

PACIFIC-GREAT BASINS

Death Valley National Park hosted the first western area wilderness stewardship session for line officers last May. Planned and instructed by National Park Service, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Bureau of Land Management, and U.S. Forest Service staff, this session

focused attention on wilderness philosophy, operations constraints inherent in the 1964 Wilderness Act, and resource and visitor management issues in light of the passage of the California Desert Protection Act. A second session will be held in Arizona during October.

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Great Basin National Park installed a remote weather station on the summit of Bald Mountain last September making it the highest in Nevada and one of the highest in North America. At 11,562 feet above sea level, the new weather station provides data for resource management and research activities and also enhances the safety of park visitors.

The weather station transmits data by radio to a base station at park headquarters. Visitor center staff can query the station at any time in order to inform hikers and climbers of current high elevation weather conditions. This information is especially useful to those who plan to climb 13,063 foot Wheeler Peak, which is located just south of Bald Mountain and is the highest peak in Great Basin National Park.

Currently, the station is programmed to record the hourly average wind speed and direction, air temperature, relative humidity, solar radiation, and maximum wind gust and its direction. To make these measurements, the station uses an anemometer, wind vane, air temperature and relative humidity sensor, and a solar absorption pyranometer. A datalogger controls the sensors and is housed in a small structure that also shelters a

Humboldt National Forest radio repeater. Solar panels on the roof of the shelter recharge the batteries that power the station. The meteorological sensors are mounted on a 5-meter-tall mast, attached to the shelter.

This project was three years in the planning and took several months of effort during 1994 to complete. All park divisions and other agencies, including the U.S. Forest Service, the Office of the State Climatologist, and the Nevada Air National Guard, helped to establish the high elevation weather station.

Less than two weeks after being installed, the new weather station recorded a 146 mph southerly wind gust that occurred during prefrontal conditions. This set a state record for October, and is one of the highest gusts recorded for any month. That same day, the station indicated an average wind speed for one hour to be 86 mph!