

Subject: Nat Res Weekly Rpts

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Weeks of Oct 23 and 30:

MONDAY, OCTOBER 30, 1995

NRSS TELECONFERENCE AND WEEKLY REPORT

HEADS UP

**DIRECTOR'S AWARDS** - Requests for nominations for the Director's Awards for Natural Resources Management, Natural Resources Research, and Superintendent of the Year for Natural Resources Stewardship were mailed to the Directorate and Field Areas the week of October 23, 1995. The division chiefs were sent copies of the format and instructions on October 25. Nominations are due to the Associate Director, Natural Resource Stewardship and Science by January 5, 1996.

Copies of the nomination forms are available in WP5.1 from Debby Peck via cc:mail. We have already had one request for delay, stating that a panel during December is too difficult. If other Field Areas feel the same, a delay until the end of January can be instituted. (Peck)

**DAMAGE ASSESSMENT** - The new draft Departmental Manual section on delegations, roles and responsibilities for the Natural Resource Damage Assessment Program is out for review. Dan Hamson will be making it available for comment through the Bulletin Board. (Environmental Quality)

UPDATE/FYI

**NBS** - Mike Soukup, Abby Miller, Ron Hiebert, Mary Foley, Bob MacIntosh, Mike Reynolds, and Charlie Roman met with Gene Hester, Jim Reichman, Reid Goforth and Hardy Pearce on Friday, October 27. The immediate question was where the University of Rhode Island CPSU should be located within NBS. Both CPSU personnel and Cooperative Research Division (under which the CPSU is now located) personnel are uncomfortable with the current organization. The plight of the URI CPSU and upcoming changes to NPS due to appropriations act mandates presented an opportunity to discuss possible alternatives for other former NPS units as well. As a result of the discussions, NBS is drafting a proposal which will be shared with field area personnel and others when it is developed. (Miller)

**NORHEAST STATES FOR COORDINATED AIR USE MANAGEMENT (NESCAUM):**

Efforts undertaken for this organization could provide a model for other regions in assessing air quality impacts. NESCAUM is a multi-stakeholder (NPS, States, EPA, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Forest Service) organization whose mission is to provide coordination and cooperation between the northeast states (NJ, NY, VT, NH, ME, CT, RI) and federal officials to address multi-state air pollution issues. The NESCAUM Modeling Committee met to develop a regional dispersion modeling system which will allow the rapid calculation of air pollution impacts to Acadia NP, Roosevelt Campobello IP, and other federal land managed wilderness areas (Class I areas) from new and/or existing sources. ARD staff attended the meeting and discussed issues from the FLM perspective. This would be the first regional modeling system to be implemented in the country, and could serve as the example for other regional initiatives to follow. This system will use the latest EPA long-range dispersion modeling system along with a fixed input data base and sensitive Class I area receptors. This modeling system will provide an equitable method to FLMs, States, and industry to assess air pollution impacts to parks and to evaluate

proposals to mitigate those impacts. (Air Resources Division)

CARLSBAD/LECHUGILLA OIL/GAS DRILLING "TAKINGS" SETTLEMENT - GRD staff and Frank Deckert (CACA Superintendent) met with BLM Roswell District and Carlsbad Resource Area staff on Oct. 23 to discuss the proposed DOJ settlement agreement with Yates Energy Corporation (Yates). Yates filed a lawsuit against the BLM claiming a "taking" based on mandatory drilling stipulations enumerated in the Dark Canyon EIS that are beyond standard for drilling stipulations in the area. The "enhanced precautionary operation" stipulations were prepared to protect cave/karst features in Carlsbad Caverns National Park, particularly Lechuguilla Cave. When informed of the proposed settlement 10 days earlier, NPS was alarmed that it would not hold Yates to the stipulations. At the meeting, NPS and BLM agreed on modifications to the enhanced operation stipulations that still afford protection to park resources. Primary issues involved mandatory cementing of the well production casing to surface and use of steel tanks (containerized mud system) in lieu of constructing earthen pits. Yates has agreed to the revised stipulations and the settlement agreement will proceed. (Geologic Resources)

