

Author: DaVon Moore at NP-DEN3  
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GEOLOGIC RESOURCES DIVISION  
NATURAL RESOURCES PROGRAM CENTER  
2nd Quarter 1999 Report (April-June)

GEOLOGIC RESOURCES - GENERAL

NATIONAL PANEL SETS DISTURBED LANDS FUNDING PRIORITIES FOR FY2000 - The NPS Ranking Panel met June 15-17 in Lakewood, Colorado to set priorities for funding Disturbed Lands Restoration and Abandoned Mineral Lands projects. As part of the Unified Call process, many of the Natural Resources servicewide programs select projects through national ranking panels, including the AML program and, for the first time, the Disturbed Lands Restoration program. The FY00 AML/Disturbed Lands Panel consisted of representatives from the Alaska, Intermountain, Midwest, Pacific West, and Southeast Regions. Servicewide, six of seven regions submitted 39 proposals to the Division to consider for funding in fiscal year 2000. The panel read, discussed, and set final rankings among these thirty-nine proposals. It appears that the DLR and AML programs will be able to fund about 35-50% of the projects, depending on the actual availability of FY00 funds. Associate Director Soukup will notify regions about the results of the Ranking Panel by mid-July. Parks with projects expected to be funded in FY00 will need to prepare detailed "implementation plans." These plans are required as part of the funding process and must be approved by October 4, 1999.

In addition to ranking proposals, the panel provided the Division with numerous and invaluable comments and ideas on improving proposals and on the proposal process. (Steensen)

NPS PARTICIPATES WITH BLM MINERAL EXAMINER CERTIFICATION PANEL - Division staff took part in the semi-annual meeting of the BLM Certification Panel for Mineral Examiners on June 7. Important panel discussions included: 1) HR 1141 stating that patent applications submitted prior to 05/21/99 will not be subject to the 1 millsite to 1 mining claim decision which may affect Mojave; 2) standardization of gold values for mining claim patent applications and validity determinations, which will affect ongoing NPS exams in the California Desert and Alaska; and, 3) A memo anticipated from the solicitor's office restricting the right to patent mining claims on withdrawn lands where the patent application has not been received prior to withdrawal. This could affect several patents currently under review in the NPS and all patent applications on withdrawn lands in the future. (Burghardt)

GEOLOGY OF COASTAL ECOSYSTEMS WORKSHOP - Division staff, in cooperation with the U.S.G.S. Branch of Coastal Geology and the Geological Society of America, will host the "Geology of Coastal Ecosystem Workshop - Making Connections" in Ocean City, Maryland, September 8-10, 1999. The host park is Assateague Island National Seashore. The goals of the Workshop are to make connections between research and resource management, between geology and ecosystem management, and between parks and external sources of expertise. The Division will cover lodging, ground transportation and all supplies. Parks must cover travel and per diem. The agenda has been finalized, sent out, and posted on Natural Resources Bulletin Board. Facility location is yet to be determined. Division staff is lining up speakers for NPS related talks and field trips. A call for posters has gone out to all "shoreline" parks. (Covington)

DIVISION DEVELOPS STILL MORE REVISIONS TO MANAGEMENT POLICIES -In recent weeks, two issues arose that required the Division to submit additional revisions of certain subsections in Chapter 4 to the Office of Policy. The first issue was the fact that some of the language in the current draft of the Management Policies, especially pertaining to potential geohazards, committed the NPS to

unrealistic levels of visitor protection. This type of language does not serve any beneficial purpose, since the NPS cannot and should not interfere with natural geologic processes, nor protect visitors from all such processes, and it exposes the NPS to needless liability. The second issue arose from Fossil Butte's efforts to acquire certain fossil specimens, which is unaddressed by the existing and current draft rewrite of the Management Policies and which is a contentious topic among NPS paleontologists and superintendents. The Management Policies, with the Division's latest input, will be circulated Servicewide for comment by the NPS Policy Office. (Brunner)

DEATH VALLEY GEOLOGIC MEETING A SUCCESS - Over 110 geoscientists from the NPS, USGS, academia, and the Department of Energy attended a three day meeting on the status of geologic research and mapping in Death Valley National Park. Park staff and researchers networked extensively on projects and park access. A session on mapping uncovered many previously unknown maps and the USGS unveiled their digital index map of geologic maps of the park. The Program Center has agreed to maintain the index map. A USGS outreach geologist translated esoteric discussions of the park's geologic story for park interpretive staff use. (Heise)

