

Subject: September Monthly Report 1 of 2

ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR, NATURAL RESOURCE STEWARDSHIP AND SCIENCE
MONTHLY REPORT FOR SEPTEMBER 1997

NEW DEVELOPMENTS

BOOKS ON NPS NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT Dick Sellars' long-awaited book on natural resource management in the National Park Service is due to be released in mid- October. Copies have been distributed internally already. Each park was sent a copy, as well as each regional director, courtesy of John Cook, who supported much of the effort (Natural Resources contributed toward expenses the first couple of years of Dick's effort). Mike Soukup has distributed copies to his Natural Resource Advisory Group. If you can't borrow a copy from one of these sources, check Amazon.com, your local Borders, or your favorite local book vendor. Gary Davis has reviewed Dick's book and has or will post his review on the Natural Resource bulletin board.

Speaking of books on NPS natural resources and Gary Davis, a very positive review of the Halvorson/Davis book "Science and Ecosystem Management in the National Parks" appeared in the most recent issue of BioScience.

OMB REVIEW OF VISITOR SURVEYS NPS has published a 60 day notice of intention to request clearance from OMB for a program of visitor surveys. The proposed program would reinvent the OMB information collection clearance process for a class of surveys NPS would conduct dealing with visitors and visitor services. If ultimately approved by OMB, the proposed program would reduce greatly the number of Federal Register notices required, would delegate to DOI the ultimate approval authority for NPS sponsored surveys within the designated class of surveys, and would greatly reduce the time required to obtain survey approvals. The Federal Register notice was published September 30 at FR 62(189):51133-51143. The comment period closes December 1, 1997.

NEW AIR QUALITY REPORT AVAILABLE. The Air Resources Division is distributing copies of a recently-published final report entitled "Status of Air Quality and Related Values in Class I National Parks and Monuments of the Colorado Plateau", authored by Dr. Dan Binkley, Christian Giardina, and Ingrid Dockersmith of Colorado State University, and Dee Morse, Dr. Mark Scruggs, and Dr. Kathy Tonnessen of the Air Resources Division. The report summarizes emissions, ambient monitoring, and air quality-related ecological and visibility effects information for northern Arizona, southern Colorado, northern New Mexico, and southern Utah, with chapters dedicated to each of the 11 NPS Class I areas in the region. In addition, the report provides recommendations for future air quality research and monitoring efforts that would better clarify current conditions and resource effects thresholds. Although the focus is on NPS areas, the report should also prove useful for other agencies that manage areas in the region, as it discusses regional threats and conditions. Contact Tonnie Maniero at (303) 969-2806 for a copy of the report.

BIG BEND VISIBILITY. NPS and EPA personnel met with representatives from Mexico's Procuraduría Federal de Protección al Ambiente on September 4-5 to discuss the results of the 5-week preliminary fine particle study conducted during September and October, 1996. Big Bend

Superintendent José Cisneros and ARD s Miguel Flores represented NPS at the meeting held in El Paso. Based on ARD s preliminary analysis of daily fine particle samples collected at 18 locations in Texas and Mexico, it appears 3 regions were primarily responsible for poor visibility during the study period. These were: (1) an area extending from East Texas to the Ohio River Valley; (2) an area extending from south of Monterrey, Mexico to southeast of Big Bend National Park; and (3) an area on the west coast of Mexico southeast of the Baja Peninsula. Due to limited duration of the study, however, it was not possible to quantify the actual contribution from each of these (and possibly, other) regions to visibility impairment at Big Bend. This will require additional more intensive studies. At the meeting Mexico agreed to initiate plans to conduct the first of two intensive studies next summer. These intensive studies will likely involve sampling at more than 40 locations in both countries. US and Mexico representatives will issue a joint press release in early October discussing the results of the preliminary study and agreed to issue a final report by the end of the year. For further information contact Miguel Flores at 303-969-2076.