After considerable compromise and negotiation to address OMB and DOE concerns, the revised Class I area section (addressing Prevention of Significant Deterioration) of the New Source Review Reform proposal was sent over to OMB on Friday, October 27. The rest of the revised proposal should be sent over to OMB early this week. Although the OMB/interagency review period closed on October 29, it is anticipated that the period will be extended until November 13, 1995. Once OMB approves the package, it will be signed by EPA and appear in the Federal Register for public review and comment.

NATIONAL ACID PRECIPITATION ASSESSMENT PROGRAM (NAPAP): On October 25, John Christiano, Mark Scruggs, and Karen Malkin met with Mark Schaefer (consultant to the Assistant Secretary -- Water and Science), Paul Dresler (staff assistant to the Assistant Secretary -- Water and Science), Paul Kapinos (USGS staff), and Molly Ross (special assistant to Assistant Secretary for Fish and Wildlife and Parks) to help develop a Department position on NAPAP. Mark Schaefer is slated to become the Deputy Assistant Secretary -- Water and Science, and Secretary Babbitt's designee to the NAPAP Task Force. Although the Task Force has not met during the current Administration, a meeting of at least some Task Force members is anticipated to help determine funding and staff resource allocations for the NAPAP 1996 assessment and State of the Science report.

In addition to the Departmental meeting last week, Air Resources personnel attended two workshops hosted by NPAP on October 26 and 27. The first workshop addressed information needs concerning prevention of adverse ecological effects associated with acid deposition. The second workshop addressed information needs concerning the costs/benefits/effectiveness of the acid rain provisions of the 1990 Clean Air Act Amendments. Results of both workshops will be published in the Federal Register for public review and comment. The NAPAP Interagency Committee will meet on October 31 to select foreign peer reviewers for DOE's proposed integrated assessment tool, TAF (Tracking and Analysis Framework). Domestic peer reviewers will be selected by the Interagency Committee the following week. If you have any proposed reviewers in mind, please contact Karen Malkin, at 202-219-3384, or John Christiano, at 303-969-2074. The TAF peer review panel will meet in Washington, DC from December 18-20 to discuss and evaluate TAF. DOE is paying for all travel expenses for peer reviewers. (Air Resources)

INTERAGENCY COORDINATION FOR MINERALS PERMITTING - Last week the kickoff meeting was held for the new National Interagency Coordinating Committee (NICC) under an interagency agreement intended to facilitate

Federal agency cooperation on the permitting of new mineral operations. Under the agreement, signed by BLM, NPS, USFS, and EPA, the agencies will undertake efforts to improve cooperative technical analysis and environmental effects assessment related to planned new mineral developments. The NPS is represented by the Chiefs of the Geologic Resources Division (Principle Contact), the Water Resources Division, and the Hazardous Waste Office. At the initial meeting two work groups were established to investigate improvements in 1) the NEPA/EIS coordination process, and 2) the operation bonding process. While there are significant differences of opinion regarding the problems with mineral permitting and potential solutions, we are hopeful that the NICC will provide a forum to develop mutually acceptable solutions. (Geologic Resources)

NEW WORLD MINE EIS FEDERAL FAMILY MEETING - Representatives from Yellowstone, GRD, and the Assistant Secretary's Office, will participate in an October 30th meeting of the Federal agencies involved in the development of this controversial EIS. Portions of the internal draft EIS are beginning to appear, with the complete draft expected over the next month. The meeting will discuss status and the review/revision process to be followed in developing the public draft EIS. The NPS, along with other cooperating agencies, is concerned that the specialty work groups addressing areas such as economics, groundwater effects, and water rights, are still not functioning effectively and the process needs to be corrected quickly. (Geologic Resources)

