

Five-Year Plan For Biodiversity Action on Track

The "five year action plan" proposal presented to NPS Director William Penn Mott, Jr., by the Director's Task Force on Conserving Gene Pools, (*Park Science*, Winter 1987, p. 9) is moving forward, according to the Task Force leader, Christine Schonewald-Cox. She described one objective as "developing state-of-the-art standards for inventorying and monitoring that would integrate classic I&M techniques with (1) assessment of health and 'viability' for populations (of crucial species) and communities, (2) geographic information systems (GIS), and (3) remote sensing. The methodology for assembling a GIS will undergo some revisions, Schonewald-Cox indicated, to incorporate the dynamic changes that occur across park boundaries influenced by surrounding habitat, a subject of ongoing research at U/Cal Davis and U/Cal Berkeley.

Other objectives of the 5-year action plan include training, translation, and interpretation functions that will be handled by means of workshops, training courses, and video techniques, she said.

In addition, a Director's Steering Committee on Biological Diversity is being established and will meet regularly to offer guidance to the NPS Director on national and international biological diversity issues (including genetic diversity) that involve the National Park System.

According to Schonewald-Cox, the plan is to test the I&M standards and guidelines (above) at a particular park site and adjust them so that they can be applied to other parks. They must be responsive to different budget commitments, park sizes, and mission orientations – "thereby maintaining flexibility for a decentralized System."

The 5-year action plan will proceed, she said, with continuous interchange between its working group and the current NPS I&M projects.

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A relationship between the NPS Denver Service Center's construction branch and the conservation biology group at the NPS Cooperative Park Studies Unit at U/Cal/Davis (see this page), has been proposed to develop alternative recommendations for restoration (primarily of plants) at planned construction sites in National Parks.

Christine Schonewald-Cox, research scientist with the CPSU and spokesperson for the group, described the project as an attempt to develop a set of probable consequences involved in each alternative. The plan will be tested first at Sequoia and Kings Canyon NPs (SEKI), where the DSC construction branch is planning two projects – one at the park's edge, the other within the park.

The roots of this project lie in a SEKI program initiated several years ago, whereby only park-specific genetic materials are used in vegetation restoration work. Being the "right species" but coming from outside the park was not considered sufficient. Seeds are collected from park plants, the Department of Agriculture nurses them to a stage at which they can be transferred to the SEKI nursery and brought along to the point where they can be used in restoring disturbed sites.

Tom Warner, SEKI forester, has agreed to do a *Park Science* article for the Summer issue describing the Western Region's revegetation programs in general and the SEKI nursery operation in particular.