COOPERATIVE AGREEMENTS Two agreements were signed at the end of fiscal 1997 - One with Haskell Indian University Foundation, for NPS participation with other Federal Agencies in Haskell's Natural Resources Advisory Board. NPS wishes to promote and support educational and employment opportunities for Native Americans in professional level natural resources fields. The second with the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, with NPS participating in the Native Plant Conservation Initiative. Several parks have received grants under the NPCI this past year

NUCLEAR FACILITY RELICENSING NEAR GLCA - In the spring, Geologic Resources Division (GRD) staff assisted Glen Canyon National Recreation Area in submitting comments on the Nuclear Regulatory Commission's (NRC) environmental assessment on licensing for the Shootaring Canyon uranium mill. Plateau Resources Ltd., new owners of the long-idled mill is planning to begin milling of 750,000 lbs. of stockpiled uranium ore at the mill site and could also begin custom milling uranium ore from other locations. NPS comments on the environmental assessment centered around ground water and surface water contamination, tailings impoundment design, reclamation requirements, and reliance by NRC on a 1979 environmental impact statement for much of their data. The NRC recently replied to the NPS, essentially denied each allegation of the EA's deficiencies, and accompanied the response with a "finding of no significant impact" decision and a notice that the mill's license has now been converted to "operational." The BLM, manager of areas also adjacent to the mill, is equally frustrated by their treatment on this issue. The NRC's actions on the mill licensing may provide NPS a good opportunity to partner with the BLM, and work together to persuade the NRC to address our concerns and prevent another "Atlas Moab tailings" issue.

T&E INTERN Michael Field is interning with the NPS Endangered Species Program in WASO for the fall semester. The internship is through the Washington Leadership Program at Indiana University, where Michael is an Environmental Science and Management Major, with a Business Minor. He is a Senior and will be graduating in December 1997 after his internship with the Service. One of his main projects is the NPS Endangered Species Recovery Database, entering those tasks that the Park Service has responsibility for as outlined in federally approved recovery plans. Preliminary results indicate that we have over 1200 tasks for approximately 140 species. In addition, Michael is working on the Endangered Species Expenditure Report He is looking for any field experience that will help him in the future after graduation.

ROOSEVELT-VANDERBILT NATIONAL HISTORIC SITES WATER RESOURCES MANAGEMENT PLAN was recently published. The primary purpose of the water resources management plan is to provide information on potential threats to water resources of these sites and guidance on immediate actions that can prevent or mitigate water resource degradation. This plan is designed to serve as a management implementation plan to guide park water-related activities over the next 10 years. Project statements and/or detailed information were developed to address the following water resource issues: 1) restoration of Upper Val-Kill Pond to historic conditions; 2) adequacy of the current water quality monitoring program; 3) wetland and riparian resource delineation and management; 4) the need for monitoring sedimentation rates at ponds; and 5) the potential risk of zebra mussel colonization. [Vana-Miller, Hayes, Farris]

SEKI AND MORA WATERSHED MONITORING The Air Resources Division completed a cooperative agreement with the University of Virginia and with E&S Environmental Chemistry to calibrate and run the MAGIC model (Model of Acidification of Groundwater in Catchments) for a number of potentially sensitive watersheds in the western national parks. The objective of the field data collection and model runs are to determine the critical loads of deposition of sulfur and nitrogen that can affect watershed and surface water chemistry. Investigators, with assistance from park contacts (Barbara Samora at Mount Rainier NP and Annie Esperanza at Sequoia-Kings Canyon NP), made sampling trips to Lake Eunice (MORA) and Emerald Lake (SEKI) watersheds to collect soil and vegetation samples to allow for model calibration. Sensitive watersheds in Rocky Mountain and Grand Teton NPs will be sampled and modelled in subsequent years. Dr. Tim Sullivan, one of the principal investigators, described the approach to critical loads estimates and the uncertainty in model outputs to the ARD staff during a seminar held in early September in Denver. For more information call Kathy Tonnessen, NPS-ARD, 303-969-2738.

VAFO ASBESTOS Discovery of asbestos contamination at VAFO triggered emergency actions by EPA and the EQD's ERPA unit for funding (\$250,000) and technical support to the park in addressing immediate threats to human health and the environment. Once immediate risks were abated, the project was transferred to the Hazardous Waste group in the Operations Directorate. (Ralston)

SPILL RESPONSE EXERCISE For the first time the National Park Service participated in the USCG Spill of National Significance Exercise in Philadelphia, PA (Sept. 15-18) at the request of the Department. This allowed advocacy for inclusion of NPS interests in spill planning. These exercises are held to simulate responses to large spills and were mandated under the Oil Pollution Act as a result of experiences in the Exxon Valdez spill in Alaska. (Ralston, Dawson)

