



PARTNERSHIP WITH THE NATIONAL BIOLOGICAL SERVICE

This document provides an overview of the National Park Service's Natural Resources Inventory and Monitoring (I&M) Program. In carrying out this major initiative, the National Park Service (NPS) will work closely with several different state and federal agencies. However, the partnership between the NPS and the National Biological Service (NBS) deserves special mention, since it is one of close coordination, shared resources, and mutual benefit. In support of the NPS initiative, the two agencies will work closely with each other over the next several years to: (1) complete important baseline biological resource inventories in approximately 250 natural resource park units and, (2) initiate a series of long-term ecological monitoring programs.

The first biological inventory, vegetation mapping, will be funded and carried out by NBS personnel on behalf of the NPS, working from specifications and priorities provided by the NPS. A second cooperative effort will focus on inventories of Threatened and Endangered species in the parks. For this inventory, the NBS will provide funding and research personnel to design and test the field protocols needed to conduct those species inventories. The NPS will then fund and conduct field inventories for individual park units, using those protocols.

The NBS will also assist the NPS in initiating Prototype Long-term Ecological Monitoring (LTEM) programs but will not actually conduct those monitoring studies for the NPS. As part of its Servicewide I&M Program, the NPS will establish a network of Prototype LTEM Programs in 10 major biogeographical associations. The NBS will provide the funding and research personnel needed to carry out the initial R&D phase for each monitoring program, a period estimated to be approximately 4-5 years per monitoring program. Once the R&D efforts have been completed, the NPS will provide the funding and staffing needed to maintain the programs, perform data collection and analysis, and assess ecosystem status and trends in the parks.

The NBS is currently assisting the NPS in the development of monitoring programs at Denali National Park and Preserve, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, plus a cluster of 5 small NPS units in the Great Plains region. Similar efforts are planned for the Caribbean Park Cluster, Cape Cod National Seashore, units of the Northern Colorado Plateau, and Olympic, North Cascades, and Mammoth Cave National Parks. The NPS and NBS will periodically (e.g. every 3-5 years) review the monitoring programs for scientific integrity and recommend updates of new technologies to park managers whenever appropriate.

The data sets and expertise acquired through these joint efforts will lay an important cornerstone for natural resource management and resource protection efforts throughout the NPS, both now and into the 21st Century. However, these products will also greatly assist the NBS in its mandate to document the status and trends of the nation's most important biological resources.