

Scientists Hear Mott Call For 'Long View'

More than 350 conferees at the opening session of the fourth triennial conference on Research in the National Parks and Equivalent Reserves (July 13-18, 1986, Fort Collins, Colo.), heard NPS Director William Penn Mott, Jr., endorse the holding of future such conferences on a biennial basis.

Defining science in the parks as "systematic knowledge applied to practical situations," Mott vastly expanded the context of the phrase "practical situations" by calling for "the long-term view - 500 to 1000 years, not 3 to 5."

Maintaining that the National Park Service's overriding mission is to deliver the National Park System "unimpaired to future generations," the Director called science "an essential ingredient of park management." He told the assembled scientists, resource managers, and superintendents:

"We must be standard bearers of systematic, practical scientific knowledge as a basis for sound judgment decisions." Citing the re-evaluation of fire management at Sequoia/King's Canyon NPs, Mott noted: "We now have a far greater body of information, and if it implies the need for a change in our fire management practices, then we should be just as proud of that acquired knowledge that dictates a change as we would be if it affirmed our earlier decisions. We need to rework our vocabularies so that we view even our failures as valuable. Only the efforts from which we get NO information will be regarded as failures."

Resource inventories were called "the never ending task that can and must be tackled as on-going work - work that will provide a basis for scientists of tomorrow to use as standards of comparison."

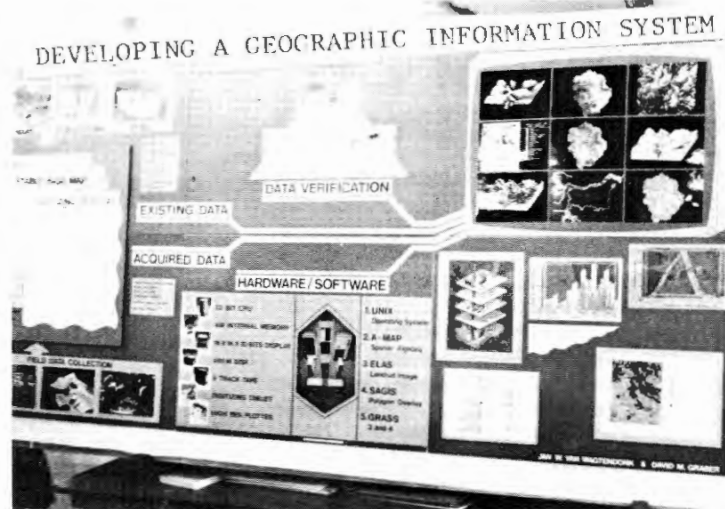
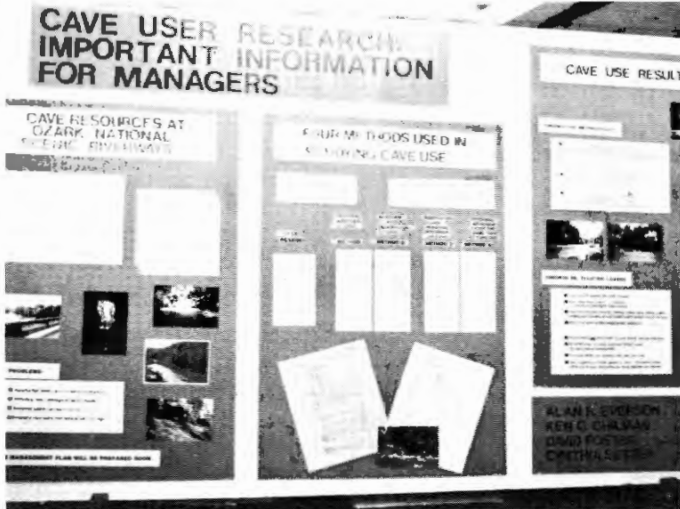
Mott coupled his remarks about the need for long-term research with strong support for interpretation. "We have told our interpreters," he said, "not to be afraid to discuss controversial management problems with the public. The public needs to understand the pressures on parks - their natural and cultural resources. It's difficult to convince Congress and the public of the need for funding us in long-term research unless they understand that need. Scientists MUST communicate with interpreters, and interpreters MUST communicate with the public."

Mott announced that a blue ribbon panel presently is re-evaluating the Leopold Report "on the basis of our new knowledge acquired since 1963," and added that the National Parks and Conservation Association's new carrying capacity formula is being tested.

The new carrying capacity formula, product of a cooperative effort between NPS and NPCA, is now out in draft form for review. Preliminary field tests have been carried out this summer, and full-scale application will begin this fall at Glacier NP's North Fork portion.



