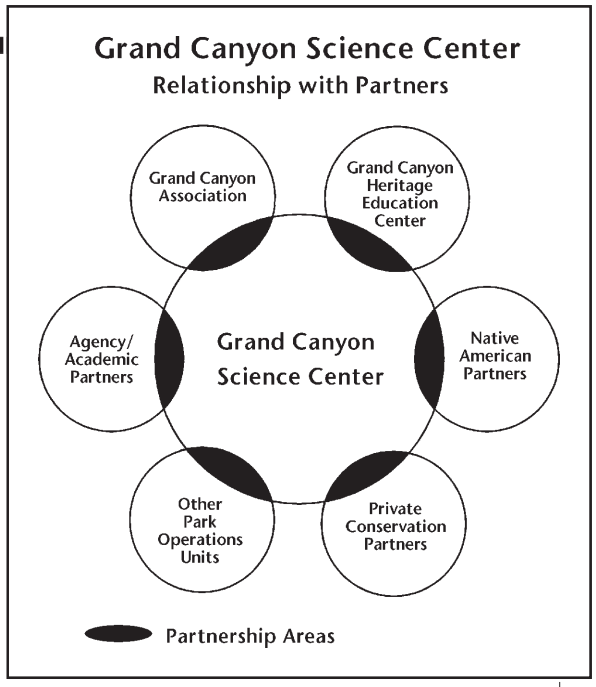
Announcing the New Grand Canyon Science Center

Organization joins science partners with resource management leadership



By David Haskell

Created in April, 1995, the Grand Canyon National Park Science Center is a new concept that responds to initiatives within the Department of the Interior and the National Park Service to improve agency efficiency, public service, and resource protection. Central to this effort is the need to work more closely with associated state and federal agencies, Native American tribes, conservation groups, and other organizations that share an interest in resource stewardship on public lands.

The NPS Strategic Plan (1994) provides a list of the most important things that the agency should do to meet current and future challenges. The first task is to base park management decisions on sound scientific information. In order to accomplish this goal the agency must redefine and strengthen the role of science in park management. The creation and operation of the Grand Canyon Science Center will assist the park and the National Park Service in achieving this goal.

The science center will operate differently than the previous park Resource Management Division. We will foucs on four areas in this process:

- The name change recognizes that resource management is a responsibility and function of all park divisions. By not having a park division called *resource management* we recognize the contribution other operational units and partners make in achieving our shared resource management mission. The science center will provide leadership, planning, and scientific knowledge of resources. Other park operational units will be engaged in resource education, protection, restoration, and other related activities.

- The creation of the science center acknowledges that science is a fundamental part of park management and operations. The quality and scientific credibility of science center programs are being improved by raising staff performance expectations and recruiting new employees with clearly defined scientific capabilities.

- Operational areas have been defined and are lead by qualified science program managers. These program areas are: research, geographic information systems and data management, natural science programs, cultural programs, social science-recreation programs, and administration.

- Center operations include the regular involvement and participation of six recognized categories of science program partners. These are the Grand Canyon Association, Native American tribes, academic and agency partners, citizen conservation association partners, and other park operational units.

In the context used to describe science center operations, we use the definition of *science* in Webster's Dictionary, which is "The systematic acquisition of knowledge through observation, study and experimentation." The center staff is made up of scientists, historians, curators, archeologists, and other professional subject matter experts, plus technicians who assist in carrying out field operations, and technical and administrative support staff. Together these people, in consultation with science partners, provide the scientific knowledge about park resources necessary to make knowledgeable and informed management decisions. This staff also formulates and prepares resource management plans and provides the leadership to carry out key portions of the park resource stewardship program.

The new science center will engage in many of the same activities that were being accomplished by the old Resource Management Division in the fields of natural, cultural, and recreational resource management. Science operations that are to be expanded include the addition of social science capability, expanding and improving the research program, which will be carried out primarilly by partnership agencies and contract research scientists, and the development of a comprehensive long-term monitoring program for both natural and cultural resources. The purpose of expanding the latter two operations is to greatly improve our knowledge and understanding of the condition of park resources. Periodically evaluating the status and trends of resource condition allows park managers to be more effective in reducing threats to resource health and visitor enjoyment before any threats become serious problems.

Accomplishing this newly defined mission for the Grand Canyon Science Center will be a challenge in these times of reduced federal spending, continued increases in park visitation, and intensifying threats to resource health. The National Park Service recognizes that accomplishing the agency mission will require harnessing the energy, creativity, and financial support of partnership agencies and organizations. To accomplish this task, a primary focus of the center operations is to develop well-defined partnerships and to routinely incorporate these partners into center operations. PS

David Haskell is the Director of the Grand Canyon Science Center. Reach him by calling (520) 638-7701 or sending e-mail through the NPS cc:Mail network or over the Internet at "dave_haskell@nps.gov".