

Subject: ADNRSS Monthly Report for May

Associate Director, Natural Resource Stewardship and Science
Monthly Report
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NEWS/NEW DEVELOPMENTS

Executive Order on Marine Protection The President announced an executive order on Friday May, May 26, to protect the marine environment (including coastal waters and the Great Lakes). The order seeks to integrate existing protected areas, such as National Parks, National Wildlife Areas and National Marine Sanctuaries. It also directs the Secretaries of Interior and Commerce to develop recommendations on new steps the Federal government can take to protect coral reefs in Northwestern Hawaii.

Buffalo River Rebuffs Dam Proposal The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers denied a permit application to dam a tributary of the Buffalo National River to create a drinking-water reservoir for Searcy County, citing a "less environmentally damaging alternative." The alternative, dubbed the Clinton-Marshall Pipeline, involves building a waterline along a state highway. The proposed Bear Creek reservoir would have been the first dam on a Buffalo tributary since Congress declared the waterway America's first national river in 1972. The proposal drew strong opposition from the National Park Service, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and environmental groups, but had strong local backing. Park Hydrologist David Mott was instrumental in making the Park Service's case about the impacts of the project, and its threat to the free-flowing nature of the Buffalo River.

First Canon National Parks Science Scholars Retreat Eleven of 13 National Parks Science Scholars attended the Canon retreat outside Yellowstone National Park May 11-14. The retreat focused on the relationship among science, the media, and the public. Presentations were given by Pulitzer Prize winning journalist William Dietrich, public relations staff from Canon U.S.A., Inc. and others.

GAO Audits Validity Program in California Desert Parks The General Accounting Office has begun an audit of validity exams on unpatented mining claims on withdrawn lands in the California Desert. Both the BLM and NPS conduct exams on claims under their jurisdiction to determine if the claims constitute valid property rights. Negative findings result in claims being declared "null and void." Validity exams often are costly and time consuming. This in part has prompted the audit and the search for more cost-effective alternatives. Parks within the scope of the audit include Death Valley NP, Joshua Tree NP and Mojave National Preserve. In addition to the parks, GAO has contacted the Geologic Resources Division for assistance.

Snowmobile Hearings On Thursday May 25th, Assistant Secretary Don Barry

testified on behalf of the National Park Service's ban on recreational snowmobile use in the parks. The morning's House hearing, chaired by Representative Hansen from Utah, was well attended by subcommittee members, four panels of witnesses, the media and general public. Assistant Secretary Barry fielded a variety of questions from air quality impacts to emerging engine technologies to the Yellowstone Winter Use Plan process. A general concern of the subcommittee was that of public access and how this decision to ban snowmobiles would be the first in a cascade of future decisions affecting the public's use of the parks. The same concerns and skepticism continued in the afternoon Senate subcommittee hearing chaired by Senator Thomas from Wyoming. Questions once again focused on how and why the Park Service reached the conclusion of a ban on snowmobile use and whether or not this decision would precipitate denial of other modes of access to the parks in the future. Assistant Secretary Barry was effective in communicating that compliance with existing Executive Orders and Park Service regulations was at the forefront of this decision and that environmental impacts from snowmobile usage were enough of a concern that this policy decision was warranted.

Fossil Butte Received Collection - Retiring Brigham Young University (BYU) Paleobotanist Dr. Don Tidwell donated the Green River Formation Paleobotany Collection at BYU to Fossil Butte National Monument in April 2000. This important collection contains hundreds of individual fossil plants collected over the past 25 years by Dr. Tidwell, including a few rare flowers and a number of new species not yet named or studied. Fossil plants of the Eocene (50-million-year-old) Green River Formation lake deposits have not been well studied. Fossil Butte NM is the principle repository for Green River Formation fossil collections.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

SO₂ Alert Planning for Hawaii Volcanoes Sulfur dioxide monitoring at Hawaii Volcanoes NP indicates that the park exceeded the National Ambient Air Quality Standard for SO₂ for both the 3-hour and the 24-hour standard 5 to 20 times a year. Air Resources Division staff and staff from the Pacific West Regional Office met with the park superintendent and his staff to develop a plan to warn visitors and park employees when SO₂ concentrations are high. The plan also includes concentration trigger points, action plans, recommendations for additional monitoring, and a better system to communicate SO₂ concentrations.

Big Bend Paleontology Scoping-A team of paleontologists held a Paleontological Resource Scoping Session at Big Bend National Park the first week of April. In response to a request to the Geologic Resources Division from Big Bend, the team met with park staff, including superintendent Frank Deckert, to map out a strategy for the management, research, and protection of the park's world-renowned fossils. The session, including an all day field trip to some of the more famous fossil localities in the park, helped the park staff better understand the scope and significance of the paleontological resources at Big Bend.

