

GEOLOGIC RESOURCES DIVISION
NATURAL RESOURCES PROGRAM CENTER
Bi-Monthly Report: December 1996 - January 1997

GEOLOGIC RESOURCES - GENERAL

U.S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY PARTNERSHIP & NPS LIAISONS - The NPS and the USGS have a long history of cooperation on a broad range of geological programs. A 1995 NPS - USGS Memorandum of Understanding paved the way for development of new programs, particularly in geologic mapping and public education. Other USGS Geologic Division Programs include Global Change and Climate History, Mineral Resource Surveys, Marine and Coastal Geologic Surveys, Earthquake Hazards, Volcano Hazards, Energy Resource Surveys, and Critical Ecosystems. To facilitate future cooperative geology work, the NPS has designated liaisons at the Survey's Geologic Division in each of the three USGS regional offices. These individuals spend one day or more a week at USGS and are available to facilitate direct ties between parks and USGS staff. The NPS liaisons are:

Headquarters and Eastern Region - Lindsay McClelland
(202-208-4958),
Central Region - Bob Higgins (303-969-2018), and
Western Region - Judy Rocchio (415-744-3874).

There will be opportunities for FY 98 new USGS project starts in geologic resource management, interpretation, and research. Details of the opportunities and proposal process will be in the Natural Resources Unified Project Call.

DEPARTMENT AWARDS TECHNOLOGY TRANSFER GRANT - The natural ecosystems in parks serve as a repository for potentially valuable biological resources, often associated with unique geologic resources such as geothermal pools or cave environments. In FY-97 the Department will award \$35,000 to Yellowstone NP for development of bioprospecting agreements with private biotechnology companies related to microbes obtained from geothermal pools, and to provide training on those agreements to NPS personnel. Royalty provisions in these agreements have the potential to provide significant income for the park under the provisions of the Stevenson-Wydler Technology Transfer Act. The Solicitor's Office is working with YELL to develop provisions in the agreements that meet legal and policy requirements. (McClelland)

MINERALS MANAGEMENT - GENERAL

NPS COMMENTS ON BLM'S PROPOSED REVISIONS TO SOLID MINERAL LEASING REGULATIONS - Because of the potential impacts of adjacent mineral development on park resources and mineral leasing potential in three NPS units, the Division prepared comments on BLM's proposed plain English revisions to its regulations governing the leasing of solid minerals other than coal and oil shale. "Plain English" refers to transforming regulations into a user friendly Q & A format. The Director signed the comments on January 15, 1997. In brief, the NPS comments ask BLM to correct an inaccurate reference to Ross Lake and Lake

Chelan NRAs, clarify the impact of NEPA compliance on mineral permits and leases, clarify the role of other surface management agencies in BLM decision making processes, explain the factors that go into a "valuable deposit" determination, define the concept of "overriding royalties," reorganize and renumber several sections of the proposed rule, clarify BLM's authority to issue use permits, and encourage BLM to revise 43 CFR Part 3580 which contains obsolete language pertinent to NPS units. (Brunner, McCoy)

DELEGATION OF MINING APPROVAL AUTHORITY TO SUPERINTENDENTS -

Several parks have asked the Division about the ability to delegate decision making authority under the Service's mining claim regulations. These parks would like Field Directors to be able to delegate a variety of decisions under the regulations to Superintendents. In response, the Division looked into including language in the upcoming Director's Order #3 allowing for such a delegation. The draft of Order #3 purports to delegate from the Director to the Associate Director for Natural Resources and the Field Directors all decision making authority within their respective program and field responsibilities. However, it falls short of its target. To fix it within the mining context, the Division suggested that Section 2 of the Mining in the Parks Act, under which the NPS promulgated the 9A regulations, be expressly included as a possible area of authority to be delegated. The draft D.O. is under final review by the NLC. (Brunner)