COLORADO PLATEAU AIR QUALITY REVIEW: ARD has contracted with a researcher at Colorado State University to prepare a report that will summarize air quality effects monitoring/research and data gaps in Colorado Plateau parks. The contractor and Tonnie Maniero, ARD, discussed the project in meetings associated with the Third Biennial Conference of Research on the Colorado Plateau, October 16-20. They discussed information collected to date, and solicited input from park staff on the format and content of the report. Park and SSO staff are pleased with the contractor's progress, and look forward to reviewing the draft report, which is due in early 1996. (Air Resources Division)

GRAND CANYON VISIBILITY TRANSPORT COMMISSION (GCVTC): Several committees of the GCVTC met last week to consider the contractor's draft report on "Options for Improving Western Visibility" for presentation to the Commission and release to the public for review and comment. The report was approved by the Alternatives Assessment Committee, with a foreword which qualifies the use of the report's contents due to the preliminary nature of results and deficiencies in the assessment model used to produce the results. The report will be presented to the Commission at its November 15, 1995, meeting in Phoenix. Public meetings are scheduled to be held in all transport commission states in late November and early December. The overall process is still aimed at a final report and Commission recommendations to EPA by May 1, 1996.

Of particular interest is action taken during the Operations Committee (OpsCom) meeting to eliminate existing voting rights of the National Park Service and other Federal Land Managers on that committee. Because Commission activities are now moving away from technical issues and into policy areas, the OpsCom chair (Executive Director of the Western Governors Association) proffered that the OpsCom decision process should be patterned after the Commission (i.e., that decisions are based on majority rules and that only State and Tribal members are allowed to vote). Some states and tribes voiced concern that this change in process could disenfranchise the FLM members who have worked hard to assure meaningful progress on Commission activities. The

eventual outcome was a motion which passed (sans FLM concurrence) which first establishes a consensus process within the OpsCom and, if that fails, resorts to a vote count of State and Tribal members. Any decision that is presented to the Commission or its committees will include a minority report, or an "opposing majority" report if the non-voting FLMs together with the voting minority constitute a majority of OpsCom membership. (Air Resources Division)

**SOUTHERN APPALACHIAN MOUNTAINS INITIATIVE (SAMI):** SAMI is a multi-stakeholder (NPS, Forest Service, States, EPA, industry, academia, environmental groups) initiative whose mission is to mitigate adverse air pollution impacts at national parks and wilderness areas ("Class I areas") in the southeast. ARD and Shenandoah, Great Smoky Mountains, and Mammoth Cave NPs staff, participated in a conference call with environmental groups (Environmental Defense Fund, Southern Environmental Law Center, National Parks and Conservation Association, Virginia Conservation Network) to discuss comments on SAMI's Integrated Assessment Framework (IAF) report and to discuss future involvement in SAMI. One major problem with SAMI is a reluctance (primarily from the utility sector) to take action until effects of the 1990 Clean Air Act Amendments (CAAA) are assessed. Since ozone is not tied directly to Title IV of the CAAA, it was decided to jointly attempt to get SAMI to develop a NOx (ozone precursor) reduction strategy. Some of the public interest representatives support pulling out of SAMI if it fails to take action on such a strategy. However, before pulling out, they would like FLM support for such action. Please note that SAMI's 5th Semi-annual meeting has been scheduled for November 29- December 1 in Birmingham, Alabama. At this meeting, the various committees will brief the Governing Body on recent committee activities, including review of the IAF. (Air Resources Division)

