



Northern Great Plains Network

Inventory and Monitoring Monthly Report

August 2004



Vital Signs Planning: The Technical Committee had a conference call on August 23. I told the Committee that I hope to get a draft of Phase I of the Vital Signs Plan to them in September/October and submitted to WASO in November. This would be almost a year ahead of the WASO schedule. The conference call minutes will soon be posted at <http://www1.nature.nps.gov/im/units/ngpn/Pages/Organization/meetingMinutes.htm>

Integrating Monitoring Programs: Amy Symstad (USGS-BRD) attended a workshop in the Pacific West Region that focused on developing ways for the Vital Signs, Exotic Plant Management Team, and Fire Effects programs to cooperate in monitoring restoration efforts in areas infested with invasive plants. She went there on behalf of the I&M Program and shared with workshop participants our efforts to date. Unfortunately, it does not look like their effort (which is receiving USGS-BRD funds) will substantially help us in regards to integrating the three programs in the Northern Great Plains. Therefore, we will continue developing an integrated approach for these programs rather than waiting for completion of the Pacific West effort. Chad Prosser, Cody Wienk, and I hope to convene a meeting this fall to keep moving this forward.

Linda Williams: For the past year Linda Williams (administrative clerk at Badlands NP) has been processing time and travel for the I&M Program, and generally keeping us in line and out of trouble. As many of you know, Linda lost her fight with non-Hodgkin's lymphoma on August 14, 2004. We miss her terribly and wish her family the best. For the remainder of fiscal year 2004 our administrative needs will be covered by other Badlands NP staff and by the Regional Office. Assuming we get a funding increase in FY05 it may be time to consider hiring an administrative clerk for the I&M Program.

Midwest Region I&M Coordinator: Phyllis Adams, the Midwest Region I&M Coordinator, has accepted a position with the Forest Service in Oregon. We thank her for all her hard work on behalf of the I&M Program and wish her the best on her new job. The position will soon be advertised as a GS-12/13 so spread the word.

Miscellaneous: The I&M Program is pulling together information on past and current monitoring efforts for the Phase I report. Much of this information comes from the park-specific meetings we held over the past couple years. As a result of this effort I now realize more than ever how important and wise it is to have a base-funded I&M Program within the National Park Service that is dedicated to long-term monitoring of natural resources. As we found in some of our meetings, many parks have in the past initiated well-intentioned efforts for long-term monitoring; however, many of these efforts have fizzled and died due to funding restraints, changing priorities, staff turnover, lack of follow through by the non-NPS researcher, and other reasons. I encourage parks to be very careful in committing time and money to long-term monitoring efforts unless they're certain the park has the commitment and resources to see it through.