PROGRESS

PIPELINE SAFETY REGS The proposed pipeline safety regulations of the Department of Transportation have the potential for impacts to resources of the National Park System. As a result of this continuing issue a briefing was held with our new Deputy Director for External Affairs. As a consequence of that briefing, a meeting with the Directors of the Pipeline Safety Office at DOT was held and considerable progress was reached in incorporation of the consideration of NPS resources in their proposed regulatory scheme. Discussions have also taken place with senior EPA officials on this subject. (Hoogland, Hamson, Ryan)

PARK SYSTEM PROTECTION ACT Implementation of the Park System Resource Protection Act was addressed at a meeting in San Francisco on September 23 to 25. Representatives of the Division met with a team of DOJ and Office of the Solicitor representatives to discuss legal and procedural issues related to implementing that Act. A memo to the field concerning implementation is forthcoming. (Hoogland, Hamson, Dawson, Angel)

CERCLA Reauthorization of CERCLA is a continuing issue facing the National Park Service as a whole. Especially important is any action that may impact recoveries under the Natural Resource Damage Title of that Act. Working with the Department the EQD division prepared comments on the Senate Bill and provided comments for Secretary Babbitt on NPS interests regarding CERCLA Reauthorization issues. (Hamson)

NEPA Work is continuing in reinvention of NEPA projects both with the President's Council on Environmental Quality and in internal NPS implementation. CEQ reinvention resulting in landscape level analysis approaches have been reviewed and NPS comments incorporated. In addition a supplemental report on the implementation of the national NEPA effectiveness study is being prepared. Additional copies of the NEPA effectiveness study are available by contacting the EQD. The public review period for the NPS handbook on environmental impact analysis and planning under NEPA has been extended to November 3, 1997. The draft document can be downloaded from the NPS website at www.nps.gov/planning/nepa. Internal NPS review comments are welcomed.

Also NEPA-related, the Heritage Corridor designation presents new challenges in implementation. The EQD has been working with NPS leadership in preparing a strategy to integrate heritage corridor planning and environmental impact analysis/public involvement under NPS NEPA standards. (Hoogland)

HOMESTEAD AIRFORCE BASE Over the past two months extensive meetings have been held with BISC, EVER and EQD staffs with DO Air Force, DOJ, FAA, CEQ in reviewing the update report on the closure and re-use of Homestead AFB and its effect on NPS resources. In addition briefings have been held with A/S Water and Science on Homestead issue. Homestead re-use presents important long-term issues for the South Florida ecosystem and park resources in particular. (Hoogland)

RMP SOFTWARE The current RMP software is being changed to allow it to operate in a graphical interface, hopefully in time for submittal of FY1999 RMP information in February 1999. As part of the software revision process, WASO has led an evaluation of changes that should be made to the RMP project statement database structure at the same time.

A survey was circulated on the Natural Resources bulletin board and elsewhere to elicit initial park input and a task group of natural resource personnel from various levels and offices around the Service met at Shenandoah in June. Recommendations were circulated for comment, with comments due September 26. A limited number of comments were received, which were generally in favor of proposed modifications. Tim Goddard is developing an RFP for the changes and will activate an RMP Software Development Team consisting of park and central office staff to assist him in implementation of the final changes.

RESEARCH AND COLLECTING PERMITS - The Research and Collecting Permit Team met in Washington DC September 17-18 to review legal considerations and processing factors affecting the permitting process. The team is developing recommendations for a servicewide

Research and Collecting Permit Application Form, Research Proposal Guidelines, and software functionality capable of automating portions of the permitting process. Draft recommendations should be ready for servicewide review in January. Team members include the following: Jonathan Bayless (PGSO), John Dennis (WASO/Nat Syst Mgt Off), Tim Goddard (WASO/NR Info Div), Norm Henderson (GLCA, Ann Hitchcock (WASO/Collections Mgt), Glenda Jackson (WASO/NR Info Div), Bob Krumenaker (SHEN), Bob Lindstrom (YELL), David Manski (ACAD), Lindsay McClelland (WASO/Geol Res Div), Sue Mills (AKSO), Rijk Morawe (EVER), Chuck Rafkind (COLO), Joe Van Horn (DENA), Robert Winfree, GRCA). Questions pertaining to the Research and Collecting Permit Team may be directed to Tim Goddard via CC:Mail or phone at (970)225-3543.

