

U.S. National Park Service

International Programs Quarterly Bulletin

Welcome to the inaugural issue of the US National Park Service (NPS) International Programs Quarterly Bulletin, issued by the NPS Office of International Affairs (OIA).

Additional information on NPS international activities can be found at the NPS OIA webpage: www.nps.gov/oia.

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New NPS International Agreements with Mexico

On March 23rd, 2006, U.S. Department of the Interior Deputy Secretary Lynn Scarlett, along with Felipe Adrian Vasquez, Mexico's Undersecretary of the Environment and Natural Resources (SEMARNAT), signed a new Memorandum of Understanding on behalf of the National Park Service and Mexico's National Commission for Natural Protected Areas (CONANP), which provides a framework for cooperation between NPS and CONANP over the next five years. They also signed a "Declaration" recognizing and promoting the concept of "Sister Parks" established by NPS and CONANP over the last decade. NPS has worked with partners in Mexico for decades; recent joint projects have focused on invasive species eradication, shared species monitoring, and wildland fire management and fire fighting. For more information, visit: http://www.doi.gov/news/06_News_Releases/060324a.htm

World Heritage: NPS Begins New U.S. World Heritage Tentative List

The U.S. was elected to the World Heritage Committee, the governing body of the World Heritage Convention, this past October and will serve until October 2009. Service on the Committee involves voting on such issues as international assistance to World Heritage Sites and the selection of new World Heritage Sites. To avoid potential conflicts of interest, no U.S. nominations will be made to the List during the U.S. tenure on the Committee. However, the NPS Office of International Affairs (OIA) is cooperating with the George Wright Society to prepare a new U.S. list of candidate sites (also known as the Tentative List) that will be considered for nomination to the World Heritage List. When this list, which is being prepared with the involvement of property owners and other stakeholders, including the public, is completed in 2008, it will help guide U.S. selection of World Heritage nominations during the following decade. A Questionnaire that will be available to property owners of nationally important sites will form the basis of decisions on what to include in the new Tentative List. OIA plans to submit the draft

Questionnaire for Office of Management and Budget approval by May 1. It is anticipated that it will be available for use about 2 months later. As part of its responsibility to provide staff support to the DOI Assistant Secretary for Fish and Wildlife and Parks on World Heritage issues, OIA coordinated the development and submission of State of Conservation reports for 2 U.S. World Heritage Sites -- Yellowstone and Everglades National Parks. The reports which were requested by the World Heritage Committee will be reviewed at the Committee's upcoming session in Lithuania next July. For more information, contact Jim Charleton, at james_charleton@contractor.nps.gov

NPS Considers Renewing International Training Initiative

On February 24, 2006, the NPS hosted a "brainstorming" meeting that brought together nearly 40 participants from the NPS, other federal agencies, universities, foundations and NGOs involved with international protected area issues to discuss potential options for a revived NPS international training initiative. For almost 30 years -- from the mid 1960s to the early 1990s -- the NPS organized an annual training program for park managers from around the world - the so-called "International Seminar on National Parks and Equivalent Reserves." The Seminar (also known as the "Short Course") trained hundreds of park managers, many of whom went on to become Directors and other senior leaders of their countries' park systems.

Due to financial and other reasons, the Seminar was terminated in the early 1990s, but there has been increasing interest both inside and outside the Service over the last few years to develop a new and improved international training program. A big difference between the current training environment and the era of the "old" Seminar is that today there are numerous other providers of training in protected area management. The objectives of the brainstorming session were to try to determine where the NPS could add the greatest value to current international training programs, identify the key training needs of international park managers, and discuss potential funding options. A report of the meeting is available on-line here: <http://www.nps.gov/oia/Training/brainstormingsession.htm>

International Volunteers in the Parks Highlights – Participants from France, Malawi and Spain

The NPS International Volunteers in Parks (IVIP) program has welcomed several new participants this year. **Dixie Makwale**, a park ranger employed by Malawi National Parks, is currently training at Great Smoky Mountains National Park. Dixie, whose program is financed by the World Wildlife Fund, is assisting Great Smoky Mountains with environmental education programs. A group of **4 French researchers**, organized by OIA & the French Ecology Ministry, are participating in a wolf study at Yellowstone National Park. Wolves reappeared in the French Alps a few years ago and the group was interested in learning about NPS predator management practices with Yellowstone staff. The French researchers observed and filmed wolves in the park and hope to continue a relationship with Yellowstone. **Jose Rubio**, from Spain's National Park agency, is working on a variety of natural resource management issues at Mammoth Cave, Glacier, Yellowstone and Olympic National Parks over the next six months.

