



Ecosystem Management and Restoration Program

Background

The Ecosystems Program of the NRPC was created to bring leadership to ecosystem restoration issues and greater coordination between Natural Resource Management and Fire Management Programs within the NPS. The program has evolved to address livestock use in parks, contaminants, native plant materials and revegetation, landscape scale partnering, and new management paradigms. The program is staffed by a PhD Ecologist.

Highlights and Accomplishments

Since 2001, Ecosystem Program staff have worked on a range of issues and projects to help park managers and the Service meet resource management goals. These include:

- With the NPS Fire Program, presenting Fire Management Planning Workshops and an NPS White Paper, “Managing Wildland Fire and Hazardous Fuels for Ecosystem Health.” Also, represented NPS on Interagency Biomass strategy teams.
- Representing the NPS to the Interagency Plant Conservation Alliance.
- Implementing a pilot project, A Seamless Network of Protected Areas to explore data-driven approaches to broad-scale partnering and resource management.
- Cooperatively developing national strategies such as American Chestnut restoration
- Providing technical assistance to over 2 dozen parks on issues ranging from damage assessments, contaminant analysis, restoration planning and implementation, fire and resource management integration, and natural resource planning.
- Participating on multi-disciplinary teams to assess resource condition related to floods, hurricanes and grazing management.
- Developing applications of soil ecology through technical assistance and support for two academic reviews of soil ecological issues in restoration.
- Representing US Agencies at workshops to develop a restoration guide for Parks Canada



Appropriate use of manipulations that mimic ecosystem processes, such as fire, are key to maintaining park ecosystems in fragmented landscapes.

Status and Future

While continuing with current responsibilities, staff will work to identify and evaluate emerging issues in natural resource management. Activities currently planned include:

- Field test tools for defining desired conditions and ecological integrity. These will facilitate clear communications and address technical guidance gaps for analysis, decision-making and condition reporting.
- Provide expertise in soil and ecosystem ecology to NPS climate change strategies for science, stewardship and planning.
- Provide expertise to parks to respond to stressors resulting from expanded energy development and border crossing-related activities.
- Expand work to inter-organizational collaborations through the National Conference on Ecosystem Restoration and the Society for Ecological Restoration International.
- Develop applications of landscape ecology to resource management in and beyond parks.
- Continue to develop scientific management paradigms such as adaptive management, ecological integrity and resiliency as operational tools for park managers.
- Work with economists to place values on the ecosystem services that protected areas provide to working and urban landscapes.

More Information

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