

MONDAY, AUGUST 7, 1995

NATURAL RESOURCES S&S NOTES

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Last week DOI staff, including WRD's Sharon Kliwinski, visited the Hill with USDA staff to brief CO and MT House and Senate staff on the Abandoned Mine Lands (AML) initiative. This initiative involves an innovative and cooperative approach to responding to the Clean Water Act amendments' requirement for stormwater discharge permits for abandoned mines. Federal agencies have proposed a risk-based, watershed approach (in lieu of individual site permits), with pilots tested in one or two states. Staff from Skaggs, Campbell, and Schroederr's offices were present. The staff were particularly interested in how private and patented lands would be dealt with (States or EPA decides whether to include them). The reception by the staff was favorable.

UPDATE/FYI

Natural Systems Management The new Natural Systems Management Office (John Dennis, Peggy Olwell, Gary Johnston, and Craig Shafer) are meeting this week with a group from the field to discuss priorities and issues for the new organization. Mike Soukup will lay out the charge. The new office is to focus on parks operating in a regional context and the natural resource impacts that result from activities within natural system, but not necessarily park, boundaries.

Ozone With about two months left in the "ozone season" preliminary data indicate that ozone levels in many parks are elevated this summer. The data will have to be validated before final release, however, it appears that Great Smoky Mountains, Joshua Tree, Yosemite, and Acadia have had concentrations above the level of the national ambient air quality standard (NAAQS) that is designed to protect public health and welfare. Indiana Dunes, Mammoth Cave, Sequoia-Kings Canyon, and Shenandoah have recorded levels approaching the NAAQS. Ozone affects many plant species at levels considerably below the NAAQS. High ozone levels are often associated with extreme hot weather. (Air Resources Division)

EPA/WRD On August 15, EPA Region 8 will sign an MOU with the Water Resources Division to address water resource issues facing units of the National Park System.

New World Mine: World Heritage Commission Meetings - The site visit by World Heritage Commission representatives investigating potential harm to Yellowstone from the New World mine is scheduled for September 8-11, 1995. Park staff are coordinating plans for the meetings. The World Heritage folks will hear presentations from representatives of the NPS, USFS, State of Montana, EPA, public interest groups, and the company. Shaver and Kimball have

been requested to make technical presentations on the mining proposal and associated water resource concerns. (Geologic Resources Division)

Olympic Mining Proposal - Division staff met in Denver with park management and region Lands staff to initiate a contract evaluation of the mineral reserves on Shi-Shi Beach. The private mineral owner has suggested the NPS acquire the mineral rights or allow development. The contractor will conduct field work in August to assess the geologic potential of the 162 acres and help in defining non-destructive exploration techniques for valuation and negotiation purposes. (Geologic Resources Division)

California Desert Validity Exams - The first mining claim validity exam in the new desert park lands is schedule for the week of August 14. Division staff will conduct a mineral exam of the Rainbow Talc claims in Death Valley. The claimant has submitted a plan to develop the claims, and validity must be determined prior to NPS action on the plain. The claimant and park mining engineer will participate in the field exam. (Geologic Resources Division)

Mojave NP Temporary Approvals - Temporary approval letters have been sent out by the Field Director for nine (9) mining operations in the Mojave. The letters, drafted by Division staff, allow mining operations to continue for 6 months while NPS plans of operations are prepared. When plans are submitted to NPS, validity exams will be required prior to approval. If significant numbers of mining plans are submitted, validity could prove to be a bottleneck in the desert parks. (Geologic Resources Division)