



Planning and Information Branch



Canoe on McDonald Lake in Glacier National Park (Montana). NPS/DAVE RESTIVO

The Planning and Information Branch encompasses the Planning and Information Management programs. The Planning program provides parks with comprehensive strategies and products that cover the full spectrum of water resources. The program provides national oversight for Natural Resource Condition Assessments which evaluate current conditions, identify critical data gaps, and highlight some notable resource condition influences for a subset of a park unit's important natural resources. The Information Management program supports parks in analysis and archiving of hydrologic data, including database design and data management, as well as GIS applications.

Planning

Planning is the decision-making process that translates laws and policies into tangible guidance for parks to use in managing their fundamental and other important water resources. The WRD Planning program provides parks with comprehensive services and products that cover the full spectrum of water resources supporting Foundation planning, State of the Parks and Resource Stewardship Strategy development, and park-specific project plans. Staff coordinate the State of the Parks

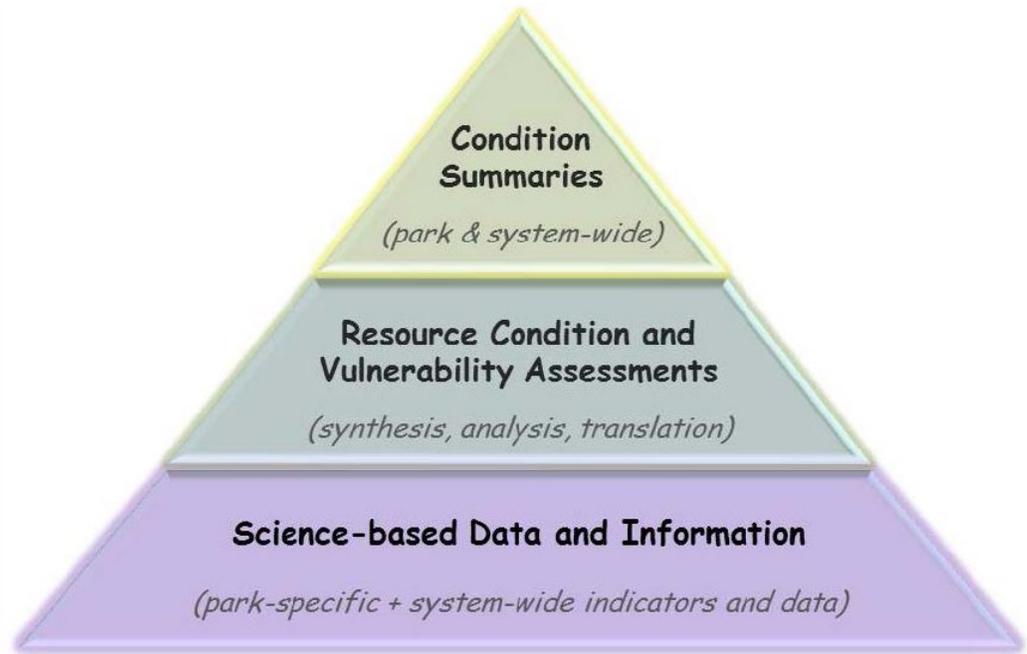
and Climate Change Planning programs that provide technical assistance to parks in the development of RSSes and other planning documents as well as the incorporation of climate change considerations into park planning processes. Additionally, staff provide policy and technical review of water resource aspects of NPS planning documents. RSS and Climate Change Planning program leads are members of the NPS Planning Leadership Group that formulates policy for park planning.

Information Management

The WRD Information Management program supports parks in analysis and archiving of hydrologic data. This includes database design, data management, EPA-STORET water quality databases, GIS applications, and National Hydrographic Datasets. Services also include recommending standards for hydrographic

data sets, compiling waterbody inventories for parks, maintaining servicewide water quality databases, and identifying national water quality issues. Program staff assist in acquiring digital hydrographic data and in developing hydrographic themes for GIS applications.

A simplified view of credible resource condition reporting for national park units. NPS IMAGE



Natural Resource Condition Assessments

The Water Resources Division provides national oversight for a series of park-based resource assessments. Each Natural Resource Condition Assessment (NRCA) evaluates current conditions, identifies critical data gaps, and highlights some notable resource condition influences for a subset of a park unit's important natural resources. Focal study resources (and associated resource indicators and measures) are selected on a park-by-park basis. Each park-level NRCA results in a written report that (1) describes park setting, natural resources, and some existing resource management issues or concerns; (1) provides credible reporting on current conditions (trends as possible) for the focal study resources, indicators, and measures; and (3)

provides a more holistic interpretation or summary of overall condition findings by park areas and/or topics of management interest. NRCAs rely on existing scientific data and information from varied sources, combined with expert interpretations or syntheses of these data sources, as the primary basis for developing condition findings. A successful NRCA provides sciencebased information that is deemed accurate, reliable, and useful by the receiving park. Among other potential uses, NRCAs are specifically designed to assist strategic planning and resource condition reporting by local park managers.

More Information

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