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Subject: corrected report--Challenge \$\$ wrong in first version

ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR, NATURAL RESOURCE STEWARDSHIP AND SCIENCE
MONTHLY REPORT FOR OCTOBER 2000

NEW DEVELOPMENTS/MAJOR MILESTONES & ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Second Year of Natural Resource Challenge Funded A series of funding requests tied to the Natural Resource Challenge was funded through the FY 2001 appropriation. Of the \$ \$18.45 requested, \$15.25 was appropriated, including requested amounts for vegetation mapping, vital signs monitoring, water quality monitoring, park base increases related to exotic species management and threatened and endangered species recovery, learning centers and Cooperative Park Ecosystem Studies Units. The request related to natural resource data management was also funded, at slightly lower than the request. Unfunded were requests related to California Desert restoration, the Alaska Tundra to Tropics initiative, and section 19jj. This represents nearly three-quarters of the increase planned for through the Challenge. As a result, natural resource management and research support is now 10% of the Operation of the National Park System appropriation, compared to 7.6% in FY 1999.

Proposed Rail Line Between Badlands and Wind Cave - The Dakota, Minnesota and Eastern (DM&E) Railroad Corporation is proposing to construct a new rail line in east-central Wyoming, southwest South Dakota, and south-central Minnesota to transport coal from Wyoming's Powder River Basin. Emission of soot from the diesel locomotives may cause perceptible visibility deterioration. The route lies between Wind Cave and Badlands national parks, both Class I air quality areas. Coal and coal bed methane development in Wyoming and South Dakota is predicted to cause more degradation of visibility. Badlands is one of two parks where visibility has shown a trend of deterioration. An Air Quality Working Group, composed of state and federal agencies and consultants, has been meeting to discuss the impacts on air quality of the railroad project, as well as mitigation alternatives. The Surface Transportation Board, the lead agency in the NEPA process, will be conducting public meetings October 30 through November 16 on its Draft Environmental Impact Statement. Closing date for public comments is January 2001. The NPS Midwest Region is the lead for preparing DOI comments, due December 22.

Oil and Gas Leasing Outside Great Sand Dunes Postponed -Lexam Corporation has asked the Colorado State Land Board to postpone leasing of 60,000 acres west of Great Sand Dunes National Monument until they drill a deep well on an existing lease northwest of the park to evaluate the oil and gas potential. Over half of the lands are within the proposed boundary expansion of the monument and are managed by the Nature Conservancy. Park staff opposes any oil and gas drilling in the proposed expansion area. Park and Geologic Resources Division staff attended an informational meeting with the Board in July.

Federal Watershed Management Policy is Released. The final Unified Federal Policy (UFP) for a Watershed Approach to Federal Land and Resource Management was approved by OMB and CEQ and published in the October 18th Federal Register.

The Departments of Interior, Agriculture, Commerce, Defense, Energy, EPA, TVA and the Army Corps adopted the final policy. The UFP will result in better coordination among Federal agencies, states, tribes, private landowners, and interested stakeholders in the management of Federal lands and resources using a watershed approach; and, promote management on a watershed basis to protect water quality and the health of aquatic ecosystems. Copies are available at: www.cleanwater.gov/ufp.

W.R. Grace, Historic Green Springs Settle Out of Court - W.R. Grace has agreed to settle out of court with Robert Sansom, owner of Virginia Vermiculite Ltd., for a reported sum of \$2 million. Sansom, owner of a vermiculite mine in Green Springs National Historic District, had sued Grace and Historic Green Springs, Inc. for anti-trust violations. The suit claimed that Grace unfairly blocked Virginia Vermiculite Ltd., from obtaining additional leases when Grace deeded its property in the Historic District to the non-profit Historic Green Springs, Inc. The donated land carried with it specific language stating that it could never be mined.

PROGRESS/OTHER ACCOMPLISHMENTS

New Contracts Awarded - The IMPROVE monitoring program employs a 4-channel particle sampling system that collects particulate samples on filter media to measure atmospheric particulates responsible for reduced visibility. Two contracts pertaining to the IMPROVE program were awarded the last week of September. Research Triangle Institute (RTI) of Research Triangle Park, NC won the Ion Analysis contract out of 12 bidders. Desert Research Institute (DRI) of Reno, NV was the successful bidder for the Carbon Analysis contract. Both RTI and DRI were the incumbent contractors.

Canon National Parks Science Scholars Program in Fourth Year - The Canon Program is a collaboration among Canon U.S.A., Inc., the NPS, the National Park Foundation, and the American Association for the Advancement of Science. A total of 21 Ph.D. students have been named Canon Scholars. The 2000 Canon National Parks Science Scholars Symposium was held October 21-24, 2000, in Williamsburg, Virginia, and Washington, DC. The Canon National Parks Science Scholars Program 2000 Annual Report has been published. Copies of the report are available from the WASO Social Science Program office. Contact Brian Forist at 202-208-6330.

Natural Resources Information Needs Workshop Held - On September 19-21, representatives of 27 parks and offices from six regions attended a workshop on natural resource information needs hosted by the Natural Resources Data and Information Team of the NRPC. Representatives of five NRPC divisions, ITC, and the NRSS directorate gave presentations. Participants completed questionnaires about their field knowledge of and involvement with NRPC divisions, programs, and funding opportunities. The major product of the workshop was a prioritized list of information needs about biota, climate, and air, land, water, and cultural resources. NRPC proposed actions to meet the needs and will publish periodic status reports.

