

Northern Great Plains Network

Inventory and Monitoring Monthly Report

August 2002

Herp Inventory: Summer herpetofauna inventories are mostly completed, with some work being postponed because of the fires in the Black Hills. Dr. Smith and I plan to re-evaluate the need for the fall inventories (i.e., re-allocating that effort toward spring work may be more productive especially in light of this year's drought). A progress report is due this winter.

Bird Inventory: Bird field work is completed for the year. A progress report is due this winter.

Mammal Inventory: Small mammal trapping has been completed at Devils Tower NM, Mount Rushmore NMEM, Ft. Union Trading Post NHS, and Knife River Indian Villages NHS. Dr. Schmidt plans to be at Scotts Bluff NM on September 10th to the 15th, Agate Fossil Beds NM on the 16th to 19th, and Jewel Cave NM on the 23rd to 27th. Small mammal trapping at Ft. Laramie NHS has been rescheduled for next year, along with the Missouri National Recreation River. Keep in mind that Dr. Schmidt will be re-visiting most of the above-listed parks for bat inventories and general searches (to document those mid and large species not recorded as part of the small mammal work). As a result of discussions with Dr. Schmidt, and an evaluation of her workload, I will be conducting the automated camera station surveys myself. These automated cameras detect hard-to-observe nocturnal species such as bobcats. I currently have six units out at Mount Rushmore where they will remain for 20-30 days. I hope to get them to a few other parks before winter sets in (most likely in the Black Hills area).

Plant Voucher Museum Search: We originally budgeted \$7,500 in FY02 to conduct a search of museums that may house plant specimens collected from national parks in the Northern Great Plains Network; however, we ultimately postponed the task until FY03. I'm happy to report that we will begin the task in FY03 in an incremental manner. Sandee Dingman (Natural Resource Specialist at Badlands NP) will be attending graduate school at the University of South Dakota this fall. We will pay her 18 hours per pay period for about 11 weeks to go through the school herbarium looking for records that may have come from national parks. Unfortunately, the herbarium does not have a digital catalog so this will be a laborious process. Sandee will first query by state and then county. If there's a park in the county, she will then review the legal description or other location information. (If your park is in a county that previously had a different name, such as is the case at Badlands NP, please notify me and I'll pass it on to Sandee, or contact Sandee directly). Depending on the success of this effort, we may extend it to other museums/herbariums.

NPSpecies: Jon Dagleish made great strides in populating NPSpecies, especially for Wind Cave NP, Agate Fossil Beds NM, and Fort Laramie NHS. Unfortunately, I think progress will slow on this effort until I can hire a new data technician to replace Jon, which I hope to do this October.

Monitoring: Unfortunately, the news from the National I&M Program in regards to our monitoring funds is not positive. We were originally scheduled to get \$150k of startup monitoring money in FY03. This would greatly expand our program, and allow me to hire a full time data manger. I have pleaded our case to people at the national level about our need for the funds, but to no avail. The change in funding schedule appears to be a tactical switch by the Washington Office in the face of increasing budget uncertainties (i.e., they plan to fully fund those 15 networks already funded, and postpone the remaining 17 until a later date). At the advice of the Regional Office, I plan to draft a memorandum to the Washington Office making our case for the need for the startup funds. I will be approaching either the Superintendents serving on the Network Steering Committee (i.e., Supernaugh and Poe), or all Network Superintendents, for signatures on the memo (I'm waiting for feedback from the Steering Committee on how best to proceed).

USGS-BRD Plant Ecologist: I'm happy to report that USGS-BRD has selected Dr. Amy Symstad to be the plant ecologist duty stationed in the Black Hills. I believe she will be onboard around January of next year. I, along with several other NPS and BRD folks, met with Dr. Symstad a few weeks back. We were very impressed with her background in working with exotic weeds, prairie restoration, prairie ecology, and other plant-related work. She is well published and comes with excellent credentials. It's my understanding that her primary charge is to support NPS research needs in the Northern Great Plains, and where appropriate, provide technical assistance on park operations. Thanks to BRD-Jamestown Center Director Jay Hestbeck for recognizing our needs and placing her close to our parks. As agreed to with Jay earlier this year, the I&M Program will provide office space for her. I expect to work closely with her as she gets up to speed on our parks and needs.

I&M Office Location: Partly as a result of the new USGS-BRD position described above, and partly as a result of other needs (e.g., my need to hire a technician), I will be moving my office to Mount Rushmore NMEM effective October 1 of this year. We all expect to be at this location for only a year or two until the Forest Service building is constructed south of Rapid City.