

Midwest Region

A meeting was held in Minneapolis March 29-30 to discuss findings from a study of wolf decline at Isle Royale NP. The 26 participants represented NPS management and research, wolf ecology, disease and genetics specialties, and conservation biology.

The meeting was to summarize preliminary findings, seek consensus on immediate actions, and make recommendations on long-term study and management involving Isle Royale wolves. The format emphasized open discussions organized around short presentations by collaborators who have been involved in the Isle Royale wolf study during the past year.

The group consensus was the original three hypotheses set forth to explain the decline all remain as possibilities, and to this list a fourth possible cause should be added. The hypotheses are:

1. **Food shortage**, caused by moose age structure heavily skewed toward young moose.
2. **Disease**, with exposure to canine parvovirus (CPV) and Lyme disease confirmed and other possible parasite/disease influences remaining to be studied.
3. **Genetics**, as preliminary findings suggest that the entire population may be closely related and that loss of genetic variability may be substantial.
4. **Stochastic events**, with numbers now so low that random individual or population events may jeopardize the population.

Discussions centered around research scenarios developed to test the four hypotheses for wolf decline. The group recommended as priority management objectives scientific and educational efforts that will maximize new understanding of the dynamics of small populations. Findings need to be promptly published in scientific journals and interpreted for the public at large.

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The Midwest Regional Office now has a cooperative agreement with the University of Nebraska to inventory, rank, map, and evaluate control measures for exotic species within 10 national park units. A 1985 exotic plant inventory for each park will be updated and

a complete exotic species list developed. Each park's exotic plant species will be classified as either innocuous or disruptive according to a set of criteria and the disruptive species will be ranked using a modified version of the Exotic Species Ranking System developed at Indiana Dunes. The distribution and population status of the most disruptive species will be determined and management recommendations will be provided. An evaluation of the Exotic Species Ranking System also will be included. A final report is due June 30, 1991.

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The Midwest Region will sponsor a Research and Natural Resources Management Workshop July 10-14 at Scotts Bluff and Agate Fossil Beds. About 30 scientists and resource managers will discuss the status and use of Midwest Region CPSUs, park and Region research conferences, coordination of Midwest Region parks Geographic Information Systems, collections management, and inventorying and monitoring needs. A special topic will be management of fossil resources, with participants assisting Dr. Robert Hunt at a dig site at Agate Fossil Beds. Participants also will design the outline for an ecosystem inventory and monitoring program for Scotts Bluff.