INTRODUCTION

Although the National Park Service Science Center (NPSC) has been an organization unit of the National Park System for approximately three years, it still remains anonymous in some sectors of the Service. Even where it is recognized as an organization entity, there is often confusion as to its mission, role, function and reporting authority. It is the purpose of this report to briefly analyze the problem areas, give some information on future plans to correct the situation, and provide a progress summation of NPSC programs and activities since the Center was established. The latter item will cover the major part of this report.

The nucleus for the Center was created by an amendment (No. 15) to the NPS 1973 Fiscal Year appropriation bill (H.R. 15418). This amendment was "for the establishment and operation of a regional Ecological Services Laboratory at the (NASA) Mississippi Test Facility/Slidell Computer Center (MTF/SCC)." The increase over the appropriation amount proposed by the House was $750,000. This base funding along with addition of 10 permanent positions and 15 man-year of other positions above the NPS employment ceiling was an investment made to use the NASA/MTF facility (space age technology) for meeting the NPS mission. On June 14, 1974, MTF was established as NASA National Space Technology Laboratories (NSTL). In December 1972, a small contingent of NPS scientists under the leadership of Dr. Clyde Hurst, Chief of the Ecological Services Laboratory, were assigned to MTF to develop a program as provided by legislation.

During the Service's initial efforts to use NASA/NSTL, it became increasingly evident that the Ecological Services Laboratory and the associated computer facilities had a potential for the Servicewide mission of procuring the Resources Basic Inventory (RBI) for master planning, long-term research of Servicewide ecological problems and a supportive role in developing the Servicewide Environmental Management Information System. On December 14, 1973, Director Ronald H. Walker announced through a Department of Interior news release the establishment of a National Park Service Science Center in the NASA/MTF, and that it would include an Ecological Services Laboratory, and the NPS Ecological and Environmental Management Information Center. Dr. Garrett Smathers, formerly Chief Scientist of the PNR and Unit Leader of the University of Washington CPSU, was named Chief Scientist of the new Center (see appendix A). The following statement of the Director's news release was to become the major goal of the new unit: "the facility . . . gives the National Park Service a unique opportunity to develop a true science center oriented to management-type problems and at the same time provides a central facility for other NPS scientists and managers to call upon for expert assistance."

It soon became evident to the NPSC Chief Scientist that if the Center was to be a "true science center" that was responsive to park managers and serve their immediate and long-term needs, then they should have a part in determining its role, function, mission and organizational structure. On December 20, 1973, Director Walker announced the appointment of a task force team that would visit and study NPSC and make recommendations to his office on the unit's role, function, relationship, mission and organization

(see appendix B). In selecting the team Director Walker made a concerted effort to assemble a group that possessed a wide spectrum of capability in park management and science administration. Upon assembly of the team at NPSC, Dr. Smathers recommended that the actual work be chaired by Frank Kowski in order that he could participate more freely and so as not to overly influence the ultimate outcome.

On February 22, 1974 Chairman Kowski made his report to the Director, which included a discussion paper that clearly established the roles of the Chief Scientist, WASO and the Chief, NPSC. Up to this time the WASO Chief Scientist, being the project program manager of NPSC, was the responsible and accountable official for projects at NPSC. The basic recommendation of the task force was to transfer this accountability to the Chief, NPSC, but leaving the WASO Chief Scientist as his line supervisor. A copy of the foregoing documents along with a memorandum of the NPSC Chief Scientist comments are shown in appendix C.

As of this date, the task force team study report has not been approved. There have been various opinions as to why the document has not been approved, but at the present time there is no definitive answer to the question. In the meantime NPSC has attempted to operate a hybrid program based primarily upon the basic recommendations of the task force study team report. The present organizational structure is shown in appendix D. As to be expected, difficulties have arisen in the areas of operation missions, priorities and reporting authority.

