PANEL ON PERSPECTIVES ON RESEARCH AND PARKS AND PROTECTED AREAS

Science in National Parks Management - Current Science

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Introduction

In the context of this meeting for an Ontario Parks and Protected Areas Research Forum four important points need to be made at the outset.

- major increases have been made to do research in Parks Canada in an internal capacity
- linkages with universities and research institutions are strong across the county
- a modern call has been made for science based management, but with little understanding
- we are data rich - information poor

Issues-Topics

Two cases where issues associated with science are raised include:
- Greater Fundy Ecosystem and Science
- Banff-Bow Valley Study

Two key issues in these cases and other similar situations are:
- social science vs natural science
- the lack of lateral thinking

Managing Science

This is rarely done well in protected areas
- managers often misunderstand the process
- we need to foster a science based culture
- science budgets and operational budgets don't mix well
- science cannot fit policy, but must critique policy
- science is never a substitute for good management
- science needs careful care and feeding to be of use

Characteristics of a Science Based Culture

A science based culture is important and should involve the following:
- trained staff - to international standards
- dedicated staff for research and resource management
- a context where inquiry is valued and rewarded
- time is allocated for design, research, publication and liaison
- evaluation is based on science, both formal and informal

Limitations to the Use of Science

Science is basic to good decisions but does have limitations including:

- rarely value free, despite its reputation
- rarely is the answer all by itself
- what is believed vs. ecological literacy
- distinction between science and action
  - gap between production of knowledge and its application
  - precision gap
  - paralysis pit

The need for a network?

In regard to the need for a research network:

- does one exist now ?
- what problems would a new or reformulated network address?
- perhaps focus on key questions where science can inform management?