THE DIVISION BECOMES INUNDATED WITH REQUESTS FOR INFORMATION

UNDER THE FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT -Over the last few months, the Division has received multiple requests for information under FOIA, generally related to mineral development operations Servicewide and in particular park units. While our past practice has always been to supply requested information free of charge, the number and character of the requests of late have constituted a substantial work load. In consultation with Jack O'Brian, the FOIA officer with the Intermountain Support Office, the Division will now charge requesters the cost to fulfill their requests. Cost recovery is permissible under the statute and as Jack O'Brian aptly stated, "It is the Freedom of Information Act, not the Free Information Act." Recently, the BLM informed a mining claimant that it would charge \$2300 to fulfill the claimant's FOIA request. This same claimant, who has mining claims located in 3 park units, has received extensive information from the NPS free of charge. Because of the importance of having a consistent Servicewide policy with respect to charging fees to cover the costs to comply with FOIA, the Division has conveyed this need to the WASO Administrative Program Center. If the NPS does not have a consistent Servicewide policy, requesters will have a big incentive to shop around to find the no cost NPS FOIA forum. (McCoy, Brunner)

THE DIVISION IS INVITED TO PRESENT MINERAL ISSUES TO NPS WILDERNESS

STEERING COMMITTEE - Currently, about 50% of the acreage in park units consists of designated wilderness. Unlike other surface management agencies, the NPS has not yet promulgated wilderness-specific regulations, detailed policies, or other forms of specific guidance to the field on the special management needs of such areas. In addition, there is a lack of consistency in interpreting and applying the legal duties of the Wilderness Act of 1964 relative to the duties under the NPS Organic Act and park specific statutes. To address the

need for comprehensive guidance, the NPS in 1993 created a wilderness steering committee consisting of representatives across the Service. That committee is hard at work addressing a variety of wilderness management issues. To aid in that effort in the minerals context, the Division has prepared an analysis of five key issues that confront or likely will confront park managers with respect to managing mining claims in wilderness. We will be discussing these issues with the steering committee at its upcoming meeting in Death Valley in late February and plan on revising our analysis based on the committee's input. (Brunner)

DIVISION PREPARES COMMENTS ON PROPOSED BLM REGULATIONS

GOVERNING THE BODIE BOWL IN CALIFORNIA - To protect the Bodie Bowl, an area noted for its historic structures, ghost town ambiance and natural values, Congress directed the BLM to promulgate mining claim regulations no less stringent than those applicable to claims in National Park System units. In November 1996, the BLM published its proposed regulations for public comment. In January, the Director signed NPS comments on the proposed regulations. In brief, the NPS complimented the Bureau on its use of direct cross-references to the Service's mining claim regulations at 36 CFR Part 9A. By using cross-references, the Bureau avoided generating well intended but conflicting provisions with the Service's regulations. Conflicting provisions could have embroiled the NPS in litigation by either claimants or the environmental community. The Service also made a few suggestions on how the BLM could improve the clarity of the final rule. (McCoy)

MINING CLAIMANTS CONTINUE TO SEEK SMALL MINER WAIVERS FROM

PAYMENT OF ANNUAL STATUTORY FEES INSIDE PARKS - Pursuant to statutory and regulatory authority, the BLM requires all holders of unpatented mining claims to pay \$100 per claim per year to maintain the good standing of their claims on Federal land. Several limited exceptions from fee payment exist, with the small miner waiver being the most popular. Under this exemption a claimant must own 10 or fewer claims nationwide and adhere to set procedural requirements. To qualify for this waiver in park units, claimants must also adhere to NPS regulations at 36 CFR Part 9A; that is, submit a complete proposed plan of operations to the NPS for approval and, by a set date, either have that plan approved and utilized, or receive a letter from the NPS stating that the Service must undertake a validity examination of the claims before final deliberation on the plan. If claimants fail to properly comply with the fee or waiver requirements, their mining claims can be deemed administratively void and eliminated from park boundaries. Because of this potential, the Division is working closely with parks and BLM State Offices to assure that the proper administrative action is taken where claimants fail to fulfill the requisite regulatory requirements. (McCoy)

MINING CLAIM VALIDITY PROGRAM - In response to the significant increase in mining claim workload in the new park lands in the California Desert, the Geologic Resources Division is developing a comprehensive plan for carrying out the claim validity program. In addition to the need for budget and qualified specialists to complete validity examinations in the desert, the Division has identified a variety of related technical and policy issues that NPS must address including: handling removal of personal property from mining claims, the effect

of wilderness status or reclamation costs on validity determinations, instituting methods to streamline the validity process, claim acquisition through nominal purchase donation of claims, assumption of validity, and interaction with BLM and other agencies. The division staff will be coordinating with knowledgeable and potentially affected field staff in addressing these issues. If interested in participating, contact Carol McCoy at 303-969-2096. Validity field exams scheduled for 1997 include the following claim groups: Golden Quail, Volco, and possibly Soda Lake, which are all in Mojave; and Ostranger in Death Valley. Also scheduled for completion are the mineral reports for Blair Brothers in Mojave and Comstock in Denali. (Covington)

