

New aquatic resource professionals stationed in parks

by Dan B. Kimball

IN FY 2002 THE NATIONAL PARK SERVICE HIRED nine new field-based aquatic resource professionals to address a variety of critical needs. These new staff members are providing technical assistance to parks, identifying and conducting technical investigations to determine the condition of park aquatic resources, and determining if actions of the National Park Service or external parties impair or impact resources. They also are developing and implementing aquatic resource mitigation and restoration projects and interpreting and implementing NPS water resource-related policies and regulations. Of the 13 professional aquatic resource positions funded in FY 2002, 4 remain to be filled.

“These new staff members are ... conducting ... investigations to determine the condition of park aquatic resources and ... implementing aquatic resource mitigation and restoration projects.”

In deciding which aquatic resource disciplines would be required and where the new staff would be stationed, the National Park Service evaluated existing water resource-related issues and needs and the distribution of aquatic resource professionals in the parks. Based on this evaluation, the 13 newly funded positions include four fisheries biologists at Lake Clark National Park and Preserve (Alaska), Northern and Southern Colorado Plateau Networks, Chattahoochee River National Recreation Area (Georgia), and Isle Royale National Park (Michigan); four aquatic ecologists at Yukon-Charley Rivers National Preserve (Alaska), Point Reyes National Seashore (California), Saint Croix National Scenic Riverway (Wisconsin and Minnesota), and Center for Urban Ecology (National Capital Region); two hydrologists at Delaware Gap National Recreation Area (Pennsylvania and New Jersey) and Grand Teton National Park (Wyoming); a groundwater hydrologist at Sonoran Desert Network; a geomorphologist at Mount Rainier National Park (Washington); and a wetlands ecologist at Chattahoochee River.

These new staff members work on a wide range of water resource-related issues facing the parks. Some particularly significant issues to be addressed include the recovery of endangered fish (e.g., in the Colorado River), evaluating the water quality impacts of urban development

(e.g., near Delaware Water Gap), assessing stream stabilization and the protection of cultural resources (e.g., Klondike Gold Rush National Historical Park, Alaska), analyzing the effects of beach replenishment projects (e.g., Fire Island National Seashore, New York), evaluating groundwater development near parks (e.g., Saguaro National Park, Arizona), and the reestablishment of anadromous fish populations in park waters (e.g., Point Reyes).

The Natural Resource Challenge calls for funding and placement of 16 new aquatic resource professionals in the parks by FY 2003. Funding for the final three positions is expected in FY 2003 and would provide two groundwater hydrologists at Chickasaw (Oklahoma) and Lake Mead National Recreation Areas (Nevada) and a marine ecologist at Fire Island.

Prior to funding provided by the Natural Resource Challenge, only 20 parks had aquatic resource professionals on staff. Founders of the Challenge recognized the need to increase professional expertise and to employ more park-based aquatic resource professionals to address water resource-related issues facing the National Park System. Consistent with the goals of the Challenge, these new positions will significantly enhance the National Park Service's capability to understand, maintain, restore, and protect aquatic resources in the national parks. ■

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Hydrologists sample water quality in Lake Powell, Glen Canyon National Recreation Area, Utah. The Natural Resource Challenge funded a fishery biologist and water resource specialist to deal with natural resource projects and fishery issues in national parks in the Colorado River watershed.