

Editorial

Yo, field troops! A dispatch from the front.

Having heard, felt, even experienced some of the angst that currently is rocking the National Park Service field personnel, I can report that I approached the March 1-3 Regional Chief Scientists meeting in Washington, D.C. with equal parts of hope and fear.

After sitting through one full day of fairly frank and open discussion among key players in the National Biological Survey and the National Park Service, and two more days of even franker and more open thrashing over of the situation with NPS personnel only, my assessment is as follows:

The NBS is currently a non-negotiable fact of Department of the Interior life. The Secretary and the Director stand solidly behind its organization and implementation. The two most powerful players in its makeup—the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the National Park Service—are doing their level best to make it work.

I saw good people from two very different science programs striving with good will and commitment to recognize one another's viewpoints and responsibilities. They acknowledged the difficulties they face in trying to meld their different skills and resources, and they gave evidence of being willing to tackle what must eventually become their **mutual** problems.

Promises and pitfalls are a natural coupling that occurs at all major crossroads; jitters are natural and understandable. Into the swirl of events that constitute "present

conditions" must go not just the best-laid plans of the well intentioned, but also the human climate such conditions engender. The human perception today seems to range from supreme confidence, downhill through educated doubts, and ending in stark terror.

Also very present is "the butterfly wing effect." Given the extremely fluid state of the emerging new order, the softest bump from anywhere could tip the balance of direction. Frantic phone calls from the field during the March RCS meeting in D.C. emphasized the wisdom of keeping field personnel fully advised as to developments. Well meaning people are attempting to shape an approach that will be stronger, better armed, and more responsive to park management needs. The very real fears of resource managers need to be recognized, honored, and dealt with openly.

To pull off what is being attempted here would be a monumental task even in the best of all possible circumstances. To do so in straitened fiscal times is even more challenging. Small factors can have huge effects at times of "initial conditions." So grab the moment all you positive butterflies, and beat your wings!

Editor's Note: For additional thoughts on this philosophy, please refer to Book Review (page 27), especially the portion dealing with Leadership and the New Science by Margaret J. Wheatley on page 28.