

Editorial

These are heady days of change throughout the National Park System...exciting, promising, and nervous. The Park Service is responding with the predictable mix of enthusiasm, hope, and anxiety.

Whole systems are among the toughest things in the world to change. When they do begin to alter, they "self design," in spite of the best intentions of those who are most instrumental in setting the process in motion. Hence the watchful waiting with which the Service (a "whole system" in its own right) watches as the rock-solid boulder begins to move. How will it travel? Once in motion, can it be guided? And where will it settle until the next set of circumstances again sets it in motion?

The changes now underway have been heralded for years. Mostly, the trumpets have sounded on deaf ears. But this issue of *Park Science* reflects almost the entire rainbow of a new dawn—from the Gary Williams article on I&M and the Gary Machlis piece on Extended GAP Analysis to the philosophic musings of Dave Haskell about the "why" of the NPS mission and the thoughtful letter to the editor from the Alaska contingency.

The words of Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt, in reply to questions from the Hon. Robert S. Walker (R-PA) as quoted below, are a reassuring answer to the cloud of question marks that hang over the Park Service. They speak clearly of a strong hand at the helm of change and a warning to the encrusted "old ways" that a fresh and bracing wind is blowing.

Question: (from the Hon. Robert S. Walker (R-PA)) How will the National Biological Survey balance the need for scientific integrity with the need for relevance to natural resource managers of the science being conducted by the NBS?

Answer: (from Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt) Scientific integrity and responsiveness to natural resource manager needs are not necessarily opposites that need to be "balanced." Scientific integrity entails credible procedures for the collection, analysis, and interpretation of data. Existing research projects that are transferring to NBS will continue according to their study plans. The needs of bureaus within Interior will continue to be met.

NBS will strengthen the overall support for bureaus by increasing the visibility of

science; by combining research and inventory activities in a single organization; and by ensuring consistent approaches across bureaus, so that information can more readily be shared. The information transfer capability will make technical and scientific information more available in non-technical terms to provide information to managers.

Bureaus will continue to identify and rank their science needs, and will be actively involved in setting the NBS agenda and budget. This will occur at the headquarters level through the intra-departmental Policy Council, but also will happen in the field, as NBS managers and scientists interact on a day-to-day basis with client bureau staff.