

ON BEING PREPARED

As you may know, President Clinton recently announced a land swap between Canadian-held Crown Butte Mines, Inc., and the federal government, effectively killing the proposed New World Mine near Yellowstone. Had it gone through, this project would have developed an underground mining process to recover gold, silver, and copper from a mountain near the park's northeast boundary. The controversial project had the potential for long-term contamination of Soda Butte Creek in Yellowstone and also endangered the Clark's Fork of the Yellowstone River, a federal wild and scenic river.

The high-level deal did not come by politics alone and it did not come overnight. It was based on a steady stream of technical information and reasoned analysis that has been flowing from scientists and resource managers to park administrators and political representatives for several years. Certainly, the proposed mine was also an emotional issue, but geologists, biologists, hydrologists, and water resource specialists played the central role in making the scientifically based case against the project. They even suggested the land swap.

Not all threats facing parks are as prominent as this, yet the process to deal with them involves the application of information gained through research. This relationship, the core of this publication, is illustrated throughout this issue in articles that span the continuum from documenting park resources to resource manipulation.

We cannot possibly predict all threats to the natural resources in our care, but we can prepare for some as Toben Lafrancois points out in his article on the diverse aquatic life in rock pools at Capitol Reef National Park. A part of his study involved a resource inventory process, a fundamental building block for resource preservation that is the basis from which so many other resource activities are based. We also need to be prepared to examine our work critically from time to time and make midcourse corrections. Laurel Last and Richard Whitman share suggestions on this subject in their examination of the water quality monitoring program at Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore. Demonstrating the possibility of a strong marriage between science and interpretation, Jeff Marion and Susan Brame bring us up to date on the *Leave No Trace* backcountry ethics education program that is having success in minimizing impacts to wilderness.

If, as Louis Pasteur suggested, chance favors only the prepared mind, then nowhere is preparation more important than in our own workforce. As the lead article details, the Natural Resource Trainee Program was a successful investment in the future of NPS natural resource management. As a result of that course and a similar one just begun, we are continually preparing to handle future unknowns like the New World Mine.

