

Interagency communications productive at Bandelier

Managing migratory wildlife where several agencies are involved is a challenge. Bandelier National Monument (New Mexico) is addressing just such a management challenge using two ongoing approaches to promote dialog between biologists and managers concerning migratory elk. The first approach is to sponsor a yearly symposium of biological research in the Jemez Mountains of northern New Mexico. The symposia have been very successful, attracting approximately 100 biologists and land managers each year. The

second approach is to support and participate in the East Jemez Resource Council—an inter-agency group formed to promote understanding and coordination of natural and cultural resource management in the east Jemez Mountains.

In November 1998, the third symposium featured several papers on elk from both Los Alamos National Laboratory and Bandelier. Participants learned about the laboratory's elk tracking efforts that use global positioning system collars and efforts to create a predictive computer model for elk movements based on habitat, slope, aspect, and proximity to man-made structures. Presentations on simulated trampling and grazing, observations of elk behavior, and development of an elk visibility model from Bandelier's elk research program generated much interest and many questions. Also part of the symposium were papers on the 1950s rapid drought-induced ecotone shift in the ponderosa pine zone at Bandelier and a summary of vegetation recovery after the 16,500-acre "Dome" fire of 1996.

The East Jemez Resource Council was the invention of Bandelier's Chief of Resource Management Charisse Sydoriak. In 1998 the council was directed to make suggestions on elk hunting regulations to the New Mexico Department of Game and Fish. In drafting the recommendations, communications between biologists created two success stories for the park. First, a new subunit for elk hunting in areas adjacent to Bandelier will be created in the fall of 1999 to increase hunting pressure and reduce the winter elk population on the monument. Hunting in the new subunit will be limited to avoid long-period hunts that would likely drive animals onto the monument. A focus on cow-only rifle hunts will also maxi-

mize herd reduction until harvest goals are met, while maintaining quality archery bull hunts. Second, voluntary hunter check stations were cooperatively staffed by council personnel last fall to determine hunter numbers and success rate information—not otherwise available—in the planned subunit. From staffing check stations the council learned that hunter success was only 16% in the planned subunit area, approximately 50% below anticipated success. This information will be used to formulate future harvest targets in an adaptive interagency management approach aimed at accommodating both Bandelier's elk management goals and the goals of neighboring land managers.