

<b>Standard Element</b>	<b>What it Means or Why it is Important</b>	<b>Project Level Flexibility</b>
<p><b>Multi-disciplinary (ecological) in scope</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Project seeks to go beyond a single resource or program perspective on resource conditions; it also seeks to provide more than a grab bag of disconnected indicator-level condition findings</li> <li>▪ Multi-disciplinary studies contribute to a bigger picture view of resource conditions for important ecosystem characteristics and park areas; this assists ongoing park efforts to manage their resources in a coordinated, comprehensive way</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Practical decisions must be made about the number of resources/indicators to evaluate and report conditions for; this is a project level decision (breadth vs. depth)</li> <li>▪ Park staff and NPS resource specialists need to weigh in on the study priorities, and to help identify most relevant/useful data sets and expertise that could be brought into the project</li> </ul>
<p><b>Reports on current conditions across the entire park</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Full-park condition assessment and reporting is the ideal although certain park areas should be excluded from consideration:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- highly developed areas that lack important natural resources and associated values (e.g., park administrative areas)</li> <li>- areas that may include natural resources, but where natural resources play only a minor, peripheral role in planning and decision making for that part of the park (e.g., some cultural areas)</li> </ul> </li> <li>▪ Note: while natural resource conditions aren't reported for highly developed areas, the influences/impacts these areas have on conditions in surrounding natural areas may be discussed and documented</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Practical decisions must be made in this regard as well, in terms of what park areas to exclude and what areas to focus on</li> <li>▪ Park staff and NPS resource specialists need to weigh in on study priorities, for example:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- should primary reporting areas for a park's NRCA be watersheds or ecosystem/habitat types</li> <li>- are there any management or thematic overlays that conditions should also be reported for (e.g., front country vs. back country areas, wilderness areas)</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

<b>Standard Element</b>	<b>What it Means or Why it is Important</b>	<b>Project Level Flexibility</b>
<b>Relies on existing data from multiple sources</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Draws upon existing resource data and expertise from the park, the NPS Inventory and Monitoring Program, other NPS science support programs and from NPS partners</li> <li>▪ Draws upon scientific data and expertise from a diverse array of other sources to complement and strengthen use of existing NPS science, and to provide surrogate data to help estimate park resource conditions where NPS data is lacking</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Can employ field-based rapid assessment techniques with prior approval by both Region and WASO NRCA leads</li> </ul>
<b>Uses hierarchical study frameworks</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The study framework will include:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- current condition evaluation and reporting by indicators</li> <li>- reference conditions (the logical, documented basis for interpreting and reporting current condition status)</li> <li>- condition reporting by ecosystem characteristics and (optionally) other topics of interest like “Ecosystem Services”</li> <li>- condition reporting by park areas</li> </ul> </li> <li>▪ Condition reporting for ecosystem characteristics and park areas involves a hierarchical rollup of study findings for multiple indicators; this helps give park managers a big picture (more holistic) view of overall resource conditions and threat/stressor factors</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Decisions on specific resource indicators, data sets, study methods, and reporting areas to use are made on a project level basis</li> <li>▪ The following are examples of frameworks that can be used to guide and organize the project work:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- EPA-SAB</li> <li>- Heinz (as adapted by NPS)</li> <li>- NPS I&amp;M</li> <li>- Ecological Integrity Assessment Framework</li> </ul> </li> <li>▪ Substantial flexibility is allowed in terms of the types of reference condition “contexts” used in a project:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- [required] ecological reference conditions/values developed via historic data, modeling, site comparisons, best professional judgment, etc.</li> <li>- [required] legal/regulatory standards</li> <li>- [optional] management-specified desired resource conditions, benchmarks, or targets</li> <li>- [optional] values based on additional park resource management priorities or contexts</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

<b>Standard Element</b>	<b>What it Means or Why it is Important</b>	<b>Project Level Flexibility</b>
<b>Uses the standard NRCA report outline</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ NRCAs are a national project series that is new to NPS in terms of overall study approach, methods and products; a minimum level of predictability and standardization across all reports is desirable and needed</li> <li>▪ A standard report outline facilitates national level review and general-level comparisons of study findings across all NRCA projects</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Projects can elect to insert additional report sections into the standard report outline as helpful or needed</li> <li>▪ Report sections can be renamed or their order shifted based on prior approval from both Region and WASO NRCA leads</li> <li>▪ Greatest flexibility to deviate from the standard report outline will be granted to parks with a completed Resource Stewardship Strategy, that are using the NRCA to develop information for use in park implementation planning</li> </ul>
<b>Emphasizes spatial analyses and reporting products</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Resource stewardship has a strong spatial component; over time each park unit needs to be able to:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- describe (and map) their important natural resources</li> <li>- describe and map current conditions for those resources</li> <li>- describe and quantify desired conditions for those resources through formal park planning and decision making processes</li> <li>- develop strategies for how to best protect/restore those resources to their desired conditions</li> </ul> </li> <li>▪ Emphasis on GIS (map) products helps parks as they work to achieve these objectives</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Projects can report current natural resource conditions by watersheds or ecosystem/habitat units; each park provides input on which reporting scale(s) are most appropriate to their situation</li> <li>▪ Optionally, a park can specify additional management or thematic overlays (e.g., front country vs. back country areas, wilderness areas) to use in reporting current resource conditions</li> </ul>