



Water Resources Division



Yampa River, 2010, in Dinosaur National Monument (Colorado). NPS/
BILL HANSEN

The Water Resources Division (WRD) is one of eight divisions that make up the Natural Resource Stewardship and Science (NRSS) Directorate of the National Park Service. WRD was established to provide servicewide program management and specialized advice and assistance to parks in the protection and management of natural resources.

The mission of WRD is to provide leadership and senior-level technical, scientific, policy, and resource management expertise in the protection, preservation, and restoration of water resources and water-dependent environments within the National Park System. WRD provides its services directly to parks through a broad range of programs in the areas of fisheries, natural resource condition assessments, information management, hydrology, planning, ocean & coastal resources, wetlands, water quality, and water rights.

Aquatic Systems Branch

The Aquatic Systems Branch encompasses four areas of freshwater management. The Hydrology program provides technical and policy advice regarding hydrologic issues for the over 100,000 miles of perennial rivers and streams and over 2.3 million acres of lakes and reservoirs in the National Park System. The Water Quality program coordinates all aspects related to water quality protection in national parks and provides technical assistance to

parks without water quality specialists. The Wetlands program provides leadership and technical expertise for protection and management of over 16 million acres of NPS wetlands and ensures compliance with the NPS “no net loss of wetlands” policy. The Fisheries program provides technical assistance and policy guidance in managing and restoring native fish and their habitats in parks.

Ocean and Coastal Resources Branch

The National Park Service manages 85 ocean and Great Lakes parks with 11,000 miles of shoreline and 2.5 million acres of submerged habitats. The WRD Ocean & Coastal Resources program provides leadership and coordination of NPS responsibilities and policies in ocean resource stewardship. We coordinate acquisition of expertise in science and technology, develop servicewide policies and programs, and provide technical assistance to parks. Program and policy areas include water quality and coastal watershed assessments, submerged habitat mapping, marine fisheries and recreational uses, management and evaluation of coastal resources and marine protected areas, interagency programs, and cooperative research.

Eva DiDonato, Ocean and Coastal Resources Branch Chief and marine ecologist, conducts a coral-growth study using purple dye at National Park of American Samoa. NPS PHOTO



Planning and Information Branch

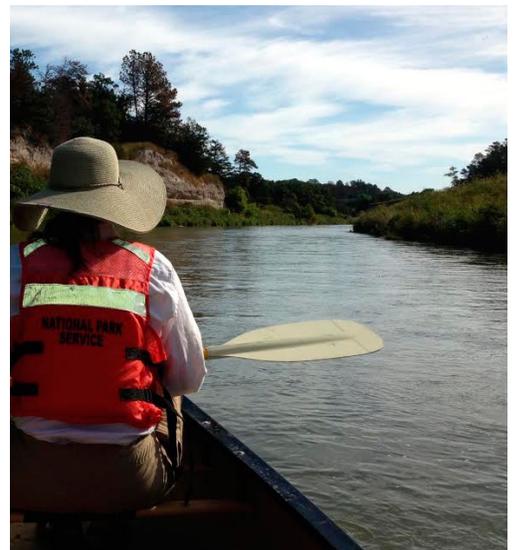
The Planning program provides parks with comprehensive strategies and products that cover the full spectrum of water resources, supporting Foundation planning, State of the Parks and Resource Stewardship Strategy development, and park-specific project plans. The program provides national oversight for Natural Resource Condition Assessments which evaluate current conditions, identify

critical data gaps, and highlight 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, data management, EPA-STORET water quality databases, GIS applications, and National Hydrographic Datasets.

Water Rights Branch

The quantity of water available in streams and aquifers is often limited. In response, lawmakers establish law to bring order to the use of water. The right to use public waters is commonly referred to as a water right. A water right is one of the many tools a park manager can use to ensure that park resources are preserved for present and future generations. The WRD Water Rights program assists parks by providing scientific expertise to quantify water needs and leadership to secure and protect NPS rights under state and federal law. Water Rights staff specializes in various fields of hydrology and lead projects to define water-dependent resource needs, including fisheries and riparian vegetation.

Jennifer Back, Water Rights Branch hydrologist, canoes the Niobrara National Scenic River (Nebraska). NPS/ED HARVEY



More Information

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