



Natural Resource Condition Assessment



Wind Canyon Overlook at Theodore Roosevelt National Park (North Dakota). NPS/MARY BRAZELL

Background

More than 270 national park units (hereafter, parks) include significant natural resources. Each of these parks is working to achieve the common NPS goal of protecting, restoring, and maintaining valued natural resources in good condition. They also strive to manage those resources within their broader ecosystem context.

To help accomplish this, an effort is underway to complete a Natural Resource Condition Assessment (NRCA) for each of these parks.

NRCAs provide park managers a snapshot-in-time assessment and report on current conditions, critical data gaps, and selected condition influences for a subset of their park's important natural resources. Focal study resources are selected on a park by park basis.

Study findings will assist a variety of park management activities with an emphasis on resource condition reporting to the public and park-level strategic planning exercises.

Current Status and Accomplishments

As of May 2013, NRCAs have been completed for 70 parks and are ongoing, at varying stages of completion, for more than 90 additional parks. Current plans call for funding a similar assessment at the ~110 other parks with significant natural resources over the next few years.

Relatively new and still developing NPS programs for State of the Park Reports, Resource

Stewardship Strategies, and Vulnerability Assessments are benefitting from credible resource condition reporting that the assessments strive to deliver. Ad hoc uses of study findings have also occurred for things such as park special-use permit reviews and preparation of General Management Plans.

Study Approach and Products

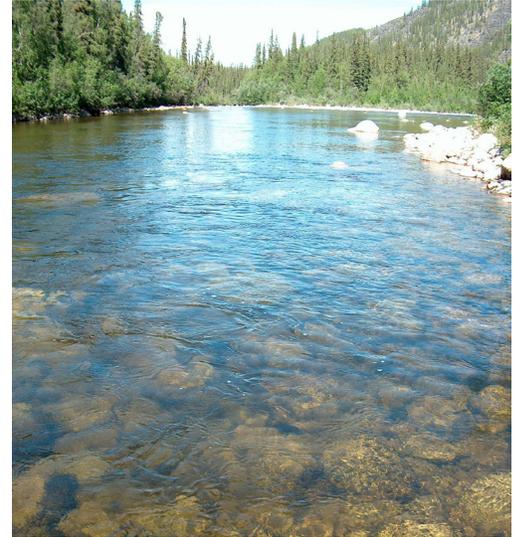
NRCAs rely on existing data and expert judgment drawn from a variety of NPS and NPS-partner sources. The graphic (below) highlights the “value added” role the assessments can play in interpreting and communicating technical science via simpler condition summaries and in forms that are more readily useful to park managers and NPS resource planners.

Credibility is achieved through good documentation of the data sets, study methods, and forms of reference conditions used; and, by discussion of level of confidence or uncertainty associated with condition findings.

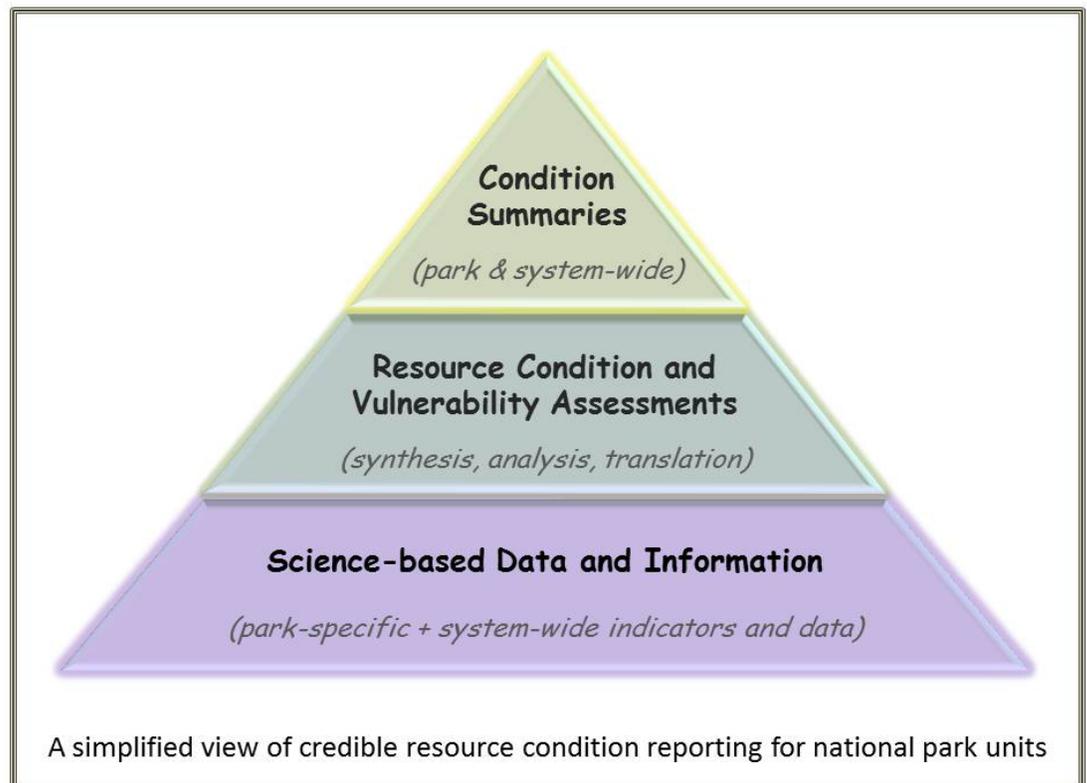
NRCA defining characteristics include:

- Condition reporting at the level of individual indicators and measures as selected for the focal study resources
- Use of logical and appropriate reference conditions as the basis for evaluating and reporting on current conditions

- Use of assessment frameworks to guide the study effort and assist (at least informal) roll-up and summary of condition findings by park areas and/or by broader resource categories or topics



Charley River at Yukon-Charley Rivers National Preserve (Alaska). NPS PHOTO



More Information

Jeff Albright
Natural Resource Condition Assessment Lead
(970) 225-3528
jeff_albright@nps.gov

Natural Resource Stewardship & Science
1201 Oakridge Drive
Fort Collins, CO 80525
www.nature.nps.gov/water/nrca