OSM RULE ON RIGHTS TO MINE COAL IN PARKS IS OUT FOR REVIEW - On January 31, 1997, the Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement (OSM) released its proposed rule defining "valid existing rights" (VER) to mine coal in and adjacent to a variety of special categories of land, including units of the National Park System. The rulemaking, which has been under development and controversial for over 15 years, will determine the extent to which parks will be impacted by coal mining. Accompanying the rule is a Draft Environmental Impact Statement. The public comment period on both documents closes on June 2, 1997. The Geologic Resources Division will be working with the Environmental Quality Division to prepare NPS comments on the rule and companion EIS. While copies have been distributed to targeted parks and Regions, please let Dale Morlock know if you would like to review the documents by sending him a cc-mail note. (McCoy)

COLORADO SCHOOL OF MINES OIL AND GAS SYMPOSIUM ATTRACTS NEW AUDIENCE, NUMEROUS PAPERS HAVE PARK APPLICABILITY - The Fourth Annual Oil, Gas, and the Environment Symposium, sponsored by the Colorado School of Mines with significant support from the Division, is on schedule for July 14-15. Continuing downsizing in the local oil and gas community removed some industry support for the symposium but the environmental technology industry appears to have filled the void. Twenty-six papers were accepted, covering topics ranging from air quality to site remediation to low impact operations. Of particular interest to the Division are papers on brine spills and sound reduction. Additional information on the symposium is available from Bruce Heise at 303-969-2017. (Heise)

ALASKA REGION

DIRECTOR'S RESPONSE TO ALASKA MINING APPEAL - Acting as staff to the Director, Geologic Resources staff reviewed the record on appeal and prepared decision options for the Director in response to an operator's appeal under the NPS mining regulations. Steve Hicks, the operator for several mining claimants in the Kantishna Hills of Denali National Park and Preserve, requested the Director to overturn a decision by the NPS Alaska Field Director with respect to his mining plan submitted under the NPS mining claim regulations. In 1996, Mr. Hicks submitted a proposed plan of operations for appraisal sampling on 20 unpatented mining claims pursuant to the 9A regulations. The NPS approved Mr. Hicks' proposal with stipulations. Unhappy with the stipulations, Mr. Hicks appealed. Upon the Alaska Field

Director's affirmation of the stipulations, Mr. Hicks appealed to the NPS Director, pursuant to 36 CFR § 9.14. After examining the extensive record on appeal, the Director, on February 4, 1997, upheld the then Field Director's decision. (Brunner, McCoy)

INTERMOUNTAIN REGION

UTAH URANIUM MAKING A COMEBACK - U.S. Energy Corp., has requested that the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) change the permit status of their Shootaring Canyon uranium mill from "standby" to "operational." The mill is adjacent to Capitol Reef National Park and upstream of Glen Canyon National Recreation Area. If the NRC honors U.S. Energy's request, the mill will soon begin to process 750,000 lbs. of stockpiled uranium ore (U308). The mill, formerly known as the Ticaboo mill, was constructed in 1982 at a cost of \$100 million. The facility only operated for two months before being mothballed due to low U308 prices. An increase in U308 prices from \$11 per pound to \$16 per pound has prompted U.S. Energy's request to restart the mill. In addition to the mill, U.S. Energy also owns associated uranium mines that the company claims will yield an additional 20 million pounds of U308 if the market holds up. Division soil sampling efforts in the early '90's revealed no significant off site contamination from the Shootaring Canyon uranium mill. However, the proposal for significant long term operations at the mill and the possibility of additional uranium mining near Capitol Reef and Glen Canyon will necessitate a watchful NPS eye. The Division is contacting the NRC and NPS units adjacent to the Shootaring Canyon mill to facilitate NPS input into the permitting process. (Moss)

