

*Interpretation is putting it all together.*

*The best interpretation takes the widest ranging sets of facts available and presents them in such a way that the subject matter takes on new depth and dimensions, complete with hooks and tie-ins to the experience of the "audience."*

*As scientists and resource managers have pursued their objectives in the fields that make up the National Park System, a whole world of fascinating raw material for interpretation has been emerging. Not only does this information make for exciting visitor experience, it is a "natural" for imparting management messages . . . from the "whats" of visitor safety to the "whys" of tough management calls.*

*It's one thing to put up a sign that says "do this" or "don't do that." It's quite another thing to fold into park interpretive programs and brochures the underlying scientific reasons for the dos and don'ts of visitor management.*

*Much of the scientific information available to interpreters is simply that – information. It can be used to frame, enhance, deepen, embroider – even to plant some eternal questions about – the basic subject matter for which the park was established. An article in the NPS Ranger Newsletter (see Information Crossfile, this issue) suggests that interpretation is a four-fold program, with enrichment at the "recreational-inspirational" level as the most suitable "philosophical foundation upon which to base programs."*

*Dick Cunningham, with strong backing from Western Regional Director Howard Chapman (see p. 17 this issue), goes straight for the heart of the other three "folds" – interpretation as (1) a management tool, (2) an educational tool, and (3) a tool for attitude change. All three of these can become valuable adjuncts to wise visitor management.*

*In the Southwest Region, Keith Yarborough (see p. 9) recognized the results of air quality research in the great scenic parks of the West as a gold mine of interpretive information and did something about it. With superb support from the Denver science team and the Southwest Regional interpretive division, he not only spread the facts before interpreters from three NPS Regions, but gave them the materials from which to build meaty, well-received, management-supportive visitor programs.*

*There must be other such success stories out there, either in place or in the making. We'd like to hear about them – the things that worked and the things that didn't. Wherever the gap between interpretation and scientific research is closed, a whole host of benefits emerge: the fruits begin with better public understanding of the national parklands, extend to greater support for necessary management decisions, and wind up making park interpretation a richer, more integrated part of the total NPS experience.*