

NPS Joins Interagency Effort To Develop Biological Diversity

By John G. Dennis

Conservation of biological diversity currently is a major topic of discussion and concern, both nationally and internationally. Congress several years ago enacted legislation to identify biological diversity concerns that should be addressed as part of our foreign aid program. Congress currently has bills pending to develop a companion domestic biological diversity program, and last year invited the NPS Director to participate in a panel presentation of agency domestic efforts regarding biological diversity conservation.

Because of its concerns for the conservation of biological diversity, the NPS already has convened or co-sponsored two workshops dealing with the topic. In addition, NPS currently is developing a bureau biological diversity plan. One result is the observation that no single agency can achieve the conservation of the nation's biological diversity by itself and that, if the nation is to succeed in conserving its natural biological diversity, all segments of society must be joined in a common effort.

In recognition of the need for interagency cooperation, and as part of its developing biological diversity program, the Service has joined an inter-agency activity to discuss the factors involved in conservation of biological diversity. This activity is being managed by the Keystone Center of Colorado. The Keystone Center is a neutral, non-profit organization dedicated to conflict resolution on issues involving natural resources, environmental quality and health, and biotechnology and genetic resources.

To facilitate conflict resolution, the Keystone Center holds policy dialogues that bring together leaders from industry, environmental and citizens organizations, government, and academia. In convening its dialogues, Keystone makes it clear that, while participants come from agencies and are provided agency support, they serve in the dialogues as individuals rather than as formal representatives of their organizations.

The Dialogue on biological diversity developed by the Keystone Center currently is planned to include three to six plenary sessions and a number of work group meetings spread over an 18 month period that started in March, 1989. The Service has agreed to participate in this dialogue both by providing funding through the Forest Service and by designating four NPS participants (Dr. F. Eugene Hester, Dr. Michael A. Ruggiero, Dr. John G. Dennis, and Supt. John F. Byrne) who will attend the meetings and develop written materials as appropriate.

The Service participated fully in the first dialogue (March 29-31, in Washington, DC) together with personnel from the Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, Fish and Wildlife Service, Environmental Protection Agency, U.S. Navy, 7 Congressional Committees, Office of Technology Assessment, 14 environmental or trade organizations, 6 resource utilization companies, and 2 universities. This first meeting developed agreements on:

- a working definition (biological diversity is the variety of life and its processes);
- an initial focus for the dialogue (looking at the programs and activities of major federal land management agencies on federal lands that may affect biological diversity);
- five objectives to be sought to maintain biological diversity;
- a tentative outline of what the final report would contain;

- assignments of participants to one of two work groups (Policy and Coordination, Data and Research) and development of tentative work plans for each of the two work groups; and

- scheduling of two work group meetings and the next plenary meeting.

The first working group meeting (May 22, 1989 in Washington, DC) was the Policy and Coordination Work Group, to exchange information about existing policies, programs, and activities of the Dialogue's member organizations which are supportive of the protection and maintenance of biological diversity. As background for this meeting, the Service submitted Chapter IV of the Management Policies, a staff paper discussing the Service's mandate with respect to biological diversity, and a summary of existing Service activities that relate to four objectives established by the Dialogue.

The second working group meeting (June 5-6, 1989, in Denver) was the Data and Research Work Group, to continue development of the group's work plan regarding inventory, monitoring, and research aspects of protection of biological diversity. The group took advantage of its Denver meeting site to engage in a half day field trip to Rocky Mountain NP to observe some examples of Service research on biological diversity preservation con-

cerns, and to learn first hand some of the real constraints that exist in the practicality of concretely applying in the field concepts that are developed in the abstract by the Dialogue.

The second plenary session (July 10-12, 1989, in Keystone, Colorado) carried out the following steps. It received reports on each of the previous work group meetings. It split the Policy and Coordination Work Group into an Agency Policy Work Group and a Coordination Work Group, and conducted sessions of all three work groups. It reexamined the scope of the Dialogue in response to concerns raised as a result of work group discussions and reaffirmed the Dialogue purpose to focus initially on programs and activities of major federal land management agencies on federal lands as they affect biological diversity, with recognition that federal agencies will need a broad perspective.

At this stage, the Dialogue has passed through the phase of introductions of what the various agencies are doing and now is generating ideas and new ways of viewing biological management situations. It is likely that the current brainstorming phase will extend through several more sets of meetings.

Dennis is Chief, Science Branch, NPS Wildlife and Vegetation Division.