COOKE CITY AREA MINERAL WITHDRAWAL - The Geologic Resources Division along with other Natural Resource Program Center Divisions and Yellowstone National Park provided the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) with extensive comments on the Cooke City Mineral Withdrawal preliminary draft EIS. The preliminary draft analyzes the withdrawal of federal locatable minerals on up to 22,000 acres near Cooke City, Montana. This withdrawal extends the temporary, two year withdrawal announced by President Clinton in 1995. The President originally announced the temporary withdrawal in an effort to protect Yellowstone National Park and the Greater Yellowstone Area from the threat of extensive mining in the historic New World mining district. Additional mining in the area may have resulted from significant ore body finds by Crown Butte Mining, Inc., at the proposed New World mine. The area of the withdrawal basically surrounds the hotly debated New World mine adjacent to the northeast corner of Yellowstone. The ongoing land swap involving the Federal government and Crown Butte Mining, Inc., for the company's New World mine properties is a separate action from the Cooke City mineral withdrawal. NPS comments on the preliminary draft EIS fully supported the intent behind the proposed mineral withdrawal and were written to help the BLM strengthen document language. Mary Hektner of Yellowstone, acting as project coordinator, also visited the BLM in Billings, MT, to more fully explain NPS comments and help BLM staff incorporate stronger language into the environmental document. A public draft of the Cooke City Mineral Area Withdrawal EIS is due out in March, 1997. (Moss)

NPS CAUGHT IN THE FRAY OVER LIABILITY FOR OIL SITE CLEANUP AT PADRE ISLAND - On January 10, 1997, Austral Oil Company, Inc. and American Exploration Company (Austral) filed suit in Federal District Court against the National Park Service and Oryx U.K. Energy Company to resolve a disputed clean-up of an abandoned oil and gas production facility near Yarborough Pass in Padre Island National Seashore. This suit arose from a real estate transaction in which Austral allegedly acquired from Oryx the rights to certain oil and gas leases and the rights to certain surface leases. After they acquired the interests, Austral discovered environmental contamination associated with the surface facilities and found themselves liable for the clean-up under NPS regulations. Austral's Complaint denies liability for that clean-up, alleging that they do not and never have owned the facility because Oryx did not own that interest at the time of transfer. They request that the court hold Oryx responsible for clean-up associated with the facility. The NPS is brought in as defendant because Austral believes the NPS owns the surface interest and may be liable for clean-up if Oryx is not. Though this is not, as in Dunn McCampbell's earlier suit, a direct challenge to NPS's authority to regulate nonfederal oil and gas operations, Austral's Complaint does suggest that if the court were to find them liable for clean-up they would challenge the NPS's authority to require more than Texas law prescribes. The Geologic Resources Division has contacted the Santa Fe Regional Solicitor's office and will provide any needed support. (Kassman)

PROPOSED SIESMIC PLAN OF OPERATIONS AT BIG THICKET NATIONAL PRESERVE IS INNOVATIVE BUT DEFICIENT - The Division reviewed a plan of operations by Weems Geophysical to conduct a conventional seismic survey in Big Thicket's Beaumont Unit. The proposed acquisition methods appear to pose minimal impact and are well thought out. Weems will use hand-carried power augers to drill the shotholes and small downhole charges to reduce surface subsidence, vibration, and noise. All data will be relayed via remote telemetry to a receiving truck located outside the park. The only motorized equipment in the park will be a small gasoline motor on each auger. Mobilization for drilling the holes, placing the charges, and laying and removing cable will be done on foot. While the process looks very good, there were some omissions in the plan, specifically relating to permission and reclamation. Although the plan mentioned that Weems was operating with the leaseholder's permission and authorization, no supporting documentation was provided. There were internal discrepancies on line length, shothole depth, and type of charge. Most troubling was the lack of any sort of reclamation bond discussion. The Division pointed out these deficiencies in our comments and recommended each be addressed before the park approved the plan. (Heise)

USGS AND DIVISION SET UP PROGRAM TO PARTICIPATE IN PADRE ISLAND NATIONAL SEASHORE MINERALS MANAGEMENT PLAN - Division staff met with the U.S. Geological Survey Energy Team to initiate a partnership that will provide essential data for the Padre Island Minerals Management Plan. To predict future impacts on the park, the plan preparers need a reasonable foreseeable development scenario on which to base their predictions. The Survey Team, using their comprehensive national hydrocarbon reserves data base, will generate the scenario and provide the data in a GIS format. The Division prepared a

letter identifying deliverables and timeframes and will serve as a liaison between the project coordinator and the Survey. Funding for the project comes from an NRPP proposal. The development scenario is the first of three needed for Texas oil and gas parks. The others are Lake Meredith National Recreation Area and Big Thicket National Preserve. (Heise)

