

Guest Editorial

By Dick Briceland, Associate Director of Natural Resources

The Washington Office of Natural Resources is embarking on a new era — new directions, new emphasis, new approach. Over the past few months there have been three specific Washington Office management actions that will shape all future WASO activities and responsibilities in the science/natural resources area. These management actions involve *organizational changes*, *role and mission changes*, and *realignment changes* and can be summarized as follows:

I. Organizational Changes

In late February, the Department approved a major structural and functional reorganization of the Washington Office. This reorganization abolished the Office of Science and Technology (S&T) and created a new Office of Natural Resources comprised of four Divisions:

- The Air and Water Quality Division, formed by consolidating the Air Quality Division and the Water Resources Division, both from S&T. This Division has two field components —the Denver Air Quality Field Unit and the Fort Collins Water Resources Field Unit.



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- The Biological Resources Division, formed by consolidating the Natural Science Division from S&T and the Natural Resources Management Division from the Office of Park Operations.
- The Special Science Projects Division, transferred intact from S&T.
- The Energy, Mining and Minerals Division, a totally new organizational unit formed by consolidating energy, mining and minerals functions from within WASO, the Regional Offices and DSC. This Division has one field component, the Denver Energy, Mining and Minerals Field Unit.

Responsibility for the Servicewide Energy Conservation Program was shifted in the reorganization from S&T to the WASO Office of Park Operations. Responsibility for the Fire Management Program was retained within the WASO Office of Park Operations.

II. Role and Mission Changes

In early March, the Director distributed the approved WASO reorganization plan to the Washington Office and defined the future role and mission of the WASO staff as follows:

"The Washington Office, in consultation with Regional Directors, will be responsible for establishing and maintaining the adequacy of Servicewide policy; establishing nationwide priorities for Service activities; and for coordinating Service matters with the Department, the Congress, national organizations and the public."

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III. WASO Central Office Realignment Changes

In mid-March, the Director announced formation of a WASO Realignment Coordinating Committee and directed that WASO functions be consolidated and streamlined to reduce overhead costs and improve organizational efficiency. The Director simultaneously advised each Associate Director to prepare and submit a realignment plan that would shift a minimum 12 percent of WASO central office staff positions and dollar resources to park units or approved Field Units.

Impacts of these management actions

When fully implemented, these three management actions will result in a major restructuring of WASO natural resource functions. Consider, for example, the following:

- *Line vs. staff role.* Effective immediately, the WASO Office of Natural Resources will function strictly in a *staff support* capacity, not in a line operating mode. Natural resource *management* responsibilities are reserved exclusively to the Director's Office and to Region and park field units; WASO staff will *not* assume responsibility for natural resource *management* functions. To emphasize this point, the term "management" deliberately has been eliminated from WASO Office and the Division of titles.
- *Natural Resource Management Plans.* WASO no longer will review and comment on park Natural Resource Management Plans (RMP's) unless requested to do so by the Regions. RMP's exist to help field personnel set programmatic and budget priorities and make informed natural resource management decisions; as such, RMP's properly are the joint responsibility of the Regions and the individual parks, not the Washington staff. The RMP Guidelines issued in December, 1980, will not be revised by WASO unless the Regional Directors determine that changes are necessary.
- *Cooperative Park Study Units.* The Office of Natural Resources no longer will be involved in maintaining or funding any Cooperative Park Study Units, or any research projects at CPSU's, without the explicit concurrence of the area Regional Director.
- *Biological Resources Division.* The Biological Resources Division will function primarily in a field liaison mode. Responsibility for ongoing technical assessment projects currently sponsored by WASO will be transferred together with appropriate funding resources to the Regional Offices, provided the Regions approve these shifts. No new research or special studies will be initiated by the Division except as may be needed for developing Service policies or guidelines . . . for example, as relate to exotic or endangered species, special protection zones, collection permits, etc. Furthermore, WASO will look to the Regions to help design such research or special studies, and, where possible, to accept a management role in implementing these projects.
- *Special Science Projects Division.* The Special Science Projects Division has been assigned lead NPS responsibility in support of the Secretary's Barrier Island legislative initiative. This activity will represent the principal work assignment for this Division for the next two years. Ongoing commitments to the MAB program will be continued. Any future social science activities that may be initiated by the Division will be coordinated fully with the Regions.
- *Air and Water Quality Division.* The Air Quality staff will continue to function essentially as it has in the past. A new Water Resources Field Unit has been established at Fort Collins, comprised of staff from the Fort Collins Water Research Lab together with former Regional Office hydrology personnel transferred to Fort Collins under the Region's

realignment plans. The Fort Collins Field Unit will continue to provide water related technical support to park units as requested by the Regional Offices.

- *Energy, Mining and Minerals Division.* The EM&M Division represents a consolidation of energy, mining and minerals functions previously distributed among various WASO and Regional Offices and in the DSC. The majority of the Division staff, including the Division Chief, will be duty stationed at the Denver EM&M Field Unit. The Division will be responsible for policy and legislative matters, for interagency coordination on regulatory and leasing activities, for development of training agendas, and for providing technical support to the Regions on such matters as mining and drilling operations plans, title certification of mineral ownership interests, examination and valuation of mining claims, and EIS support.
- *Staff levels.* It currently is anticipated that the transfer of responsibilities under the WASO reorganization, coupled with the reassignment of personnel to approved Field Units under the WASO realignment plan and the phaseout of non-essential temporary employees, will result in a 25 - 35 percent reduction in staffing levels within the immediate WASO Office of Natural Resources.
- *Field-WASO Task Forces.* A major initiative has been implemented to expand and improve the working partnership between the Washington Office of Natural Resources and the Regional Office Resource Managers and Chief Scientists. A series of ad hoc working groups comprised of these senior Regional Office field personnel will be convened to address important natural resource issues of Servicewide interest . . . for example:
 - pest management issues and procedures;
 - grazing policies;
 - elimination of non-essential Field reporting requirements;
 - Servicewide natural resources information management systems;
 - natural resources budget formulation procedures;
 - criteria for selecting and prioritizing Significant Resource Problems (SRP's) for funding under the PRIP Natural Resources account;
 - training programs for both entry level and experienced natural resource specialists; and
 - career ladder and professional advancement opportunities for field natural resource personnel.

Summary

The future role of the WASO Office of Natural Resources will be limited to precisely those functions that have been prescribed for the Office by the Director, i.e., formulating policies; establishing priorities; and providing coordination support. WASO personnel will serve in a staff support capacity and will *not* attempt to function as natural resource *managers*. Nor will WASO staff initiate research projects or study activities that can and properly should be the purview of field scientists and natural resource specialists.

Every effort will be made to eliminate the sense of competition that sometimes has existed between the Washington Office and the field with respect to budgetary and project management issues. Particular attention will be given to building improved working relationships between the WASO Office of Natural Resources and the Regional Chief Resource Managers and Chief Scientists.

It is hoped that these changes within the WASO central office will help assure a strengthened and more effective Servicewide natural resources program.

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