Northeast Region Monitoring Workshop The Northeast Region hosted a two-day network monitoring workshop at Gateway National Recreation Area in April. The purpose of the workshop was to generate a list of ecological indicators of environmental change to be considered for monitoring in the new "network monitoring" program. The 30 workshop participants discussed five management issues of major concern: shoreline change, water quality, species and habitats of concern, visitor use, and resource extraction. The program divides the country into 32 ecological networks. The Northeast Coast and Barrier Network is one of five selected for initial funding. Although management issues vary, every network needs participation from all divisions in the Natural Resources Program Center.

Special Issue of Park Science A special issue of Park Science (Volume 20, Number 1, Spring 2000) focused on the social sciences and their contribution to park management. The issue was edited by Social Science Program staff member Jared Ficker. Copies are available from the WASO Social Science Program office and soon will be available on the NatureNet website. Contact Brian Forist at 202-208-6330.

Progress/Updates

Great Lakes Commission Semiannual Meeting The semiannual meeting of the Great

Lakes Commission (GLC) was held in Duluth, MN, May 10-12, 2000. The meeting focused on Great Lakes legislation and appropriation priorities for the 2nd session of the 106th Congress; critical Great Lakes resource management and environmental quality issues; the recent report of the International Joint Commission on water use, diversion, and removal; a new GLC Strategic Plan; a proposed natural gas pipeline under the southern end of Lake Michigan; and ballast management to control aquatic nuisance species. Dan Kimball (Chief, Water Resources Division) attended as NPS's official Observer to the Great Lakes Commission. GLC A meeting report has been prepared; more information on GLC and/or this meeting may be obtained by contacting Dan at 970-225-3501 or via email dan_kimball@nps.gov).

Third State in Geologic Inventory Pilot The Geologic Resources Division and Natural Resource Information Division have commenced the Geologic Resource Inventory (GRI) of park units in North Carolina. This is the third state, along with Colorado and Utah, identified in the GRI pilot project. North Carolina offers different park geology than the others: changing coastlines, numerous historical sites, and densely vegetated, complex mountains. To date, five coastal plain parks and three mountain parks have held scoping meetings and been provided with a geologic bibliography. Work on digital maps and geologic reports is either underway or will be initiated in 2001.

Mountain Air Quality Summit On May 4, Georgia Governor Roy Barnes hosted the second Governors' Summit on Mountain Air Quality. Governor Don Sundquist (Tennessee), Governor James Hunt (North Carolina), Governor James Hodges (South Carolina), and representatives from the other four Southern Appalachian Mountains Initiative (SAMI) states (Virginia, Alabama, Kentucky, and West Virginia) attended the summit. The summit provided an opportunity for states to build on the progress made at last year's summit, and to continue the partnership efforts to improve air quality in the region. Governor Sundquist agreed to host the third summit next year in Tennessee.

Regional Planning Organizations Focus on Air Quality EPA hosted an initial meeting of all the Regional Planning Organizations (RPOs) and their member states, as well as tribal and Federal land managers. The goal of the meeting was to discuss the RPOs' roles and responsibilities, including, ways they can work with partners and each other to analyze data, develop assessment tools, and discuss policy objectives regarding regional haze. Air Resources Division staff described how the NPS expects to work with the RPOs, including data and ARDs expertise. A follow-up meeting to discuss RPO progress will be held in six months.

Western Regional Air Partnership (WRAP) Seeks Input on Goals WRAP is the Regional Planning Organization (RPO) addressing visibility issues in the West. WRAP was established in 1997 to implement the recommendations of the Grand Canyon Visibility Transport Commission. In May WRAP agreed to begin public outreach on a proposed plan for reducing sulfur dioxide emissions from stationary sources, including emission reduction milestones for 2008, 2013, and 2018. The plan must be submitted to EPA in October 2000. WRAP now includes South Dakota and California as member states, which leaves Nevada as the only western state not currently participating.

STAFF NEWS

Research Associate Leaving Terry Bergerson, Research Associate at the University of Idaho Cooperative Park Studies Unit and coordinator of the NPS Visitor Survey Card Program will be leaving on May 26 for a new position with the state of Oregon.

Graduate Interns Two graduate student interns will be working with the WASO Social Science Program during the summer. Kim Treadway from the University of Maryland begins May 25, and Joshua Cinner from the University of Rhode Island begins June 5.