Thus far in 2006, OIA has coordinated 36 international volunteer programs. Annually, NPS hosts approximately 100 international volunteers. So far this year, OIA has placed 25 international participants from Europe and 6 from Canada. European programs include those from: Germany, France, the United Kingdom, and Slovakia. 5 international volunteers are from Belize, Guatemala, Malawi, and Mexico. Among the other NPS units hosting international volunteers in 2006 are Hawaii Volcanoes, Richmond Battlefield, Wind Cave, Yellowstone, Colonial, and Manassas. Both the international volunteers and the NPS benefit greatly from the IVIP program – the international volunteers receive real-world training in park management, while the NPS receives skilled, enthusiastic and inexpensive assistance in managing parks. Each year, **international volunteers provide over \$1 million in saved costs to the NPS**. For more information, contact Linda Bennett, at Linda_bennett@nps.gov

Shared Beringia International Heritage program

The NPS Alaska Region hosted a visit by Russian cultural counterparts from the Chukchi region of the Russian Far East in January. It was an opportunity to talk with Russian dignitaries about the Beringia Shared Heritage Program. The Russian visitors included Kamil Iskhakov, President Putin's Representative for the Far East Federation District; Sergei Kapkov, Federal Duma Representative; Alexander Borodin, Advisor to the Governor of Chukotka for International Affairs, and Vladimir Volnov, Russian Consul General (Seattle). Background was provided to the Russians on NPS-Alaska and the Shared Beringia Heritage Program and discussion touched upon the status of a national park in the

Russian Far East to partner with for the proposed Beringia International Park. President Putin's representative expressed interest in the list provided and promised to check on the status of the park slated for Beringia. For more information, contact Bruce Greenwood, at bruce_greenwood@nps.gov

World Bank Silk Road Heritage Project

Three NPS specialists in heritage area management participated in a World Bank team that traveled to Gansu province in northwestern China to assess infrastructure needs for the Silk Road Heritage program. Several of the sites visited may be included in a serial World Heritage site nomination for the Silk Road route. NPS involvement in the project is ongoing. For more information, contact Rudy D'Alessandro, at rudy_dalessandro@nps.gov

Park Flight Migratory Bird Program Technical Assistance

The Park Flight Migratory Bird Program, which works to conserve shared migratory bird species and their habitat in national parks in the United States and in Latin America, implemented several international technical assistance projects this winter and spring. NPS representatives provided training in environmental education in Nicaragua, bird monitoring in El Salvador and Mexico, and interpretive exhibit design in Panama. All travel costs for these projects (as with all Park Flight projects) were paid for by the NPS's partners in Park Flight -- American Airlines and the National Park Foundation. Planning is now underway for two more technical assistance projects this year -- in Argentina and in Grenada -- and for 8 international interns who will be working in U.S. national parks on bird conservation issues this summer. As many of the birds that breed in NPS sites spend the majority of their lives outside the U.S., this type of technical assistance and exchange visits is critical to ensuring that migratory birds are protected throughout their breeding, migratory and winter ranges. For more information, click here: <http://www.nps.gov/oia/topics/flight.htm>

NPS Renews International Agreement with Spain's Park Agency

The NPS has renewed for another five years a Memorandum of Understanding with Spain's Autonomous Organization for National Parks (known by its Spanish acronym OAPN), originally signed in 2000. The NPS has worked with OAPN on a variety of issues, including invasive species control, wetlands management (staff from Doñana National Park and Everglades NP have collaborated on a variety of projects relating to wetlands), GIS and interpretation, among others. NPS employees have gained knowledge and new perspectives on such issues as community outreach, social marketing, the management of cultural landscapes, heritage areas and other non-traditional parks, and more. For more information, contact Jon Putnam, at jonathan_putnam@nps.gov

NPS Research Permit and Reporting System Used As Model for Parks Canada

The NPS recently revamped its Research Permit and Reporting System (RPRS), the process by which researchers apply for permits to conduct research and/or collect from parks. This new web-based system has attracted much attention from other land management agencies in the United States and now from outside the country as well. Parks Canada, for example, used the NPS system as a model for creating its own permitting website. Parcs Gabon has also expressed an interest in this system, and it could potentially be used for a model for park agencies around the world. The RPRS website is here: <http://science.nature.nps.gov/research/ac/ResearchIndex>

This newsletter is distributed quarterly to NPS staff, partners and other interested parties. If you wish to be removed from the distribution list, please contact Rudy D'Alessandro at rudy_dalessandro@nps.gov.

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