After perusal of the task force study team report, it is evident that had it been put into operation most of the problem areas of NPSC identity and purpose would not have occurred. However, the future of the Center becoming an organizational entity still looks bright through the efforts of our new Director. As noted in Director Everhardt's memorandum of February 10, 1975, National Park Service Policies and Priorities, Regional Director Joseph Rumburg will lead two task forces on (1) Policies and Priorities and (2) Manpower Requirements. This action seems most timely, because it will become one of the latter task force's objectives to evaluate NPSC as to its role, function and organizational structure. It seems likely that the past NPSC task force study team effort will be opened for full evaluation.

The period covered by this report extends from January 1, 1974 to May 15, 1975. Major emphasis has been placed on the development and achievement of goals for the period of May 15, 1974 to May 15, 1975. The three following missions have been pursued in the management by objectives process:

1. Preparation of RBI (ecological description of park and socio-behavioral aspect of park visitors) for master planning in cooperation with DSC, parks and regions.

2. Providing ecological services and advice on management problems concerning plants and animals (both native and exotic species), soils, pesticides, and related fields as:

    a. Extension type service that requires short-term research, advice or counsel in areas not provided by regional scientific programs.

b. Central monitoring of problems of a Servicewide nature, and providing long-term research in those areas that are unique to the National Park Service for meeting and evaluating its mission of managing parks as natural ecosystems (carrying capacity--both biological and physical environments, ecological role of exotic biota, ecological role of fire, pollution and others as determined through consultation with management).

3. The management of the Natural Landmarks and Theme Studies Division program that meets the Service's mission and objectives.

In general most 1975 Fiscal Year goals have been met, and in some instances exceeded, except those that primarily depended on the NPSC task force study team recommendations being approved.

The NPSC publications and manuscript record has been good, considering the small number of staff scientists and the limited time they have available for manuscript preparation. As with most Service scientists, the latter work is mostly done after regular work hours.

Several types of assistance and advice have been provided to regions, parks, and other agencies. In reality this has been one of the major outputs of NPSC. While it was expected that extension advice and counsel by the Ecological Services Division would comprise the greatest output, this was not necessarily the case. In fact, NPSC played a considerable Servicewide role in review of reports, plans, and EIS's. Because of the Center's close relationship to NASA and the USGS/EROS program, the NPSC EROS Coordinator was continuously queried on the availability and interpretation of remotely sensed materials (aerial photos, ERTS imagery, etc.). In Fiscal Year 1976 the EROS Coordinator is conducting a remote sensing training program for Service scientists, resource managers, engineers and similar personnel.

Many tenant agencies housed at NASA/NSTL have asked for various types of assistance that are generally reported through other offices of the National Park Service. In this respect the Center has served a very useful and important function in providing information on the Service programs, as well as providing actual services through its staff expertise. For example, interpretive planning in collaboration with the Harpers Ferry Center was provided to the State of Mississippi, which resulted in public support and legislation in preserving a parcel of wilderness land along the Pascagoula River.

An important feature of NPSC is to provide duty-station space for regional or park scientists to use the NASA/NSTL facility. The Southeast Region has taken full advantage of this opportunity. SER Aquatic Research Biologist Alan Robinson, now stationed at NSTL, has been able to provide many services and advice to the Region than could have been accomplished at his former duty station. It is hoped that other regions will take advantage of this opportunity.

INTRODUCTION

The abolishment and phaseout program of the National Park Service Science Center (NPSC) was officially announced on June 30, 1976 (see Appendix A). This was the final action and resulted from a series of events starting immediately after the First Annual Progress Report, May 1, 1975.

