

Briggles Challenges PNR Scientists To 'Bridge the Management Gap'

By Jean Matthews

A three-part agenda for scientists who "want to make your voices heard" in the parks where they do research was offered by Pacific Northwest Regional Director Bill Briggie at a November meeting of the regional scientists in Seattle.

"You can't achieve your own goals without the cooperation of park management," Briggie suggested. "and in order to gain this cooperation you need to (1) develop management's confidence, (2) cooperate with management in meeting *their* needs, and (3) deliver a quality product."

Briggie challenged the scientists to think through the process involved in starting and carrying out a research program. How do the scientists and the manager come to know each other's expectations, he asked. Management often doesn't know what it wants. Some managers wait for a scientist or a planner to define the problem. This is the part of the equation, Briggie said, where management must do its own homework . . . "sit down and think through what the actual management needs are in terms of research."

"But then," he continued, "it's up to the scientists to be up-front with management and spell out the long-term goals of the proposed research." He conceded that this is probably the most formidable stumbling block in the present process. "Scientists tend not to lay out the long-term commitments needed, for fear the superintendent will throw up his hands and reject everything. I know this is true for I've done it myself," Briggie said.

His suggestions for bridging this "understanding gap" encompassed the idea of presenting research proposals that include some short term pay-offs – some "immediate gratification" to park management along the way to the longer range goals.

But above all, Briggie urged more openness on the part of scientists in describing and justifying the longer range aspects of their research. "Firming up a partner-

ship between science and management means finding ways of reaching real understanding of what each of your agendas is," he said. "I think we have done very well at this, up to the point where the scientist is hesitant to go the last mile in describing the commitment he needs from park management and where the park is substantially in the dark about that long-term commitment."

Briggle painted a theoretical scene, drawing from his own experience as a superintendent. "You come in with a project for reestablishing native grasses. The superintendent sees tall prairies with shoulder high grasses rustling in the wind and Indians dancing carefully on the green. *You* know this is a long-term dream. *He* may want, and probably deserves, a product he can expect to see in his own lifetime!"

Briggle described the needs of a regional director, from his point of view, as "an active dialogue on the cutting edge issues." He told the scientists: "I'm very keen on trends. I want to know what's happening out in the parks of this region and what problems are developing that we might tackle and solve right now – with the knowledge we already have – instead of studying them while they worsen. How do we get around to the front end of these developing problems and handle them *before* they become crises?"

He described NPS Director Mott's interest in park science as a commitment to "the calculated risk." The Director is telling you to be forthright in your assessment of the scientific aspects of park problems, Briggle said. "He's saying you should put *all* the management options into your reports – not just the ones that are likely to meet with public approval. If shooting alien species to rid the park of their deleterious effects is likely to be the only viable action option, then say so. We need to plug in our public relations effort at this point, so as to educate the press and the public and deflect as much as possible the offended, outraged reactions that are sure to emerge. If you give us a report that does not forceably address this option, you have delivered a 'study' that is going nowhere."

Admittedly, said Briggle, this is a tall order. "It means stepping off a cliff we've been reluctant to step off," he said. "But the alternative is to sit on our science and then dump it all on the public in an Environmental Assessment statement, with no preliminary attempt to educate."

The Director, Briggle said, has indicated that he expects science to do its job for management up to the point where further study (and public silence) is counter-productive, and the time comes for "the calculated risk." He recognizes that this is likely to produce flak we haven't generated before, but in actuality we are only generating flak that would come anyway – and we would be introducing the flak at a more manageable point in the overall process."

Briggle emphasized the team nature of this way of doing things. "It means we have to be completely candid within our own ranks," he pointed out. "We all have to understand one another's goals and objectives and the risks involved. We need to communicate not only outside the Service but with one another. Interpretation and our public information offices must be plugged in throughout the process. The entire operation could use this vehicle for becoming more internally aware. So let's get on with it!"