GEOLOGY IN THE NATIONAL PARK SERVICE: AN ADMINISTRATIVE HISTORY, PHASE II REPORT-Under the recommendation of the geology advisory group, the Division initiated a project to research and write an Administrative History of Geology in the National Park Service. The proposal is to conduct a comprehensive historical study of the role of geology and geologists in the establishment, development, and operation of national parks as well as the relationship between the NPS and the U.S. Geological Survey. The administrative history of geology is seen as an important tool for examining the effect geologic awareness can have on managing park ecosystems, improving issue awareness, providing background for future management decisions, and linking to other agencies and geoscience organizations. This history will put geologic science in context with the NPS culture. NPS historian, Harlan Unrau, has recently completed a scoping report (Phase II) to outline the themes and information sources that will be the focus of research. Funding is being sought to complete the project. (Wood)

#### MINERALS MANAGEMENT - GENERAL

MINE SAFETY INSTRUCTION PROVIDED TO USDA-FOREST SERVICE - Division staff assisted the faculty for a Forest Service Mine Safety Workshop in Wallace, Idaho during the week of May 10. This was the fifth Mine Safety course offered by the Forest Service National Minerals Training Office. Participants have two days in class learning about mining and milling methods, hazards, monitoring equipment, and personal protection equipment, then two days in the field at three inactive underground mines and two abandoned millsites. Division staff will instruct at more workshops as the need arises. (Burghardt)

PADRE ISLAND OIL AND GAS MANAGEMENT PLAN / FINAL EIS IS IN THE WORKS - Overall, only 15 comment letters were received on the Padre Island Oil and Gas Management Plan / Draft Environmental Impact Statement. Members of the Padre Island interdisciplinary team are currently responding to these comments, and at the end of July, will meet at the park to finalize the responses and prepare changes to the EIS text. Linda Dansby, (IMP program leader) will prepare an abbreviated draft of the plan that will be reviewed by the planning team and the WASO Environmental Quality Division during August and September. Once the team has evaluated the text changes, they will be incorporated into the final EIS. The public will have an opportunity to review the final EIS when the 30-day No Action period begins in November. If all goes as planned, the Record of Decision will be signed on the plan in December 1999. (Norby)

#### INTERMOUNTAIN REGION

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE ON LAND ACQUISITION AT SAGUARO NATIONAL MONUMENT - Division

staff assisted the Interior Service Center staff in obtaining a technical review of the Contaminant Survey and Sampling of Tract 01-171 (39.37 acres) which has two abandoned mine shafts and old workings from the turn of the century. The independent review will answer two questions: (1) is the characterization accurate, and (2) is the conclusion in the Level II Survey based upon scientifically defensible information? The team effort improves the quality control of assessing complex land resource issues prior to acquisition and improves the long-term management goals by providing technically supportable decisions. (Cloues)

GEOLOGIST-IN-THE-PARK PROGRAM HELPS RECRUIT PALEO INTERNS -- Florissant Fossil Beds National Monument has received a generous grant from Canon USA to support and expand several of the Monument's paleontology and education programs. These programs utilize interns who will assist with on-going fossil excavations and database projects, and will provide education programs for local schools. The Monument has requested assistance from the division's Geologist-in-the-Park Program to recruit outstanding geology interns to be supported by this grant. (Gese)

UTAH GEOLOGICAL RESOURCE INVENTORY KICKS OFF IN ZION - Division staff met with Zion Park staff, USGS geologists, and Utah Geologic Survey (USGS) and Association geologists for the first of the Utah park scoping sessions for the GRI. It was an exceptional meeting with enthusiastic participation on everyone's part. The geologic map revision by the UGS will be complete in another 2 years. The park interpretive staff has a fairly strong earth science background, facilitating our project. The UGA presentation on their proposed volume on Utah park geology is pretty exciting. We have agreed to seek funding to assist with this volume, it will provide expertly written text on all but one or two NPS units in the state. A full write up is available at <http://www.nature.nps.gov/grd> (Heise)

