



Northern Great Plains Network

Inventory and Monitoring Monthly Report

April 2003



I&M Program Charter: The Northern Great Plains Network Charter has been signed by Superintendents from all 13 parks in the Network and approved by Region. If you haven't seen it, and would like a copy, let me know.

Herp Inventories: Well after much deliberation Dr. Brian Smith and I have decided to conduct the remaining herp field work in 2003, as originally planned (excluding Missouri NRR which will conclude in 2004). As you may recall, we were considering postponing the work until 2004 hoping for wetter conditions, but for all we know it could be even dryer then (and we've had some impressive rains lately here in the Black Hills), so those parks scheduled for herp inventories (the same parks that had inventories last year) can expect to see Brian and his crew in the next month or so.

Plant Inventories: As you may recall, we still have 4 parks that were short of the "90% objective" for plant inventories, those being Ft. Laramie and Ft. Union Trading Post NHS, Mt. Rushmore NMEM, and Jewel Cave NM. I have arranged for Bonnie Heidel of the Wyoming Natural Diversity Program to conduct plant inventories at Ft. Laramie and for Carolyn Godfread to conduct inventories at Ft. Union Trading Post. They should be at those parks in the next month or so. As for Mt. Rushmore and Jewel Cave, we were able to get funding through the Servicewide Comprehensive Call (a.k.a., PMIS) to conduct vegetation studies in 2003 and 2004 that should meet the 90% objective (I'll monitor progress to make sure).

Environmental Compliance: Just a reminder for you all to consider environmental compliance for the field inventories coming up this summer (I assume most of you did this last spring and need no further action). The mammal inventories this summer will involve mist-netting, handling, and release of bats, as well as live-traps and pitfalls at Ft. Laramie NHS. The herp inventories require handling and releasing specimens, but no habitat modification (other than turning over the occasional log). The bird inventories do not require any handling of specimens or habitat modification. Plant inventories will be performed at Ft. Laramie NHS and Fort Union Trading Post NHS and will involve removal of voucher specimens, as agreed to by the parks. For all parks and all inventories, vouchers will be taken only if you the parks decide.

Vouchers: We have a verbal agreement with the Bell Museum at the U. of Minnesota to prepare and curate our inventory specimens. Unfortunately, the paperwork is not moving fast. I expect to ship all specimens to the museum this summer (and finally get them off your hands).

Data Manager Position: We are working with personnel to hire a GS-12 Data Manager. This grade is higher than the Data Managers in the other networks in the region so it's been a challenge getting it classified. Obviously, if we can recruit at the GS-12 level we

should be able to get someone that can step right in and build our data management program with a minimal learning curve. More importantly, my goal has always been for staff in the I&M Program to (whenever possible) be able to work outside the I&M box and to address the “big picture” of data management. By that I mean I want this person to be able to assist parks in all facets of their data and information management needs. I would like this person (and everyone in the I&M Program) to be able to provide assistance to parks as needed. That is part of my justification for the GS-12 grade.

Biological Technician Positions: The Board of Directors has approved the hiring of a permanent GS-7 Biological Technician. I used a benchmark position description for the position. It will be open to merit promotion and all sources. The position was sent to personnel in Wind Cave NP several weeks ago.

NPSpecies: I encourage you all to continue (or start) using NPSpecies to enter all “credible” wildlife observations. As summer approaches I’m sure you’ll be getting numerous reports from staff and visitors. Contact Simon Kingston via email if you don’t have a login ID and password for the online version (or go to: <http://www.nature.nps.gov/im/apps/npspp/NPSpp/Docs/Logins.doc>). If you’ve been using your own in-house wildlife observation database please contact me so we can upload the data to NPSpecies (if we haven’t already done so).

NatureBib: Natural resource staff in parks received a recent query from me in regards to who if anyone is using the online bibliographic database NatureBib. It doesn’t sound like anyone is, which doesn’t surprise me. There are some real limitations to the database which I think WASO is starting to realize (hence, their query to me about usage and my query to you all).

Document Scanning: I’ve been using Badlands NP staff to collect information, including publications, to populate NPSpecies. As part of that effort we are scanning all publications, reports, and other paper documents into Adobe pdf format. Eventually, we will make all these available on the intranet Network web page. In theory, this means that if you go to the web page and search on “gopher” you should be able to scan hundreds of publications and reports from your park for information on gophers. It also means that if you can’t find your copy we should have one available for downloading.

“Vital Signs” Plan and Park-specific Workshops: About a month back I solicited proposals from universities in the Northern Great Plains that might want to help develop our “Vital Signs” monitoring plans. I’ve gotten lots of positive feedback. By mid-May I expect to have 6-12 solid proposals. I fully anticipate going with one of these proposals to take the lead on our monitoring plan. Assuming we’ll be contracting out much of the plan I’ve decided to postpone the park-specific “Vital Signs” workshops until the contractor is on board. I hope that such meetings can occur this summer, but it’s probably more realistic to plan on early fall.