LEASING NEAR GLACIER NATIONAL PARK AGAIN AN ISSUE, DIVISION PROVIDES INPUT ON FOREST PLAN - After many years of struggling with an oil and gas leasing EIS, the Lewis and Clark National Forest has finally produced the document. The preferred alternative would remove any unleased land in the Badger-Two Medicine area, the controversial tract of land just south of the park, from further leasing availability. Conversations with Glacier indicated they supported the preferred alternative, knowing that there was little short of a buyout that could be done otherwise. The Division concurred with that decision, although we took the opportunity to again stress to the FS that we believed that no development was appropriate in that area. The Division also described numerous techniques observed elsewhere when conducting operations in a sensitive area, and recommended that the FS include these as part of the Conditions of Approval for any future seismic or well permits. (Heise)

MIDWEST REGION

OZARK NATIONAL SCENIC RIVERWAYS THREATENED BY POTENTIAL LEAD MINING - A mining company has submitted an application for five lead prospecting permits in the Mark Twain National Forest adjacent to the park in southeastern Missouri. The NPS is concerned because lead mining in the state has a poor environmental track record and this particular area of the state teems with unique water and karst resources. Southeastern Missouri has a long and somewhat jaded history of lead mining. The scars on the environment caused by lead mining are readily apparent in the "New Lead Belt" just north of the Ozark watershed. Some of the old lead mine sites are now major Superfund sites and most of the current lead mining operations have drastically lowered the water quality and biodiversity in many of that region's rivers and streams. The NPS is concerned that similar degradation would result if lead mining is permitted in the park's watershed. The NPS believes once prospecting permits are issued there is little the Department can do, short of a buy-out, to prevent lead mining if the Company finds a valuable deposit. The BLM, the agency administering the minerals in the Mark Twain, and the Forest Service feel that the NPS is raising its concerns prematurely. They maintain there is discretion at the lease issuance stage to deny the lease even if the Company finds an valuable deposit. Staff from the Geologic and Water Resources Divisions and the park met with key local BLM and FS staff to discuss NPS concerns. In coordination with the park, Natural Resources Program Center staff are currently elevating these critical legal and policy issues within the Department to resolve this matter in a timely fashion. (Kassman, McCoy, Martin-WRD)

PACIFIC WEST REGION

MOJAVE NATIONAL PRESERVE MOVES TO STOP ILLEGAL MINING RELATED

ACTIVITIES - At the request of Mary Martin, Mojave Superintendent, the Division drafted a letter on her behalf to Vulcan Industries. Vulcan was removing personal property from their patented and unpatented mining claims without first obtaining the approval of the NPS. All mining activities on mining claims require compliance with NPS regulations at 36 CFR 9A. The draft letter warned Vulcan that if these activities were not immediately stopped, the NPS would seek a preliminary injunction. Vulcan complied with the letter, and is starting to work with the park and Division to obtain approval of their desired activities. Vulcan's proposal has raised some legal and policy issues, which the Division is currently in the process of addressing. (Brunner)

ACTIVE AND PROPOSED MINING PROJECTS INSPECTED IN MOJAVE AND DEATH VALLEY - In December, several Division staff visited and inspected the following proposed and active mining projects at the noted parks: Telegraph Mine (gold), Vulcan (iron), Rainbow/Caliente (talc), Soda Lake (gold), Volco (gold, platinum), Kelso Dunes (gold), Aiken (volcanic cinders), Gold Dome millsite (precious metals), Golden Quail (gold), Morningstar (gold), and Colosseum (gold). Staff met with mineral operators, documented the status of operations and inspected for compliance with permits and law. The Division has been providing mineral administration advice and on-site assistance to Mojave since the preserve was created in 1994. (Brunner, Burghardt, Covington, Ziegenbein)

