

National Park Service

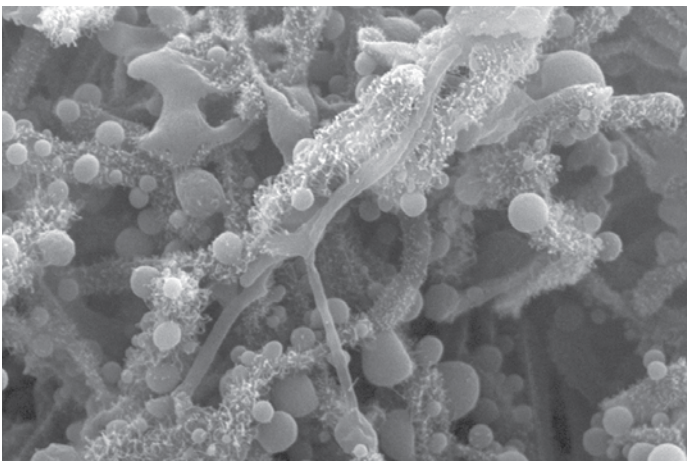
U.S. Department of the Interior



Benefits-Sharing

Final Environmental Impact Statement

October 2009



Service-wide

THIS PAGE INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK

Dear Friends:

Following careful consideration of input received during the public comment process, we are pleased to present the National Park Service (NPS) Benefits-Sharing Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS). In completing the FEIS, NPS staff received and reviewed comments submitted by about 9,600 individuals and organizations during the 130-day public review period for the Benefits-Sharing Draft Environmental Impact Statement (September 22, 2006 to January 29, 2007). A range of issues and concerns were identified, many of which have been incorporated into this Benefits-Sharing FEIS.

NPS staff worked to respond to public concerns about the benefits-sharing proposal. We valued hearing from the many commenters who emphasized support for the fundamental purpose of the national park system and the NPS's mandate to conserve park resources and values. By carefully separating the benefits-sharing proposal from the established process parks already used to evaluate applications to perform research in parks, we believe we've met that challenge. Other commenters urged the National Park Service to prevent researchers from studying park resources if their only purpose would be to make commercial discoveries. We listened to your concerns and provided a description of the scientific requirements researchers must meet before they can get an NPS research permit. Additionally, we added language to clarify when and with whom benefits-sharing would be required. Finally, at the public's suggestion, we have also proposed to include more information in the annual report to the public regarding benefits-sharing agreements.

This Benefits-Sharing FEIS presents a range of alternatives and identifies a preferred alternative. Following a required 30-day period of "no action," the National Park Service is expected to sign a "Record of Decision." This Record of Decision will represent the conclusion of the planning process and provide the guidance for parks and researchers about their rights and responsibilities related to research conducted on park resources.

We appreciate the insightful and thought-provoking comments received from the public. Your assistance allowed us to create a better proposal to clarify the rights and responsibilities of both parks and researchers with regard to potential uses of researchers' discoveries.

Sincerely,

The NPS Benefits-Sharing EIS Team

THIS PAGE INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK

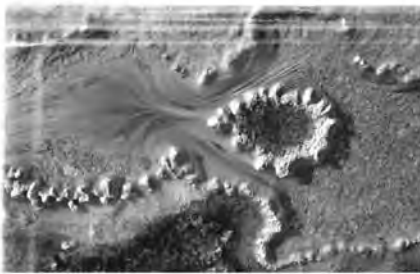
National Park Service

U.S. Department of the Interior

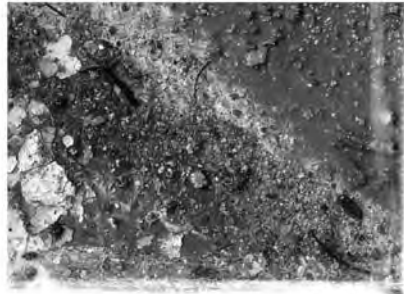
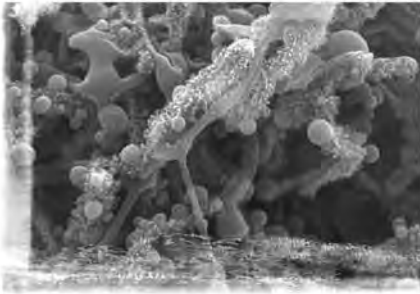


Benefits-Sharing

Final Environmental Impact Statement



October 2009



Service-wide

Cover photos, clockwise from top left: filamentous bacteria and algae, Upper Geyser Basin, Yellowstone National Park, NPS/Hirschman; bacterial products, Spider Cave, Carlsbad Caverns National Park, Kenneth Ingham; bacteria from bacterial mats on the walls of Pahoehoe Cave, El Malpais National Monument, Michael N. Spilde and Diana Northup; thermal microbial growth, Monument Geyser Basin, Yellowstone National Park, NPS/Dunmire.

National Park Service

Service-wide Benefits-Sharing Final EIS

This final environmental impact statement (FEIS) contains clarifications and changes made to the draft environmental impact statement released for public review and comment on September 2006.

Abstract: The environmental impact statement (EIS) presents and analyzes a service-wide programmatic proposal to clarify the rights and responsibilities of researchers and National Park Service (NPS) management in connection with the use of valuable discoveries, inventions, and other developments that result from research involving specimens lawfully collected from units of the National Park System. The EIS examines the potential environmental impacts of implementing benefits-sharing agreements when information derived from research specimens collected from units of the National Park System results in commercial value. In addition, the EIS examines the potential environmental impacts of continuing the current practice of not requiring benefits-sharing (the “no action” alternative), or barring researchers whose studies might result in commercially-viable products from collecting research specimens in the national parks. The nature of this EIS, whose purpose is essentially to examine the possible effects of implementing certain types of contracts, is such that its affected environment and impact topics relate primarily to administrative functions of the NPS. As a service-wide programmatic EIS, the affected environment and relevant impact topics have the potential to include all units of the National Park System.

A Record of Decision for the EIS can be approved by the National Park Service 30 days after the Environmental Protection Agency publishes a notice in the Federal Register regarding the release of the final EIS. An additional notice will be published in the Federal Register announcing the Record of Decision, concluding the EIS process.

For additional information or to receive a copy of this document (please specify paper copy or CD):

A full electronic copy of this document is available at the NPS’s Planning, Environment and Public Comment (PEPC) website at <http://parkplanning.nps.gov>. Select “Washington Office” under “Choose a park” and then click “Benefits Sharing.”

NPS Benefits-Sharing EIS
PO Box 168
Yellowstone National Park, WY 82190

Phone: 307-344-2203

E-mail: benefitseis@nps.gov

Visit our website: www.nature.nps.gov/benefitssharing/

THIS PAGE INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK