

Data Banks On Old-growth Forest Jointly Funded

Two programs based outside the NPS but offering a variety of cooperative hooks for research and applications are the Old-Growth Wildlife Habitat Research and Development Program and the Natural Heritage Program. The former was launched by the Pacific Northwest Forest & Range Experiment Station, the latter by the State of Washington.

The Forest Service program recognizes that old-growth forest stands are becoming more rare as they are harvested and addresses the "increasingly key issue" that is posed by the continued cutting of these "silviculturally decadent stands" – especially in view of the National Forest Management Act's mandate that production must meet "diversity" and multiple-use requirements.

The Washington State program (which became law in July 1981) establishes a data bank of information about Washington's unique natural features and is supported by environmental, governmental and industry groups. The information assembly was started in 1977 by The Nature Conservancy at the Evergreen State College under a contract with the Washington Department of Natural Resources and other state agencies. The 1981 legislature picked it up and provided money to match federal funds to continue development of the data bank.

Al O'Donnell, supervisor of DNR's Natural Area Preserves program, pointed out that the data base will allow public and private resource agencies to learn the locations of rare habitat or unique geological features *in advance* of preparing management plans . . . thus saving time and costly legal delays. He estimates that local, state, and federal agencies in Washington, which prepare more than 300 environmental impact statements each year, could save an estimated \$620,000 a year by utilizing information from the Heritage Program data bank.