Interaction was the hallmark of the conference. Above, conferees throng the poster hall to decide on the next symposium or to "see what they missed." Informal conversation was encouraged (center) by the conference facility layout. Comfortable furniture groupings in the conference hallways lent themselves to tete a tete like this one between Ro Wauer (left) and Jon Jarvis.



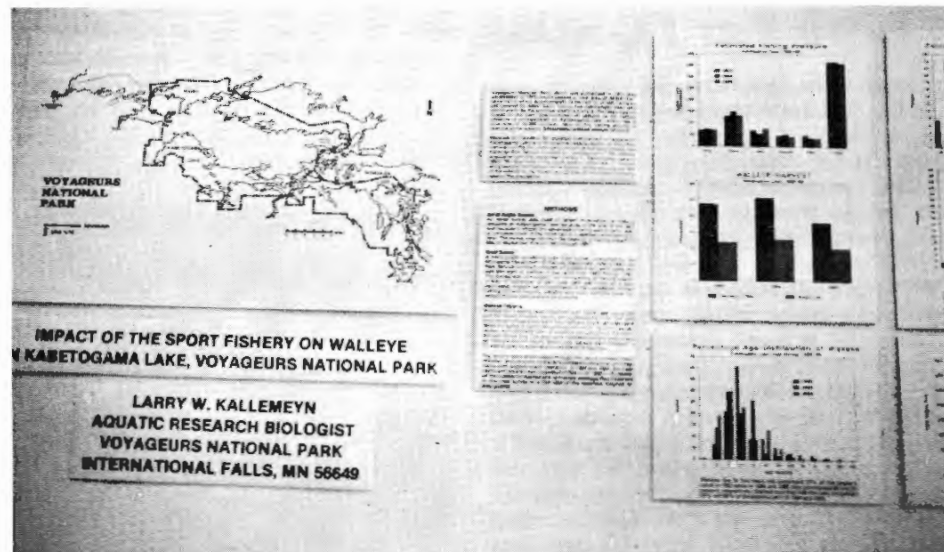
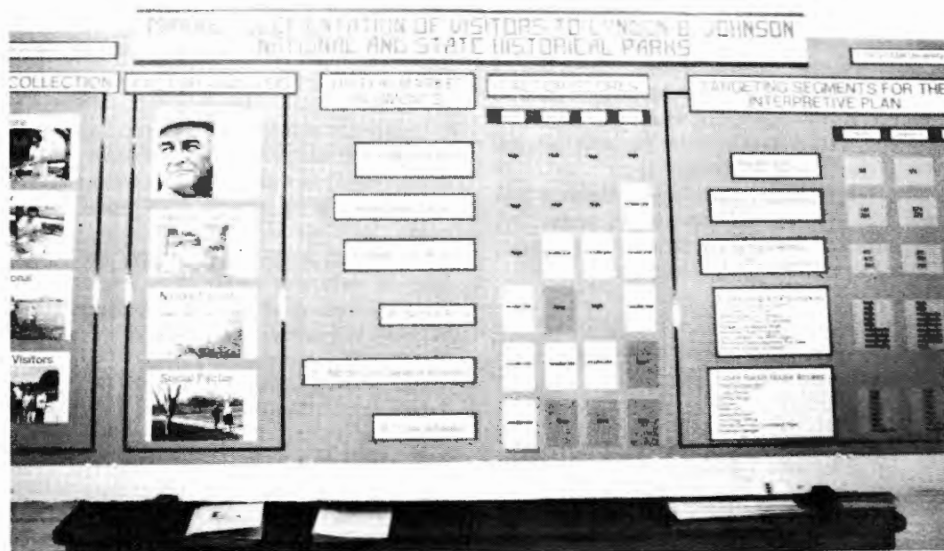
Symposia were organized around posters, which otherwise were on continuous display in the poster hall. Representative samples are shown above and below.

An article on that formula and the tests will appear in future *Park Science* bulletins.

"Above all," Mott concluded, "we are a public service agency. We must have a science program so well grounded, so well thought out, that we can explain it to the Congress, to the public, and to OMB. Ours is an element of a real world education. We believe in the validity of our science programs. We must strengthen science, interpretation, and the management of our natural and cultural resources. I pledge support for all three."

In addition to about 150 NPS personnel, conferees were from other federal agencies, state and private organizations and universities, plus representation from several other nations.

Publication of symposia presentations will be grouped into subject areas, making seven or eight different books. Conference Chairman Roy Herrmann indicated that they should be available by spring 1987.



has been the effort to increase the awareness of those with their hands on the purse strings.

"Within the past year, we are finally beginning to

here those things put into the 'official word.' There is no question that Bill Mott's leadership has forced a turn of the corner in this."