

Editorial

In this issue, we focus on change.

Science in the National Park System and Service has been an evolving entity, shifting with the currents of the surrounding system within which it was embedded. There are two sayings that have pertinent currency within the General Systems Theory crowd: (1) a system self-designs, and (2) no system can understand itself.

These two rules of general systems theory help explain the position in which NPS scientific research, application, and interpretation find themselves today. The best of intentions, a host of well-educated, well-meaning personnel grappling with fragments of an ever-growing mountain of resource problems, led to a dawning recognition in the larger "system" surrounding the Park System that something different **had** to be done.

Beginning on page 1 of this issue, Michael Soukup and Robert Doren present an example of how informed resource specialists, in one of the National Park System's most threatened parks, have been attempting to solve the formidable problems of one park—a park that is inextricably linked with other parks in the region and with other management agencies.

Paired with this presentation is an article by Associate Director Gene Hester, describing what Stephen Jay Gould would probably call "punctuated equilibrium" in the evolution of science in the National Parks. In effect, the sudden shift from "park biology" to a National Biological Survey, as an approach to solving our growing biological resource dilemmas, is an indication of a system that was struggling valiantly to "understand itself" but that needed an outside look, and push, in order to make the evolutionary leap to the next level of self-design.

The new NBS will **not** completely understand itself, and it **will** self-design. But out of this larger, more inclusive approach to biological resource problems that no longer can be contained or solved within the National Park System alone, will come greater ability to "see" the problems, and better-armed ways of dealing with them.

Or so we all hope and pray!