

## **WILDLIFE AND VEGETATION DIVISION**

### **Monthly Report - March**

#### **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

Division Chief Mike Ruggiero has been assigned to the National Biological Survey implementation team to help create the new agency. Hardy Pearce has been designated Acting Division Chief during Mike's assignment and will assume most of the day-to-day management duties. Mike will continue to oversee the Natural Resources Strategic Plan implementation, the Vail Agenda implementation, the National Natural Landmarks Program, and the Man and the Biosphere Program.

The spring issue of the Global Change Research Program Information Bulletin will be distributed throughout the Park Service in the second week of April. For additional copies, contact Alicia Lizarraga at 202-343-1300.

**National Natural Landmarks** The request for regions to formally initiate the 1993 Section 8 Report process was distributed on March 17. Site inspection reports are due to Washington Office by June 1. The 1992 Section 8 Report is still going through Departmental review and surname. Copies will be distributed to the regions after the Secretary has signed.

#### **WILDLIFE HEALTH**

On March 28, Colonial Pipeline reported a large oil spill into Sugarland Run and the Potomac River in Virginia. Estimates on the spill range from 300,000-600,000 gallons of #2 heating oil. This is a highly toxic oil which has a consistency similar to gasoline. In this type of oil spill, most of the effects on wildlife will likely occur from ingestion of the oil. This differs from the damage occurring from crude oil, which coats animals with thick, black oil. The Division's veterinarian, Sharon Taylor, assisted the NCR resource managers in coordinating Park Service wildlife response. Parks known to have injuries to their natural resources are George Washington Parkway, Great Falls, C&O Canal, Fort Washington, Oxen Hills, and Piscataway. Monitoring for oil-related impacts on wildlife, plants, water, and soil is ongoing and is expected to continue through the summer.

#### **IPM**

Pesticide proposals (Form 10-21A) are coming in at a furious pace, and we are doing our best to return them in less than a week. We would like to ask park IPM coordinators to be especially careful in preparing requests that require Departmental approval. We recently had to return proposals to several regional offices because of mistakes. For proposals requiring Departmental approval, we require a Form 10-21A, the Departmental form, and a current label with the same EPA registration number that appears on the forms. Both forms can be copied from NPS-77, the Natural Resources Management Guideline.

## **RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PLANNING**

**RMP Workshop** The Resources Management Plan Workshop, sponsored by the Albright Employee Development Center, was held in Tucson, Arizona, March 8-12, 1993. The 26 participants came from both regional offices and parks and represented both natural and cultural resources. The workshop focused on how to improve the content and review of RMPs and on how to help parks use RMPs as a tool for programmatic natural resources planning. The 1989 RMP guideline will be updated and expanded in areas where workshop participants indicated a need for more guidance or clarification. The revision of the RMP guidance will be in the form of a RMP Handbook and will not involve fundamental changes in the overall goals or format of RMPs, or rewriting of RMPs that have already been written using the 1989 guideline.

**RMP Software Teams** One of the products of the RMP Workshop was a consensus to establish a software development team and a software testing team. The software development team will be involved in the analysis and development of system enhancements or conceptual modifications. They will work together to establish priorities for RMP software changes and suggest a schedule for RMP software releases. The software testing team will test versions of the RMP software prior to future Servicewide releases. This should decrease the incidence of software released with "bugs." For more information, contact Tim Goddard at 202-343-8136.

## **CAVE MANAGEMENT**

The Federal Cave Resources Protection Act of 1988 mandates the identification, protection, and maintenance of significant caves on federal lands. Proposed Interior Department cave-management regulations (43 CFR, Part 37) were published in the Federal Register in January 1992, and the resulting comments incorporated. The final rule has been approved by the National Park Service, and Departmental approval is pending. The regulations establish criteria for identifying significant caves and instruct Interior Department land managers to protect them. All caves on Park Service lands are deemed significant, including portions of park caves that extend under BLM land. Six regional interagency task forces will identify and assess federally-owned caves. Their work, to be completed within a year, will list all significant cave resources on federal lands and for the first time provide a framework for effective protection and management of these valuable parts of our natural heritage. For more information, contact Lindsay McClelland at 202-343-1004.

## **INVENTORY AND MONITORING**

Sue Glenn has been working with Gary Williams and several members of the Wildlife and Vegetation Division and GIS Division on developing the vegetation mapping protocols and priorities for the Inventory and Monitoring Program. She also devised a biogeographic approach to vegetation mapping and an objective method to rank sites for priorities for vegetation mapping. All concepts were approved by the Inventory and Monitoring Committee for Servicewide use in the first

year of inventorying.

Sue Glenn prepared a poster presentation for the U.S. Section of the International Association for Landscape Ecology Annual Meeting. The poster covered her preliminary analyses of mammal distribution patterns in Rocky Mountain national parks.

#### **ECOSYSTEM MANAGEMENT**

Bill Gregg provided introductory remarks at an interagency symposium on forest ecosystem management at the landscape level sponsored by the Forest Policy Center. The symposium focused on the role of remote-sensing and GIS in resource management planning, analysis, and decision-making. Island Press will publish a book based on the proceedings later this year.

#### **BIODIVERSITY**

The Gap Analysis Steering Committee is developing a Gap Analysis Program Plan, scheduled for draft completion by October. The Committee is made up of representatives from federal and private organizations, including the Park Service, concerned with national conservation issues. The Committee is working to coordinate the development of data bases to help determine national conservation priorities. Through the FWS cooperative research units, the Gap Analysis Program has developed GIS databases on existing vegetation, species distributions, land ownership, and management status in 23 states; in FY 93, preliminary work will begin in 9 more. The program goal is to have an integrated database operational for all 50 states by 1998.

#### **MAN AND THE BIOSPHERE**

The U.S. MAB Program has sent letters to each biosphere reserve manager to gauge interest in participating in a workshop to formulate a U.S. Biosphere Reserve action plan. Responses (due March 15) have been overwhelmingly positive. At the MAB Executive Committee meeting held on March 26, the Committee endorsed proposals for continued U.S. MAB funding of the MAB Northern Science Network, and scientist exchanges between paired U.S. and Russian biosphere reserves.

#### **MARINE DEBRIS**

Bill Gregg, Bob Huggins (Interpretation Division), and representatives from the EPA's Office of Wetlands, Oceans, and Watersheds discussed opportunities for EPA support in developing interpretive materials for use in NPS coastal units. The EPA was particularly interested in the interpreters' manuals developed by Ohio State University to support the Biodiversity and "Clearing the Air" interpretive programs. To provide the basis for future cooperation, EPA will work with the Division of Interpretation to determine NPS interpreters' needs for program materials, training, etc., on coastal and marine issues with emphasis on marine debris.

#### **STAFF NEWS**

Sharon Taylor, the Division's wildlife veterinarian, will be leaving her position this summer to pursue graduate studies at the University of Wyoming, Laramie. Sharon will be studying diseases of endangered species. We wish her the best of luck!