

Axtell and Vequist take on new challenges

Last spring, Mike Soukup, the Associate Director for Natural Resource Stewardship and Science, announced the selection of Craig Axtell as Chief of the new Biological Resource Management Division.

Headquartered in Fort Collins, the new division will help carry out the thrusts of the Natural Resource Challenge to protect native and endangered species and their habitats and to aggressively control nonnative species. The division was funded and established in FY2000.

In taking the new position, Axtell left his job with Rocky Mountain National Park where he served as Chief of the Division of Resource Management and Research. His career with the National Park Service spans 25 years and also includes positions as Park Planner and Economist with the Denver Service Center and Resource Management Specialist at Everglades and Isle Royale National Parks. He graduated from Colorado State University with a B.S. in forest science and an M.S. in natural resources management.

Since coming on board in May, Axtell has been busy setting up Exotic Plant Management Teams to address the problem of invasive plants in parks. Four teams are currently operational and have begun exotic plant eradication efforts at parks in the National Capital Region, Chihuahuan Desert and shortgrass prairie, Hawaiian Islands, and Florida. Other functions of the new division are national coordination of threatened and endangered species management, integrated pest management, technical assistance with animal trapping and wildlife veterinary operations in parks, and advice to parks on other complex biological resource issues.

Also making a switch in jobs is Gary Vequist, who was recently selected as the Associate Regional Director for Natural Resource Stewardship and Science in the 13-state Midwest Region. Duty stationed in Omaha, Nebraska, Vequist formerly served as Chief, Resource Management and Visitor Protection, at Carlsbad Caverns National Park in New Mexico. He replaces Ron Hiebert, who transferred to the Colorado Plateau Cooperative Ecosystem Studies Unit at Northern Arizona University in Flagstaff, Arizona, last December.

Before his assignment at Carlsbad, Vequist held positions as the Alaska Regional Resource Manager for seven years and supervisory resource manager at Glacier Bay National Park, Alaska, for eight years, in addition to numerous other seasonal park positions. He earned a B.S. in zoology from Washington State University and an M.S. in environmental quality engineering from the University of Alaska. He brings to his position broad experience working with species inventorying and monitoring, fire and cave management, visitor protection programs, and scientific research.