GOLDEN QUAIL MINE PROPOSAL IN MOJAVE PRESERVE REQUIRES SERIOUS ATTENTION - The proposed Golden Quail open pit gold mine in Mojave National Preserve has required significant attention over the last few months from NPS staff at the park, the Division, and the Pacific Support Office. Golden Quail submitted a proposed plan of operations to the NPS on October 11, 1996. On November 22, 1996, the Division and the Pacific West Support Office prepared 16 pages of comments that pointed out the incomplete or inadequate portions of the plan, and explained the required information. On December 18, 1996, Division staff met with Golden Quail representatives to address Golden Quail's concerns and questions about the upcoming validity examination. The Division followed up this meeting with a January 23, 1997 letter that explained the anticipated timetable for initiation of the validity examination. Another concern with this proposed operation involves the applicability of the NPS solid waste disposal regulations. An additional response to Golden Quail is being drafted that will respond to their concerns and questions about the application of NPS regulations to their proposed operations. (Brunner)

MINING CLAIMANT IN DEATH VALLEY SEEKS TO CONDUCT OPERATIONS IN WILDERNESS - Last year the claimants to the Rainbow Talc mine at Death Valley submitted a proposed plan of operations to the park under the NPS mining regulations. In October of 1996, the Geologic Resources Division completed a validity examination of the claims and found them to be valid; that is, the claimants have legitimate property rights. The park is now in the process of completing an Environmental Assessment on the proposal to mine and concerned with the precedent of permitting the operation which would occur in wilderness. To date, the NPS has not permitted a mine in NPS designated wilderness. The Division participated in a meeting organized and chaired by the superintendent to discuss the

implications of establishing such a precedent and alternative options for protecting park resources. This mining proposal will be discussed at the upcoming meeting of the NPS Wilderness Steering Committee in Death Valley at the end of February. (McCoy)

OLYMPIC PRESSES MINERAL OWNERS TO PROVE TITLE AT SHI SHI - For over four years, the purported owners of a mineral reservation have been posturing with Olympic National Park over alleged vast mineral riches at Shi Shi Beach, one of the last remaining and most pristine wilderness beaches in the United States. From the NPS's perspective, an outstanding issue from the beginning of this saga has been deficiencies in the purported owners' chain of title. Consumptive uses of park resources, such as mining, are allowed only where specifically authorized by law or where private ownership rights exist. Recently, the park received an exploration plan from the owners to prove up the mineral prospect on Shi Shi beach, possibly in the hope that the NPS will purchase the reservation. With assistance from the Division, the park has responded to this latest proposal and has drawn a line in the sand stating that until the title issue and other informational deficiencies are resolved, the NPS will not entertain further exploration plans from these applicants. Stay tuned for the owners' response. (Kassman)

LASSEN VOLCANIC NATIONAL PARK TO PLUG GEOTHERMAL WELL - Lassen Volcanic N.P. is planning to plug an abandoned and deteriorating geothermal well in the park, due to concern that should the well casing fail, uncontrolled flow could threaten nearby fumaroles and other thermal features. Energy companies drilled the Walker "O" geothermal exploration well on private land in 1962 and deepened it to 4000 feet in 1978. To stop further development, the NPS acquired the land and the well by condemnation in 1979. Since the transfer of ownership, the well has been unmonitored and unmaintained. Division staff alerted the park of the potential for catastrophic well failure in 1994 when the USGS reported signs of well casing deterioration. The Division drafted a project statement for the park's Resource Management Plan and coordinated an interagency team to help in the well plugging design. Staff also developed site restoration plans, and provided cost estimates for funding purposes. Contract specifications were finalized in January and the park should award the contract for well plugging services this summer. (Ziegenbein)

EPA PROVIDES SAMPLING TO ASSESS CHEMICAL HAZARDS IN MOJAVE NATIONAL PRESERVE - The Telegraph Mine is a small underground and surface gold mine with associated processing facilities. Permitted by the BLM in the early 1980's and inactive and unmaintained since the early 1990's, the deteriorating site is now in the newly created Mojave National Preserve. Associated with the site are: hazardous underground workings; a cyanide heap-leach pad, ponds, and mill area; fuel storage tanks; equipment storage and workshop area; living facilities; and chemical storage associated with the mill and assay lab. Contaminants suspected include; cyanide, acid and caustic, hydrocarbons, mercury and other heavy metals. Division staff were successful in getting a \$24,000 grant from the EPA to sample the site and characterize the area for potential contaminants. Staff developed a sampling strategy and protocol in coordination with the PWFO Hazmat Coordinator. Staff

also assisted in initial site mapping and were on-site during initial sampling. The EPA contractor, SAIC, will provide a report this spring with the results of sampling and recommendations for future work. (Ziegenbein)

