

Resource Management History Traced by Ranger's Thesis

From R. Gerald Wright at the NPS/CPSU at University of Idaho, Moscow, comes word of a thesis by Gordon C. Olsen of Slippery Rock University, entitled "A history of natural resources management within the National Park Service." Olsen is a Ranger at Antietam National Battlefield and limited copies of his M.S. thesis are available through Barry MacIntosh, NPS historian in Washington, DC. Wright's review follows:

The thesis is chronologically organized and traces the history of resource management activities, personnel and offices from the start of the NPS to present. It is a lengthy document, well researched in terms of its use of archival records, unpublished NPS memos, and Annual Reports of the Director, Chief Scientist, etc. The thesis is an excellent reference document for those who are interested in knowing more about the roots of the NPS in terms of personalities and offices involved in natural science and resource management. A major part of this discussion deals with the Washington Office. Producing an ordered chronology of the activities of this office is no small task.

The thesis is less strong in its discussion of actual

resource management activities. However, it must be realized that considering the breadth of NPS activities, writing such a history is far from easy. In part, the chronological thread which adds organization to the administrative history, makes the discussion of resource management activities disjointed. Overall some activities are treated better than others. The history of fire management is excellent, discussions of wildlife management had less detail than I would like to have seen.

Somewhat distracting was what I consider excessive use of lengthy direct quotes. I also feel there was a tendency for the author to except some historical accounts at face value. This results in NPS activities being portrayed in a consistently positive light even when this may not be warranted. A greater reliance on the discussion of NPS resource management activities available in refereed publications may have helped correct this situation. It is my perception that these materials often provide a more objective viewpoint.