

Director Accepts Academy Report Recommendations

The National Research Council (NRC) of the National Academy of Sciences (NAS) on Aug. 19, 1992 released its report titled "Science and the National Parks," and set off a flurry of activity within the Park Service. Director Ridenour convened a field managers' task force on Sept. 24-25, to develop options for the NRC report's top recommendations. Task force members included Gene Hester, Bob Baker, Stan Alhright, Bob McIntosh, Tom Ritter, Dale Engquist, Dave Mihalic, Rob Arnberger, Don Falvey, Ralph Tingey, Cindy McCleod, Jim Larson, and Jim Sherald.

Director Ridenour participated extensively in the group deliberations and the task force presented its options to him on September 25. The Director sent a memo on Oct. 7, 1992 to the ADs for Natural Resources and Budget and Administration, the AD for Legislative and Congressional Affairs, and the Director of the Office of Policy, directing them to implement several of the NRC report recommendations in accordance with the options identified by the field managers' task force.

Specifically, Director Ridenour authorized that a "Research in the National Parks" bill be drafted and submitted to Congress by Jan. 15, 1993 that would establish a mandate for science in the NPS. The recommendation to seek a strategic funding increase for science will be addressed by first completing a Servicewide assessment and quantification of need no later than Sept. 30, 1993. Meanwhile, the FY 95 budget call will handle science needs, using the interim data base that also was utilized for the FY 94 budget formulation. The Director ordered that the controversial recommendation to create an independent science arm in the Service be dealt with by adopting what had been termed the "Western Region" model of research supervision and program management. Specific recommendations for organizational changes needed to accommodate this significant action were due to the Director by Dec. 31, 1992.

The Service will delay final decision on hiring a Chief Scientist of national repute until after necessary role and function statements and organizational structures are identified and accepted. In the interim, Dr. Hester has been authorized to proceed with filling a "Visiting Senior Scientist" position to help with these actions.

Support was given to establishing a "parks for science" program, a competitive research grants program, and a basic resource information system for the Service. The NRC recommendations to create an independent line item in the budget for research funding and to create an independent science advisory board were not accepted for a variety of reasons, but the underlying objectives will be attempted by alternati

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