



6.3 Wilderness Resource Management

6.3.7 Natural Resources Management

The National Park Service recognizes that wilderness is a composite resource with interrelated parts. Without natural resources, especially indigenous and endemic species, a wilderness experience would not be possible. Natural resources are critical, defining elements of the wilderness resource, but they need to be managed within the context of the whole ecosystem. Natural resource management plans will be integrated with and cross-reference wilderness management plans. Pursuing a series of independent component projects in wilderness, such as single-species management, will not necessarily accomplish the overarching goal of wilderness management. Natural resources management in wilderness will include and be guided by a coordinated program of scientific inventory, monitoring, and research.

The principle of nondegradation will be applied to wilderness management, and each wilderness area's condition will be measured and assessed against its own unimpaired standard. Natural processes will be allowed, insofar as possible, to shape and control wilderness ecosystems. Management should seek to sustain the natural distribution, numbers, population composition, and interaction of indigenous species. Management intervention should only be undertaken to the extent necessary to correct past mistakes, the impacts of human use, and influences originating outside of wilderness boundaries.

Management actions, including the restoration of extirpated native species, the alteration of natural fire regimes, the control of invasive alien species, the management of endangered species, and the protection of air and water quality, should be attempted only when the knowledge and tools exist to accomplish clearly articulated goals.

(See Chapter 4: Natural Resource Management. Also see Director's Order #77 series on natural resources management)