Death Valley Prepares EA For Mine Access - Death Valley National Park is analyzing proposed access over 1.2 miles of park road to the Giant Mine located on adjacent BLM lands. The Geologic Resources Division submitted comments on the environmental assessment to Death Valley. Under the proposal, the claimant would be permitted 10 trips per week to haul talc through the park for an unspecified period of time. The EA analyzes impacts to wildlife, vegetation, park operations, and visitor safety. The park envisions entering into an agreement with the claimant limited to road maintenance and not allowing changes in road width or alignment.

Cadiz Groundwater Storage Project Requires NEPA Compliance - Project proponents, Metropolitan Water District of Southern California and Cadiz, Inc., must obtain a right-of-way for a pipeline over BLM lands, triggering NEPA compliance. The NPS is a cooperating agency in the NEPA process. The project is located about halfway between Mojave National Preserve and Joshua Tree National Park. NPS interests include water resource issues from the removal of groundwater and air quality issues from wind-blown particle emissions from two dry lakebeds. The NPS has recommended a water and air quality monitoring and mitigation program to avoid adverse impacts on NPS units over the proposed 60-year project life.

North Dakota Visibility Protection Plan Review Report - Joint NPS/FWS comments to the state on the North Dakota 3-year review report disagreed with the

rationale that: (1) any existing visibility impairment in Theodore Roosevelt National Park or Lostwood Wilderness Area is due to regional haze; (2) conditions are either unchanged or have improved since three years ago; and, (3) no visibility impairment has been identified that can be reasonably attributed to large sources or small groups of sources. The NPS/FWS letter cited a 1985 certification that visibility impairment exists in these areas and that several existing units at facilities in western North Dakota should be considered for retrofit air pollution emission controls.

Research Step Down Discussed at Mesa Verde - A Research Step Down meeting to identify and prioritized research needs and projects the park has in natural resources was held at Mesa Verde National Park. Representatives from the park, USGS Biological and Water Resources Divisions, the Flagstaff CESU, National Resources Conservation Service, NPS Water Resources and Geologic Resources Divisions, and various academic units participated. Major concerns are geohazards and geologic processes operating on lands denuded of vegetation. A scoping for geology and soils was done for the park two years ago. The compilation of the step down is not yet available.

Joint USGS/NPS Programs Share Ideas - A meeting was held in Denver to discuss joint USGS/NPS programs and NPS physical science needs. Representatives from the Geologic Resources Division met with the Regional and Deputy Chief scientists for the USGS Central Region Geologic Division. Tom Fouch, Chief Scientist of the Geologic Division, Central Region, believes that information should be shared with their Regional Council headed by Central Region Chief, Tom Casadeval. GRD will provide Fouch with a list of ideas to discuss. He would also like to see an announcement of the geologic specialists in GRD, leading to a joint meeting with the USGS.

Interagency Workshop Held at BLM NTC - An interagency workshop was held at the BLM National Training Center in Phoenix to develop a broadcast training program for federal land managers. The two-hour broadcast focuses on the responsibilities of federal land managers under EPA general air conformity regulations. The workshop involved NPS, BLM, Forest Service, and EPA. The interagency training course targets park superintendents, forest supervisors, BLM district and field managers and FWS refuge managers. Topics include prescribed fire programs, mineral development activities, and conformity requirements related to transportation projects. Case studies are presented to illustrate how conformity requirements can impact decisions made by land managers.

STAFF NEWS

Two New Staff Member Join Social Sciences Program - Jennifer Hoger has joined the University of Idaho Cooperative Park Studies Unit as the coordinator of the NPS Visitor Survey Card Program. Cindy Smith will be working as a graduate student intern with the WASO Social Science Program through December. Cindy is completing her M.A. in Marine Affairs at the University of Rhode Island.

New Staff Member Joins Air Resources Division - Tamara Blett joined the Research and Monitoring Branch of the Air Resources Division in October. Her duties as an ecologist will focus on coordinating, interpreting, and disseminating park research and monitoring information regarding air pollution related biological effects and integrating this information into policy decisions. Before coming to ARD, Tamara was an Air Resource Management Specialist in the Rocky Mountain Region of the Forest Service from 1988 through September 2000. She also worked for the Research Branch of the Forest Service conducting air pollution effects field studies in Sequoia National Park from 1983-1986.

PROFESSIONAL MEETING ATTENDANCE/PAPERS

22nd Annual Conference of the Association of Abandoned Mine Lands Programs Held in Steamboat Springs, CO - The Association of Abandoned Mine Lands Programs held their 22nd annual meeting September 24-27, 2000. Three GRD staff members, Hal Pranger, Phil Cloues and John Burghardt presented papers. Pranger also moderated a session on GPS/GIS Applications in Reclamation Planning. Cloues presented a paper on polyurethane foam plug closures in mine shafts and represented the NPS in a panel discussion on state AML Program Coordination. The conference was informative and provided a great opportunity to make contacts that will be useful in future NPS AML projects.