

Sci and Tech Group Formed at Olympic NP

Whom do you consult when wrestling with management problems, such as air and water quality threats to park resources, exotic mountain goats altering plant communities, and loss of native gene stocks of anadromous fish, to mention a few? Why, you welcome any friendly face and empathetic ear, of course! But, to help Olympic Park managers, Superintendent Roger Contor has formed his own staff of consultants, the Science and Technology Group.

A staff reorganization provided the nucleus for the Group. A hard look at the role and function of existing positions and at management programs showed that several categories of threats to the park will be better met with an in-park team — resource specialists and research scientists working with line managers — than by the more traditional Resource Management and Visitor Protection organization supported by outside researchers. The team effort and specialist services are key points.

Superintendent Contor strongly asserts that rangers and maintenance workers are the parks front-line resource managers and will make the management decisions. To provide these front-line managers with state-of-the-art technology, scientific data, and program start-up assistance in the field, the parks' consultants are on-hand and available. "Plain-language communication and timeliness of results are measures of our effectiveness in helping managers solve resource problems," Contor explained. "Our consultants will not work in the abstract, but will deal with real things like people, goats, fish and some very pressing problems."

Many recurring management activities have become more complex. Greater public awareness, legal constraints, increased environmental degradation and pollution around the park, and tighter budgets all complicate the manager's primary job of preserving the park's resources. We must examine our traditional programs and activities in resource management, and our use of science and technology. Scientists must work closer to the problem, and will be held accountable in the real world for their work. Data and methods must withstand public as well as academic scrutiny. By the same token, managers too must work beyond themselves and review their assumptions and values.

The Science and Technology Group staff is small, but it is intended to grow. Presently, Group Chief John Aho serves as administrator and as the park's forestry/fire management specialist. Bruce Moorhead and Dick Starr complement each other as resource specialists in wildlife and plants, respectively. Ed Schreiner is a biological technician, working on revegetation of campsites and trails. Douglas

Houston, PNRO research biologist, is on longterm assignment to Olympic NP.

Goats, anadromous fisheries, and fire management are the three highest priorities at this time, in addition to on-going programs such as, revegetation of human-impacted sites and air and water quality monitoring.

"Our highest staffing priority is a fulltime fisheries specialist," said Contor, while discussing the role of his new Group. "At present we are only just becoming aware of the threat to native gene stocks of anadromous fish. We must now size up the problem and begin to manage our own fisheries. For too long, other agencies have been, indirectly, doing this for us. Our Science and Technology Group is engaged in rapid gathering of data about our fisheries and the influence of other agency enhancement programs. Most of what we are learning worries us greatly. We may be too late to preserve even one native stock of anadromous fish."

Crater Lake Visitor Study

"We never do have quite enough knowledge about what people want to do . . ."

This often voiced observation from superintendents was put into words most recently by Jim Rouse, superintendent of Crater Lake NP in Oregon, where studies of visitor traffic flows are providing specific clues about "what people want to do."

Bo Shelby, resource sociologist in the Oregon State University School of Forestry, working with Ed Starkey, head of the NPS/CPSU at OSU, entered the Crater Lake scene in 1977/78, when Frank Betts was superintendent and major redevelopment at Rim Village was in the wind.

With Don Wolf, then a research assistant in the forestry school, Shelby put together a design and visitor behavior study that mapped traffic flows into, around, and out of the lake area, and recorded the

observed movements of visitors after they left their cars.

Placement of parking areas was found to have the highest single effect on what visitors did. Most people crowded together at the Rim Village parking area, which offers a wide view of the lake, bought souvenirs at the gift shop, and then left the area. All but 15 to 20 percent missed the visitor center at the Rim Village area and the superb Rim Drive.

This all changed one day when the large cafeteria parking lot area was closed for construction work and more parking was made available near the visitor center. Capitalizing on this natural "field experiment," researchers found that the same number of visitors spent the same amount of time purchasing gifts, but the visitor center also was buzzing with activity. More than twice as many people visited the place where information about the lake — its history and geology — was displayed.

The study also found that at the first possible turnout with a view of the lake for visitors entering the park from the north, 65 percent were pulling off the road and stopping to look. As a result of the findings, safer stopping conditions and interpretation were provided by the park.

Jim Rouse is eyeball-deep in the usual problems of maintenance and safety, but he is aware of the information now available to him about how he can improve visitor experience of the lake as opportunities to do so arise.

"We now have the information we need in order to make changes for the better," he said. "And beyond that, the surveys and observations made by Shelby and Wolf give us some pretty compelling reasons for changing."

Crowded Rim: Crater Lake visitors settle for less than the superb experience Crater Lake can offer.