In early May 1975, the Director dispatched a second task force team to NPSC to evaluate its role, function, and organizational placement. On May 23, 1975 the NPS Science Center Sub-Task Force Captain made his report to the National Park Service Task Force Chairman (see Appendix B). This report became a subject item in a Regional Directors' meeting that followed later. An agreement was reached on the alternative to abolish the Science Center. An important observation was made by the Task Force that tended to point out that management had made no real commitment to implement the recommendations of the Kowski Task Force of February 1974 (see 1975 First Annual Report). In the final paragraph of the Sub-Task Force Report (page 16) the team was critical of the NPSC scientists for their displayed attitudes, and of the organizational problem between the NPS Chief Scientist and the NPSC Chief Scientist. The team's conclusion: "Our gut reaction has been to abolish the facility." The justification of these perceptions by the Task Force was the direct results of the failure of management to provide NPSC with an approved role, mission and organizational identity. Since February 1974 the NPSC staff has experienced a series of disappointments in trying to implement studies and services without an approved mission. It was impossible "to do business" in some sections of the Service. These conditions created serious problems in employee morale. Notwithstanding this condition, the NPSC staff was able to meet its 1975 goals.

The execution of the May 23, 1975 Sub-Task Force Report to abolish NPSC was expected to proceed in a timely manner. By mid-October 1975 plans were being made to phase out the Science Center. In December a WASO official met with the NPSC staff and stated that the phaseout program would be accomplished by July 1976. Scientists were asked to start no new projects and bring all current ones to an early conclusion. However, in July 1976 the staff was notified that the phaseout program would not be accomplished until approximately January 1, 1977. Thus, since May 1975 the NPSC staff has been subjected to frustration and uncertainty over pending projects. Again, as this 1976 report documents, the scientists were able to maintain their performance standards and make worthwhile contributions to management. The series of delays has resulted in the loss of a talented scientist to academia and a highly in-Service trained laboratory technician to private industry.

The final stage of the phaseout is planned for January 1, 1977, when the Ecological Services Division and the Chief Scientist office personnel are expected to be reassigned to field areas.

United States Department of the Interior

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20240
October 31, 1975

IN REPLY REFER TO:

TYPED COPY

Memorandum

To: Directorate

From: Acting Director

Subject: Transfer of Cooperative Park Study Units - Master Memorandum of Understanding from WASO and NPSSC

This memo will implement one of the recommendations made by the task force new reviewing programs of the National Park Service. All CPSU's administered by WASO and the Science Center are being transferred from WASO to the Regions for administration of the units. You are free to use these agreements in whatever way you deem appropriate, provided they serve management needs. These CPSU's are listed below with the funds that have been earmarked for fiscal year 1976. Those CPSU's that now have contracts in progress will require a new designation of COR from your contracting officer. This should be accomplished as soon as possible.

CPSU	Ear Marked Funds	Region
University of Virginia	$ 21,000.00	MAR
Western Carolina University	30,000.00	SER
American University	15,000.00	NCP
University of Minnesota	100,000.00	MWR
NASA	24,000.00	RMR
University of Denver	21,000.00	RMR
Penn State University	-0-	MAR
University of Georgia	-0-	SER

Universities with contracts in process:

University of Virginia	$35,000.00	CX0001-4-0096	MAR
University of Denver	20,053.00	CX0001-4-0101	DSC
Western Carolina University	70,000.00	CX0001-4-0108	SER

University of Arizona	$26,555.00	CX0001-4-0133	WR
University of Vermont	11,000.00	CX0001-4-0136	NAR
Wayne State University	4,000.00	CX0001-5-0002	MWR
New York Botanical Garden	50,000.00	CX0001-5-0155	NAR

The Chief, Organization and Methods is the coordinator for this transfer and any questions you have should be directed to him.

This transfer is being made as a partial implementation of the recommendations of the Science Program sub-task force. It was their recommendation that the Regional Directors be responsible for CPSU's within their Regions, and that management application of research results be a part of the CPSU contracts, i.e: 1) that appropriate management plans be developed and implemented using the results of research projects; 2) that these plans be part of the contracts and be developed by the project Director for the University, the Regional Chief Scientist, and his staff working in conjunction with the Park Superintendents; 3) that if research cannot be applied that it be discontinued; 4) that all contracts be negotiated by Regional Chief Scientist and Regional Contracting Officer with appropriate input from the Superintendent and his staff in the development of the proposed projects.

signed

Russell E. Dickenson