

Managing for Uncertainty Subject of AAAS Panel

"How Can Science be Used More Effectively to Manage National Park Resources?" was the title of the Conservation Foundation panel held on May 28 in Los Angeles as part of the weeklong annual meeting of the AAAS. Following is the abstract of the presentation made by Panelist Dave Graber, research scientist at Sequoia-Kings Canyon NPs.

"As wild ecosystems are progressively compromised by a variety of human activities such as mining, grazing, logging, recreation, and settlement, what is left become increasingly valuable as laboratories of natural ecological processes. The wilderness of our large national parks will assume this role to an ever greater extent. The integrity of the parks themselves, however, is threatened by pollution, the pressures of increasing visitation, and the parks' growing ecological isolation and resultant island effects. Internally, what once appeared to be straightforward relationships among organisms and their environments now appear to be far more complex.

"Management of natural resources in natural parks has begun to respond with a heightened awareness of this uncertainty. To satisfy their growing function as biosphere reserves, parks will be managed less for the preservation of a desired biotic landscape than for unimpeded interaction of native ecosystem processes and structural elements. This will call, where possible, for the correction or mitigation of anthropogenic factors. Such management will tax the knowledge of the scientific community, but it offers in return a particularly rewarding set of study areas. The National Park Service, for its part, faces the challenge of integrating its emerging scientific function with traditional recreational and aesthetic values."

Abstracts of the remarks of Yellowstone Supt. Bob Barbee will be carried in the Fall issue; those of NPS Research Scientist John Dennis appeared in the Spring issue.