

National Parks Omnibus Management Act of 1998:

Title II—National Park System Resource Inventory and Management

Ed. note: *With almost no fanfare whatsoever, landmark legislation giving a research mandate to the National Park System was included as part of the National Parks Omnibus Management Act of 1998. The bill passed Congress in the final days of the session in October, and was signed into law by President Clinton on November 13 (P.L. 105-391). As the name implies, the Omnibus Act rolled together several pieces of legislation related to national parks, including titles on career development and training, studies for proposed new parks, concessions reform (the major focus of the bill), fees, and other miscellaneous provisions. Title II, "National Park System Resource Inventory and Management," is the section mandating research in the System and the use of that research to support resource management decisions. The new law will affect not only the National Park Service, but other federal agencies (e.g., the U.S. Geological Survey Biological Resources Division), universities, and other entities that conduct research in the National Park System. We will have a detailed section-by-section analysis of the law, including its implications for research and resource management, in the next issue of THE GEORGE WRIGHT FORUM. The following is the complete text of Title II.*

Sec. 201. PURPOSES.

The purposes of this title are—

- (1) to more effectively achieve the mission of the National Park Service;
- (2) to enhance management and protection of national park resources by providing clear authority and direction for the conduct of scientific study in the National Park System and to use the information gathered for management purposes;
- (3) to ensure appropriate documentation of resource conditions in the National Park System;
- (4) to encourage others to use the National Park System for study to the benefit of park management as well as broader scientific value, where such study is consistent with the Act of August 25, 1916 (commonly known as the National Park Service Organic Act, 16 U.S.C. 1 et seq.); and
- (5) to encourage the publication and dissemination of information derived from studies in the National Park System.

Title II

Sec. 202. RESEARCH MANDATE.

The Secretary [of the Interior] is authorized and directed to assure that management of units of the National Park System is enhanced by the availability and utilization of a broad program of the highest quality science and information.

Sec. 203. COOPERATIVE AGREEMENTS.

(a) COOPERATIVE STUDY UNITS.—The Secretary is authorized and directed to enter into cooperative agreements with colleges and universities, including but not limited to land grant schools, in partnership with other Federal and State agencies, to establish cooperative study units to conduct multidisciplinary research and develop integrated information products on the resources of the National Park System, or the larger region of which parks are a part.

(b) REPORT.—Within one year of the date of enactment of this title, the Secretary shall report to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources of the United States Senate and the Committee on Resources of the House of Representatives on progress in the establishment of a comprehensive network of such college and university based cooperative study units as will provide full geographic and topical coverage for research on the resources contained in units of the National Park System and their larger regions.

Sec. 204. INVENTORY AND MONITORING PROGRAM.

The Secretary shall undertake a program of inventory and monitoring of National Park System resources to establish baseline information and to provide information on the long-term trends in the condition of National Park System resources. The monitoring program shall be developed in cooperation with other Federal monitoring and information collection efforts to ensure a cost-effective approach.

Sec. 205. AVAILABILITY FOR SCIENTIFIC STUDY.

(a) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary may solicit, receive, and consider requests from Federal or non-Federal public or private agencies, organizations, individuals, or other entities for the use of any unit of the National Park System for purposes of scientific study.

(b) CRITERIA.—A request for use of a unit of the National Park System under subsection (a) may only be approved if the Secretary determines that the proposed study—

(1) is consistent with applicable laws and National Park Service management policies; and

(2) will be conducted in a manner as to pose no threat to park resources or public enjoyment derived from those resources.

Title II

(c) FEE WAIVER.—The Secretary may waive any park admission or recreational use fee in order to facilitate the conduct of scientific study under this section.

(d) NEGOTIATIONS.—The Secretary may enter into negotiations with the research community and private industry for equitable, efficient benefits-sharing arrangements.

Sec. 206. INTEGRATION OF STUDY RESULTS INTO MANAGEMENT DECISIONS.

The Secretary shall take such measures as are necessary to assure the full and proper utilization of the results of scientific study for park management decisions. In each case in which an action undertaken by the National Park Service may cause a significant adverse effect on a park resource, the administrative record shall reflect the manner in which unit resource studies have been considered. The trend in the condition of resources of the National Park System shall be a significant factor in the annual performance evaluation of each superintendent of a unit of the National Park System.

Sec. 207. CONFIDENTIALITY OF INFORMATION.

Information concerning the nature and specific location of a National Park System resource which is endangered, threatened, rare, or commercially valuable, of mineral or paleontological objects within units of the National Park System, or of objects of cultural patrimony within units of the National Park System, may be withheld from the public in response to a request under section 552 of title 5, United States Code, unless the Secretary determines that—

(1) disclosure of the information would further the purposes of the unit of the National Park System in which the resource or object is located and would not create an unreasonable risk of harm, theft, or destruction of the resource or object, including individual organic or inorganic specimens; and

(2) disclosure is consistent with other applicable laws protecting the resource or object.

Source: *Congressional Record—Senate*, 14 October 1998, pp. S12494-12495.

