

## **To the Editor:**

### **This is a plea: Don't Bury Resource Management!**

In the 1970s, several parks, including Sequoia/Kings Canyon and Yosemite, organized independent resource management programs. Management review reports over the past decade, from State of the Parks (1980) to the Vail Agenda (1992), have stated an urgent need for more and better trained NPS natural resource managers and better program focus. The Natural Resource Management Trainee Program was begun in 1983 in response to the identified need to increase the number of professional natural resource managers and to upgrade the effectiveness of NPS resource management.

**Professional Parity** – Protection/emergency services have become so complex that just sustaining full performance level skills and maintaining quality standards has become an arduous task for rangers. Rather than pursue a futile attempt to require rangers to do everything, the time has come to embrace the concept of professional parity between rangers and resource managers.

Certainly more individuals are needed who possess the knowledge and who are provided the time to contribute significantly to resource management activities. It is imperative that a corps of individuals is dedicated fulltime to resource management functions—to provide program direction, development, operation, and evaluation. Just as technical requirements for ranger profi-

ciency have increased, so too has the need for educated, technically proficient and experienced resource managers to accomplish *scientifically valid* resource management.

**Scientific Credibility**—High-quality data are important for many management decisions and are *critical* to support controversial ones. Since the park ranger series has no science education requirements, its ranks lack scientific credibility. Such credibility is necessary for the NPS to participate effectively in complex resource management conflicts—especially when dealing with resource managers and scientists from other agencies, institutions, and private industry.

Science information is often too technical for managers to interpret alone, and the management implications may be unclear. The Vail Agenda stated, “Managers have little training and experience to learn the uses and needs of research outputs.” Acceptance by management of the value of research results can go a long way toward promoting manager-scientist cooperation.

**Partners in Park Management**—Complex social, political, environmental, and ecological considerations warrant *interdisciplinary consultation*. The natural resource management component deserves Divisional status and presence at Divisional Chief meetings so that specific ecological implications of management actions can be communicated. The separation of professional resource management disciplines from decision making is unconscionable. The integration of natural resource information into park management decisions often depends on the manner in which it is communicated to park managers, and on the level at which such input occurs. It is high time to accept and recognize natural resource professionals as full partners in providing the National Park

Service with *science-based* management. Everyone who works in a national park unit contributes, either directly or indirectly, to resource management. Rangers who are better educated in science will be able to contribute more. But program development, guidance, and evaluation must be provided by individuals educated and experienced in science and resource management and dedicated fulltime to those tasks.

Resource management is a *science*.

**Gary Vequist**

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## To the Editor:

This letter is a response to *Campfires and Firewood: A Global Perspective* by Dick Cunningham (Fall 1993, p.32). I had a chance to read this paper earlier, as Chief of Interpretation and Education at Big Thicket National Preserve. Undoubtedly many would agree that the information presented in this paper is interesting and very well researched. I do feel, however, that a major piece of the deforestation equation is curiously missing—the growth rate of Human Population.

Deforestation is directly related to population growth. In the Worldwatch Institute publication *Vigal Signs—1993*, some of the countries Mr. Cunningham mentions show strong population growth. Interestingly, the growth in non-industrialized countries is causing a decline in their populations' wellbeing. Latin America is second only to Africa as the fastest growing population area in the world. Guatemala and Honduras are seeing a 3 percent growth rate annually.

A recommended read for those wanting a calmly argued historical perspective on population expansion, natural resources extraction and exhaustion, and the human outcome, please read **A Green History of the World, the Environment, and the Collapse of Great Civilizations**, by Clive Ponting, 1991.

If I hear "Ranger, throw another log on the fire," I will respond with "That reminds me... I have some facts of history I want to share with you... something we humans need to be frequently reminded of..."

Respectfully,

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