GRAND STAIRCASE: ESCALANTE NATIONAL MONUMENT ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE - The staff has been working with the Utah State Office of the Bureau of Land Management to establish fair market value for coal leases within the park boundary. A review of the 26 page Critique of Restricted Appraisal Report and comments hopefully moves the complex negotiations a step closer to completion. The partnership of sharing scarce skills benefits our sister Interior agency as well as surrounding National Park Units by eliminating the potential adverse environmental effects from large-scale future coal production. (Cloues)

MODEL PERFORMANCE BOND LANGUAGE FOR ALL O&G PARKS - Division staff, in conjunction with the Santa Fe Field Solicitor, drafted a bond agreement between NPS and Western Geophysical, a 3-D seismic operator proposing exploration in the park. Paul Eubank, Resource Manager at Padre suggested that the Division prepare model language that the managers in parks with oil and gas operations can keep on file so they don't have to craft these agreements for each plan of operations. In May, Division staff prepared model bond language and distributed it to all park Superintendents and Resource Managers handling nonfederal oil and gas operations. (Kassman)

DREYFUS PLAN TIGHTENED TO PROTECT U.S. AGAINST FUTURE LIABILITY - To avoid potential liability associated with an ongoing clean-up operation at Padre Island National Seashore, Division staff and the Santa Fe Field Solicitor drafted a indemnity provision to supplement Louis Dreyfus Natural Gas Corp.'s current plan of operations. Louis Dreyfus is responsible for mercury and hydrocarbon contamination at its Yarbrough Pass facility at Padre Island and is currently removing the contaminated soils from the site and transporting them to an outside facility. The supplementation to Louis Dreyfus' plan indemnifies the U.S. (NPS) from potential liability that may arise under CERCLA or RCRA, should an outside entity claim that the NPS had transported or arranged for the disposal of hazardous substances from Padre Island. (Kassman)

AN INTERESTING GEOLOGIC DISCOVERY- On April 30, two El Malpais employees

apparently discovered another major volcanic vent while exploring the Bandera lava flow area north of the Big Tubes. The vent, dubbed "RK Crater," produced a small cinder cone. They also found a field of previously unknown spatter cones, west of RK Crater. Upon a more thorough investigation, this information will be incorporated into the park's geologic data and added to the geologic map of the park. Although the vent and spatter cones are an important piece of the park's geologic puzzle, what is important to understand is that new geologic discoveries are routinely being made in areas that have been previously studied. (Higgins)

#### NORTHEAST REGION

ASSISTANCE PROVIDED TO GEORGE WASHINGTON BIRTHPLACE NM - In response to the park's request, the Division provided technical, regulatory, and policy-related advice for halting the widespread illegal collection of fossils and initiating a fossil evaluation program. (Brunner)

#### PACIFIC WEST REGION

MOUNT RAINIER 100TH SCIENCE SYMPOSIUM - The Northwest Scientific Association 1999 Annual Meeting "A Century of Resource Stewardship and Beyond: Mount Rainier National Park 100th Anniversary Symposium" was held in March. Geology related sessions included the following: Hydrology and Water Quality, Glaciation, and a day-long session devoted entirely to the Geology of Mount Rainier chaired by USGS geologist Tom Sisson. Other sessions involved Environmental Chemistry, Archeology and other Cultural Resources, Terrestrial Ecology, Aquatic Ecology, Social Science, Botany and Forestry. Also, a daylong field trip, run by Pat Pringle and Tom Sisson, was held within Mount Rainier to point out several geologic features and processes. Many of the topics from the geology session and field trip stops centered around geologic hazards, as well as the preparedness of surrounding communities in the event of a natural disaster related to volcanic activity at Mount Rainier. Following the geology session, there was a lengthy panel discussion on future directions for Geologic Hazards Research and Geologic Resources Management in the Mount Rainier National Park region. Participants included park staff, Washington State Geological Survey (Pat Pringle), USGS (Tom Sisson), Cascades Volcano Observatory (Carolyn Dreidger), NPS Geologic Resources Division (Tim Connors) and many others concerned about geologic issues involving Mount Rainier. Barbara Samora, park resource management specialist, took notes and will distribute a summary of concerns raised during this meeting that should be addressed in future geologic resource management. (Connors)

