

National Park Service

The Park Service has established a National Climate Change Response Program under the auspices of the National Resource Stewardship and Science office and is located in Fort Collins, Colorado. The office is led by Dr. Leigh Welling and will guide and implement initiatives and action around four integrated components - science, mitigation, adaptation, and communication..

A key question confronting the agency is to determine a strategy for adaptation. Many park units have been established because they park units provide some of the most pristine habitat for species being impacted by climate change, i.e; Saguaro and Joshua Tree National Parks. Changes in temperature and other climatic factors are placing pressure on these plant species. The Park Service is evaluating whether these species should be afforded special protection and treated like museum pieces with special strategies put in place to assure that these species continue to exist within these defined habitats, or if natural processes should merely be interpreted and the loss of habitat treated as a teaching moment. The discussion also revolves around the issues of invasive species calling into question strategies related to control and mitigation, such as whether some species are truly invasive or merely a natural response to changing temperatures and climatic conditions.

The Intermountain Region of the National Park Service has also established a Regional Climate Change Coordinator as well as a Regional Sustainability Coordinator. The Regional Climate Change Coordinator is charged with working with the NPS National Climate Change Response Program and assuring consistent regional response to related issues. The Regional Sustainability Coordinator is charged with developing strategies for minimizing the National Park Service carbon footprint and strategically reducing costs for management of park units and regional programs in the face of dwindling federal dollars.

The National Park Service has established a national Inventory and Monitoring program. Park units throughout the system are formed into small regional cooperatives. Each of these regional cooperatives of parks work together to identify key species of plants and animals which they have determined need to be inventoried and monitored. The data from these keystone species is used by these park units to determine management strategies related to resource stewardship.