
HaskeII Explore NPS ‘Comnitment’ in FORUM Essay

"Is the NPS Ready for Science?" is the question asked by David Haskell in a provocative essay appearing this month in the George Wright Society's FORUM. Haskell cites the shelved reports so ably discussed by Jonathan Jarvis in the Summer 1993 issue of *Park Science* (Vol. 13, No. 3, pp 6,7, and 10), and proposes one way to effect a change in the NPS science and stewardship paradigm.

Despite the plethora of reports and recommendations, Haskell states, the **will to change** has been notably lacking to date. He hails the recent line-up of favorable aspects for supporting ecologically and scientifically sound park stewardship, terming it "an astrological

window," and adds: "This may be the only time in the history of NPS that the Service itself is the only obstacle to accomplishing this shift."

Haskell describes "the worries of a lot of park managers" at the transfer of all the biological science research personnel stationed in parks, CPSUs and central offices to the National Biological Survey. He muses on the fact that these Research Grade Evaluation (RGE) personnel have been relied on heavily by superintendents, because the resource management specialists ("although many of them are skilled and dedicated") are spread so thin that "they rarely have the time to address the

larger strategic resource management needs of the parks." In addition, they can aspire to no more than a GS-11 grade and "very little training and career development has been offered to enhance the basic skills they have brought to the job."

The question now, Haskell says, is why—considering the repeated recommendations of past review commissions—the Service didn't start decades ago the process of building a scientifically credible resource management program carried out by park biologists and other "applied scientists." He cites "substantial institutional inertia (euphemistically termed 'tradition') as perhaps *the* major obstacle to any meaningful change in the fundamental management strategy.

Haskell first asks "Is the NPS ready to adopt a resource stewardship paradigm based on science, that looks to the future and insures the ecological integrity of the parks?" and then presents some of the key recommendations that have been made to date—carefully arranged as "stepstones" to the preferred new paradigm.

The essay in its entirety appears in the GWS's FORUM, Vol. 10, No. 4, due out in December/January.