



Research Learning Centers

Connecting Scientists with Parks and Science with People



Research Learning Centers combine existing facilities (above) with the skills of researchers (below) and National Park Service education specialists (right) to develop and share scientific information for park management and public learning.

With more than 84 million acres of conserved land, the National Park System (NPS) provides unparalleled opportunities for research and education on some of our nation's most cherished and pristine ecosystems and for understanding their linkages to our communities and economies. As part of the Natural Resource Challenge, Research Learning Centers help meet these opportunities by attracting scientists, educators, private citizens, and funds toward new knowledge for decision making.

Research Learning Centers initiate, support, and implement a wide range of research projects in parks, including vegetation and wildlife ecology, recreation and resource interactions, fire behavior and effects, invasive species and climate change impacts, cultural use of the landscape, and social science aspects of resource issues. In addition, they provide bunk space, camp sites, laboratory and office space, as well as access to park data and other amenities that enable researchers to make maximum use of their time and project funds.



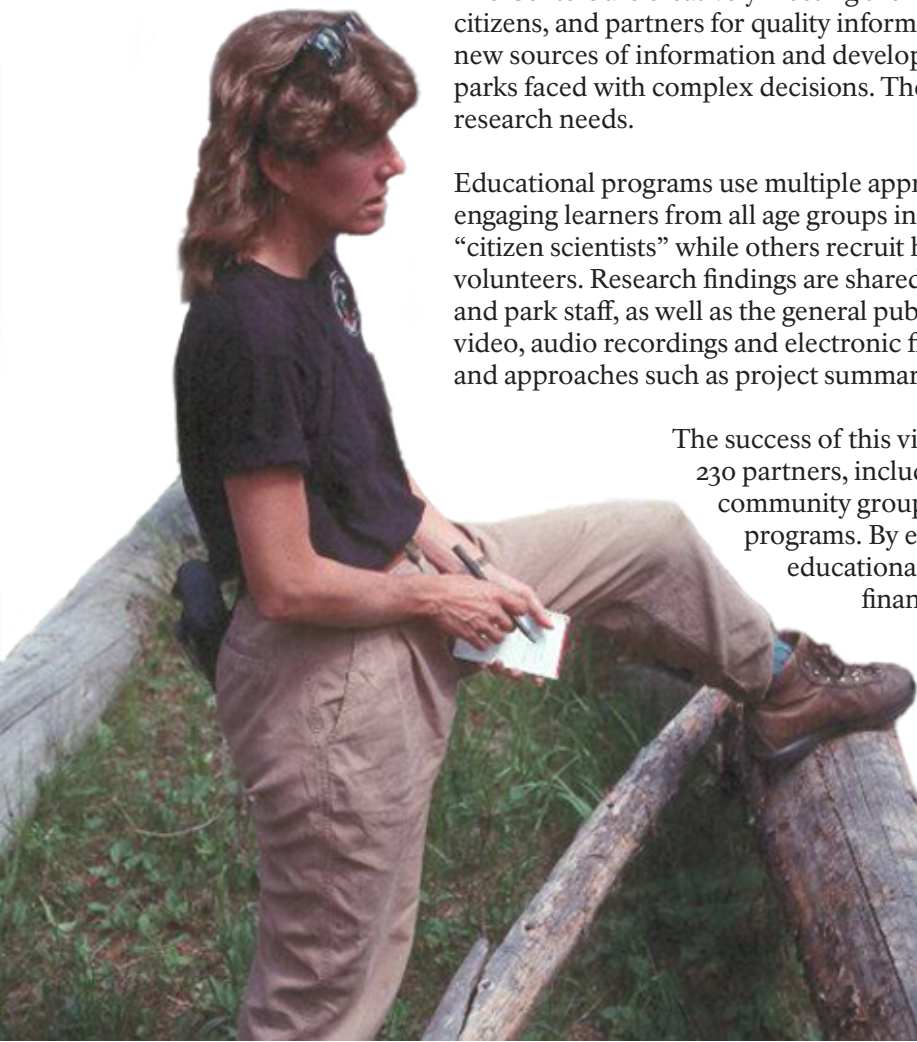
The Centers are creatively meeting the needs of park managers, citizens, and partners for quality information about park resources. Center staffs actively seek new sources of information and develop long-term relationships with experts whose data help parks faced with complex decisions. These efforts help to reduce park backlogs of high priority research needs.

Educational programs use multiple approaches for communicating scientific results and engaging learners from all age groups in hands-on research activities. