recovery Implementation Program Biology Committee reached final agreement on flow recommendations to recover razorback sucker and Colorado pikeminnow in the Gunnison River. These recommendations do not target river reaches within the Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Park, which is upstream of habitats that were historically occupied by the two endangered fishes. However, flows within park will be affected. Any flows protected by the Colorado Water Conservation Board on behalf of the park, in the future, will have to be consistent with the flows required for the recovery of these species. Finally, the Leelanau County Circuit Court of Michigan recently issued a ruling in a lawsuit involving management of Glen Lake water levels and instream flow in the Crystal River, which receives outflow from a dam on the lake. The court ruling identifies a set of seasonal targets (algorithms) that determine instream flow levels in the river based on actual lake level above the dam. NPS is not a party to the lawsuit but Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore does manage some land along the lake as well as a significant portion of land and aquatic resources along the river. The court requested that the Department of the Interior participate in a technical committee (that would also include the parties to the lawsuit, the county, and the state) formed to study water needs for both the lake and river and advise the court if any changes to the algorithms are needed.

Federal Leasing Issues In and Adjacent to Nez Perce National Historic Park: The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) received letters of interest from private oil and gas companies to lease federally owned minerals in and near the park's Bear Paw unit. Prior to issuing the leases, the BLM consulted with the park. Nez Perce staff and the Geologic Resources Division prepared a letter to the BLM informing them that federally minerals are, by law, withdrawn inside NPS units. During a recent conference call, the BLM District staff agreed to not issue leases within the Bear Paw unit, and also agreed to inform the park of any leases that are issues within a mile of the park boundary. Advanced notice of leasing adjacent to the park will give the NPS an opportunity to review the exploration and development proposals to work with the BLM and try to mitigate or avoid potential impacts to park resources.

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Abigail Miller
Deputy Associate Director, Natural Resource Stewardship & Science
National Park Service