



United States Department of the Interior

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

1849 C Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20240

IN REPLY REFER TO:

A3815(2605)

MAY 22 2003

Mr. Jeff Ruch
Executive Director
Public Employees for Environmental
Responsibility
2001 S Street NW., Suite 570
Washington, D.C. 20009

Dear Mr. Ruch:

On March 5 you made a Freedom of Information Act request to the Director requesting copies of all communications between your office and any National Park Service regional office of park that transmits a wilderness suitability assessment under section 6.2.1, and copies of any wilderness suitability assessments.

Records are limited due to the extended illness of the Wilderness Program Manager, but correspondence and phone records indicate the following to be the status of current wilderness suitability assessments in the National Park System.

Big Cypress Wilderness Suitability Assessment: A draft wilderness suitability assessment (enclosed) was sent to the Wilderness Program for an informal review in May 2002. It was noted in a phone conversation that included the Program Manager, the Superintendent, and the Southeast Regional Office that this document went beyond what was necessary for a wilderness suitability assessment and a revision was agreed to. Beyond the material provided, the status of this assessment is not known.

Channel Islands National Park Wilderness Suitability Assessment: A suitability assessment was completed and forwarded to the Director's Office in June 2002 (enclosed). It is under review in the Director's Office.

Yosemite (McCurdy Ranch) Wilderness Suitability Assessment: A suitability assessment (enclosed) was completed by the park for the McCurdy Ranch addition – as required by legislation. It was completed by the park in January 2003, and sent through the Pacific West Regional Office to the Director. It is under review in the Director's Office.

Guadalupe Mountains (Addition) Wilderness Suitability Assessment: A suitability assessment was prepared for lands added to Guadalupe Mountains National Park and submitted to the Office of the Director in April 2002. It was approved on April 1, 2003, and is now awaiting approval in

the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Fish and Wildlife and Parks for publication in the Federal Register before the study can move forward.

Pictured Rocks Wilderness Suitability Assessment: A suitability assessment for Pictured Rocks National Lakeshore was completed (enclosed) and forwarded to the Director in June 2002. In April 2003, the park requested a waiver from the formal process of completing the assessment since the requirements had actually already been met in the process of completing the General Management Plan for the park (which addresses wilderness). The Assistant Secretary has approved release of the draft plan (including the assessment in Attachment D), although a decision on the waiver is still pending.

Apostle Islands National Lakeshore: The suitability assessment for Apostle Islands National Lakeshore, completed more than a decade ago, is included in the draft Wilderness Study (enclosed) for the park that was just approved for release to the public by the Office of the Assistant Secretary.

The foregoing list includes all the current wilderness suitability assessments that are known to this office. If you have any questions concerning this response, please contact Wes Henry, Wilderness Program Manager at 202/513-7090.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Karen Taylor-Goodrich", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Karen Taylor-Goodrich
Acting Associate Director, Visitor
and Resource Protection

Enclosures