SOUTHEAST REGION

NATCHEZ TRACE PREPARES FOR NEW NEIGHBORS -- A STRIP MINE AND POWER PLANT JUST FOR STARTERS - The NPS received word from the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) of a proposed 4275 acre lignite (low grade coal) strip mine and coal fired power plant to be located adjacent to Natchez Trace Parkway in the vicinity of the Jeff Buzby campground and picnic area. Officially dubbed the "Mississippi Lignite Project," the strip mine is planned as a mine mouth operation. This means Phillips Coal Company will transport, via conveyor, 3 million tons of coal per year, for 30 years, directly to a proposed 400MW coal fired power plant to be constructed concurrently with the mine. To compliment the strip mine and power plant, Mississippi legislators are also soliciting interest in the construction of a mega-industrial complex which has curiously been named "the EcoPlex." When completed the EcoPlex will grace the landscape near Natchez Trace with industry such as wallboard, cement, agrichemical, brick, ceramic, and transportation fuel manufacturers as well as food processing and paper and wood product manufacturers. The TVA is commencing work on a draft EIS that will discuss the need for the proposed project from the standpoint of TVA's purchase of power generated by the privately owned power plant. The EIS will also address siting of the power plant and how various natural resources would be affected from placement and operation of the facility. The State of Mississippi expects Phillips Coal Company to file for a mining permit in late 1997. The NPS Natural Resource Program Center has formed a Mississippi Lignite Project team consisting of personnel from the Air, Water, and Geologic Resources Divisions that will work closely with Natchez Trace Parkway and Southeast Support Office personnel on the permitting and EIS portions of the mine/power plant proposal. Watch for more updates as NPS participation in this major industrial proposal progresses. (Moss)

DIVISION NEWS

DIVISION GPRA PLAN - The Division continues to refine its strategic plan for implementing the Government Performance Results Act. Recent revisions were made based on workshop discussions held in Denver in October of 1996 on geologic, disturbed lands and mineral topics. (McCoy)

STAFF COORDINATION WITH OTHER DENVER NPS OFFICES - Judy Geniac is co-located in the NPS's Alameda building, which houses the Intermountain Regional Office, SOs, and the Denver Service Center. She is charged with assisting in keeping the lines of communication open. In doing this she represents Division staff in meetings and exchanges of documents and materials. The Division appreciates the generosity of J.T. Reynolds, superintendent of the Colorado Plateau SO in providing the office space. Judy may be reached at 303/969-2849, in that building during morning hours. She is located at the Academy building in the afternoons and can be reached there at 303/969-2015. She is also on cc-Mail

by name.

DIVISION STAFF NAMED TO MAINTENANCE'S SUSTAINABILITY GROUP - Judy Geniac is now representing WASO Natural Resource Stewardship and Sciences to provide natural resource views and input on the new sustainability team, as part of the Maintenance Advisory Board.

GEOLOGY INTERN PROGRAM, FUNDING AND ADS ARE SUCCESSFUL - In an effort to provide parks with some funding to get geologic expertise into parks, the Division sent a request for proposals to the field. Eighteen parks submitted 23 proposals for Division funded assistance. These proposals were paneled and 12 were selected. Assistance came in three forms: funding of SCA positions, direct funds to the park for stipends, and Geological Society of America (GSA) internships (where GSA directs the funding of their interns but the interns work to meet the needs defined by parks). All parks got assistance through posting their volunteer needs on the Geologists-in-Parks site on our Web page. This site acts as a want ads list directed to students and professionals in the earth science fields. The site is periodically updated and is being used to advertise a wide range of positions from those that are paid, to those seeking local volunteers. The work encompasses interpretation, research, and resource management. A number of periodicals have and continue to advertise the Web site, located at <http://www.aqd.nps.gov/natnet/grd/geojob/geojob.htm>. *Geotimes* will publish an ad and a short article about the GIP program in their February 1997 issue. The National Speleological Society will run an ad about the GIP program highlighting cave management/research opportunities in the January 1997 *NSS News*. (Gese, Geniac)