WILDLIFE SOCIETY MEETING PARTICIPATION NSMO Wildlife Biologist Mike Coffey organized and moderated a symposium at the 4th Wildlife Society Conference in Snowmass, Co. The symposium, National Park Service's Management Policy in the 21st Century: Incorporating Today's Postmodern Deconstructionist Ideas for Tomorrow", was the second in a series of presentations at professional meetings where the NPS not only presents its wildlife management policies and selected case studies but is actively seeking scholarly, constructive debate regarding those policies. Mike Soukup also attended the Wildlife Society meeting.

BRD NRPP NPS commented on a proposed BRD-NPS relationship agreement regarding the research NRPP funds that BRD manages to support research to meet high priority park needs for biological information. The written NPS comments and followup NPS discussion at the Portland meeting will provide the basis for planned BRD-NPS discussions that will occur in early October.

GAO ECOREGION ASSESSMENT REVIEW The GAO held an entrance conference in early September with the DOI to discuss a review of ecoregion assessments that GAO has been asked to perform within the next 9 or so months. Ecoregion assessments of interest to GAO include the Northwest Forest Plan, the Interior Columbia Basin Ecosystem Management Project, the Sierra Nevada Ecosystem Project, the Southern Appalachian Assessment, and the Great Lakes Assessment. GAO has six objectives for its review: what federal, state, and local agencies are involved and how are they involved; how will assessments be kept current once they have been completed; how are the assessments being integrated into Forest Service land management decision-making; what are the similarities and differences among the assessments; how long a time and how much funding did each assessment require; and what were the statutory and regulatory bases for the assessments.

HEADS UP

TUITION-FREE BIODIVERSITY TRAINING An invitation to enroll in a tuition-free BLM course (12 slots) called Applied Biodiversity Conservation, to be given in Las Cruces, NM, December 8-12, 1997, was sent out to the field on September 29. It also mentioned the opportunity to view a satellite broadcast of another BLM course called Community Partnerships and Ecosystems for a Healthy Environment on April 22-24, 1998. For more information contact Craig Shafer, via cc:mail.

Subject: Sept monthly report 2 of 2

NSF PROPOSAL FOR GEOLOGIC EDUCATION AND INTERPRETATION - The Geologic Resources Division, working with the Geologic Society of America (GSA) and WASO Interpretation and Education office, has developed a proposal for the National Science Foundation's Informal Science Education Program. The proposal asks for \$2.8 million over 5 years to provide training and project money for NPS geology interpretation and education programs. GSA has prepared a pre-proposal, and we are now asking NPS interpreters and potential partners to review the pre-proposal and provide input by October 10. Corky Mayo has sent a copy of the pre-proposal to all parks through the In-Touch bulletin board (9/24). Those interested in the project are encouraged contribute a letter of support for inclusion with the final proposal due November 1st. Letters may include your interest in participating, ideas for projects, and potential partners/collaboration. Contact Jim F. Wood via ccMail (jim_f._wood@nps.gov) with questions and comments.

NNL SECTION 8 REPORTS The draft 1997 Section 8 Report on threatened and damaged National Natural Landmarks is being sent to the field for review.

CLIMATE CHANGE MEETING There will be a National Forum on Climate Change on November 12-13, 1997, in Washington, D.C. Craig Shafer will represent NPS. In addition, agencies are being asked to participate in a "national climate change assessment" over the next 18 months that will potentially involve many NPSers. NPS's potential ability to fully participate in this endeavor will soon be discussed. A brief for the Director on "global warming" was prepared.

ENDANGERED SPECIES Senate Bill 1180, Endangered Species Recovery Act of 1997 reauthorizes the Endangered Species Act of 1973. The bill was developed by Republican and Democratic leaders of the Senate Environment Committee, working with Department of Interior. The bill was introduced September 16, 1997 by Senators Chafee, Baucus, Kempthorne and Reid and went to mark up on September 30, 1997. Senate Bill 1180, Endangered Species Recovery Act of 1997 would reauthorize the Endangered Species Act of 1973. If this bill is enacted there will be increased responsibilities for NPS Superintendents. There are plans to take the bill to the Senate floor in early October.