MONDAY, OCTOBER 23, 1995

#### NRSS TELECONFERENCE AND WEEKLY REPORT

**NATURAL RESOURCE CONSTRUCTION CRITERIA AND PLANNING DATA - Abby Miller, Jim Woods from the Geologic Resources Division, Leslie Krueger and Dave Sharrow from the Water Resources Division, Mike Fleming from Big Bend, and Mike Bilecki from Fire Island met with Roger Brown from Strategic Planning and former NPSer Bill Locke to discuss natural resources-related criteria for prioritizing construction projects. The next day, the same group, minus Sharrow but including Gary Williams and Jen Coffey from the Natural Resource Information Management Division, met with Joel Kussman and Dave Kreger about required level of natural resource information for GMPs and DCPs. Anyone who is interested in reviewing the draft products from this meeting should contact Abby Miller who will forward them as soon as they are completed.**

**PEER REVIEWERS NEEDED:** The ARD is seeking nominations for potential peer reviewers for an integrated assessment tool known as TAF (Tracking and Analysis Framework), which was developed by a DOE contractor (Lumina Decision Systems). TAF is focused on evaluating consequences of the acid rain provisions of the 1990 Clean Air Act Amendments (CAAA), including acid deposition impacts in parks. The Air Resources Division and Great Smoky Mountain NP submitted comments to SAMI on this TAF. Lumina used this model, under contract to the Southern Appalachian Mountains Initiative, to design another integrated assessment framework (IAF) to address the adverse air quality impacts at Shenandoah and Great Smoky Mountains NPS, and other special areas of concern (see related article below). For more information on becoming a peer reviewer for the TAF, please contact Karen Malkin, at (202) 219-3384. (Air Resources Division)

NEW SOURCE REVIEW (NSR) REFORM: ARD continues to work closely with the Assistant Secretary's Office, EPA, OMB, and others on the NSR Reform package. These rules could greatly change current Prevention of Significant Deterioration (PSD) permitting procedures for pollution sources seeking to locate near Class I areas. Although an earlier draft struck a balance between resource protection and eliminating regulatory burden on industrial sources, new changes being proposed by DOE and OMB could undercut that balance. Last Friday (10/20), Assistant Secretary Frampton and Molly Ross met with EPA and OMB to discuss our concerns with the proposed changes and to stress the importance of releasing a balanced proposal for public comment as soon as possible. (Air Resources Division)

NEW WORLD PROJECT - The first formal meeting of the Groundwater Subgroup of the Water Work Group for the New World Project EIS was held Oct. 16 via conference call. Participants included representatives from Montana DEQ, EPA, Bureau of Mines, NPS, and ERO, the EIS contractor. The subject of the meeting was the report on well pump tests which were recently carried out by Crown Butte Mines. The general opinion on the well test report was that it used good data analysis techniques but drew conclusions not supported by available data. The data do indicate that a significant quantity of groundwater is entering Miller Creek (a tributary to Soda Butte Creek which flows into YELL) from the fault zone near the lower wells. However, the question remains as to how much of this water is coming from the vicinity of the ore body and would thus be affected by mining. Additional information will be requested from Crown Butte in an attempt to answer this question. (Water Resources)

ABANDONED MINED LANDS (AML) INITIATIVE - A briefing was held for Brooks Yeager, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Policy, on the AML Initiative focusing on compliance with the Clean Water Act (e.g., permitting requirements), budget implications, and other DOI commitments associated with the Initiative. (Water Resources)

THIRD BIENNIAL CONFERENCE ON RESEARCH ON THE COLORADO PLATEAU - Held in Flagstaff, Arizona, October 16-20. Over 100 managers and specialists from Plateau parks, as well as representatives from NBS, academia, and other Federal land management agencies on the Plateau attended. A session on Colorado River parks was held to identify issues of mutual concern and ways to coordinate more closely on these issues. Bill Jackson (Chief, Water Operations Branch, WRD) gave a presentation on the Colorado River Annual Operating Planning (AOP) process. The discussion which followed focused on NPS involvement in the upcoming 5-year review of AOP criteria developed pursuant to the Colorado River Basin Projects Act and the interest of river parks in having WRD continue to represent them in the AOP process and coordinate NPS interests in river reservoir operations. (Water Resources)