VOLCO MINERAL REPORT COMPLETED - The mineral report on the validity of the Volco mining claims in Mojave National Preserve is complete. Division staff submitted the report to a BLM Certified Review Mineral Examiner April 5th. The report states that insufficient quantities or qualities of minerals exist on the claims to constitute a discovery of a valuable mineral deposit. The report also contends that the Black Claims Volco Associated Placer mining claim was located improperly and cannot be amended after the date of withdrawal to correct the improper location. The result of this request from BLM will be to declare the claims null and void. (Covington)

DIVISION OFFERS COMMENTS ON BLM GUIDANCE REVISION - The California BLM office is revising a book that it circulates to mining claimants. Gordon Pine at Mojave National Preserve alerted division staff to the fact that the book contained some confusing language about the requirements for obtaining a small miner waiver in NPS units. The division obtained the draft revisions from BLM and suggested some minor changes that hopefully will eliminate the confusion. (Brunner)

JOSHUA TREE URGING BLM TO DECLARE WHEELING'S CLAIMS NULL & VOID - Joshua Tree has asked BLM to void a mining claim in the park held by John Wheeling. Wheeling alleges he qualifies for the small miner waiver under BLM's maintenance fee



regulations. However, claimants must conduct assessment work to qualify for the waiver. Assessment work in a park requires an approved 9A plan of operations that Wheeling has not obtained and thus he is not entitled to a waiver from the fees. The NPS will continue to work closely with BLM to get this issue resolved. (Brunner)

DIVISION ASSISTS YOSEMITE WITH GEOHAZARDS GUIDELINES - Yosemite and the Denver Service Center contacted the Division for assistance with the park's new guidelines for locating and relocating facilities in Yosemite Valley based on potential geohazards. The guidelines will be incorporated into the park "Valley Plan," which in turn will be added as an amendment to the park GMP. The assistance sought by the park and DSC concerned the liability implications of the guidance. The Division suggested new language for the guidelines that commits the park to a systematic evaluation of its facilities and relocation alternatives, but clarifies that the ultimate decisions about facility location and relocation are matters of park discretion. It is hoped that this language will provide adequate guidance for present and future park staff, but that it will not result in undue legal liability. (Brunner)

#### SOUTHEAST REGION

CAVE PLAN REVIEWED FOR CUMBERLAND GAP NHS - The park chief of natural resources requested review of a conceptual design plan for a cave entrance support system for Cujo Cave. The plan was reviewed and comments were sent to the park for their consideration. The recently purchased private cave is undergoing facility upgrading prior to its opening for visitation. A recent rock fall drew attention for the need to construct a support system for the cave entrance that has undergone considerable human disturbance this past century. This project must balance safety concerns, engineering options, and environmental concerns at this sensitive cave entrance. (Cloues)

#### DIVISION NEWS

REGION AWARD FOR NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT IN A SMALL PARK-- Vince Santucci, Fossil Butte NM and Geologic Resources Division paleontologist, was selected for the 1998 Intermountain Region award after a panel evaluated nominations. The award includes nomination for the Director's Servicewide Award. The nomination noted that Vince Santucci worked on a half-time basis between the division and the park, serving as Acting Superintendent part of the year. Vince was highly productive for both groups, initiating a Servicewide paleontological program and accomplishing major resource management efforts at the park, including restoration of disturbed lands, exotic plant control, monitoring park hydrologic systems, and paleontological investigations. Vince prepared a variety of paleontological publications developed training presentations for NPS staff, and recruited seven paleo-interns for Fossil Butte. The nomination noted that, "As a small park Chief Ranger, Vince has successfully carried out the responsibilities of interpretation, protection, safety, resource management, and science on a year-round basis at Fossil Butte National Monument."

DOI CONFERENCE PROVIDES USEFUL INFORMATION - Division staff attended the recent DOI Conference on the Environment in Denver. Conference speakers provided excellent guidance on the Natural Resource Damage Assessment (NRDA) process, acid mine drainage treatment, reclamation of oil and gas sites, identification of contaminated minerals sites, and compliance with CERCLA mandates. Conference information and personal contacts made will greatly aid minerals, geology, and policy staff in more effectively assisting park and regional personnel.