

From Rocky Mountain National Park

Rocky Mountain NP is upgrading its Datapoint system to the Model 8640. An agreement was made with the consulting firm of Arthur Anderson and Company of Denver (through the Super VIP program) to thoroughly evaluate the park needs. We are now in the process of looking at the various ongoing research and monitoring programs including wildlife population studies, range conditions and trend monitoring and vegetation studies as the first priority for data processing. In the future we see the addition of a basic data file, research project register, science library catalog, herbarium file and wildlife observation files. We would be interested in what other programs have been developed throughout the NPS for the Datapoint system. Being able to utilize what already has been developed would certainly accelerate our program.

Owning your own personal computer may offer a researcher a continuity in data analysis that is impossible when using larger computers. As research professionals we don't think twice about purchasing books or joining professional societies. In time, the ownership of a personal computer may be just as common a "tool of the trade." It's difficult to be enthusiastic about writing a substantial software library if you know that when you are transferred the software probably will not be compatible with the computer at your new location. Also, data sets may require an extensive overhaul to meet the input format of the new analytical software. By owning your own, or at least sticking to an industry standard, such as "IBM compatible," these problems are eliminated.

NPS researchers should begin sharing their experience with computing systems. Communication via telephone lines will permit the sharing of nonproprietary software. Data sets could be transmitted for analysis by others who may have more appropriate software. Calculations could be performed by personal computer; the results could then be transmitted to a facility with higher quality output facilities, such as a plotter or color printer.

The time seems right for the use of small computing systems for research, and for coordinating that use on a wide scale. In particular, researchers will need assistance in interfacing personal computers with mainframe systems and their associated facilities. In most cases this will consist of little more than establishing an account at the target facility and using the personal computer as a very intelligent terminal.

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