

editorial

Editor's Note: *In the serendipitous way that things often happen, editorially, for **Park Science**, a veritable spate of cave-related articles appeared in our mailbox. That this occurred at the same time that WASO was pre-empting the Southwestern Region's Chief Scientist for help in establishing a national node for cave research and management, provided this issue of **Park Science** with a focus that is herewith introduced by SWR Chief Scientist Milford Fletcher in the following guest editorial.*

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During the week of Feb. 11, 1991, I met with NPS Deputy Assoc. Director Denny Fenn to outline the tasks related to the recently passed Act directing the NPS to accomplish two tasks:

(1) Establishment of a Cave Research Program "to provide for the orderly and scholarly collection, analysis, and dissemination of research material related to caves in lands managed by the NPS including, but not limited to, Carlsbad Caverns NP and the Capitan Reef area" (a geological formation), and

(2) Transmission to Congress of a report on the feasibility of establishing a Cave Research Institute. The report shall consist of a study covering "the need for such a facility, its costs, its purposes, what the facility should include, and where it should be located. Analysis of potential sites for the Institute should include, but not be limited to, Carlsbad Caverns NP."

The Division of Natural Resources and Science in the NPS Southwest Region has agreed to be the main contact for the first task. The second task will be completed by one of the various planning organizations, pending funding for the study.

We are currently formulating a work plan for approval by the Directorate in Washington which will outline, in general terms, the main thrust and direction of such a nationwide cave research program and what it would look like.

The exciting thing about this legislation is that finally we are getting a chance to look at cave research needs on a nationwide basis. An initial list of these needs will be obtained from the recently submitted Tables and Charts, updating the resource management plan from each park area. This legislation has the potential to gather an information base on cave-related research, open lines of communication among a diverse group of cave researchers, and formalize a nationwide program of cave research and management based on the most recent knowledge of karst processes.

Since caves represent a priceless source of information on paleontology and anthropology, the participation of a wide variety of research directions and disciplines is virtually assured.

(See Kerbo's "Caves and the NPS" on page 5.)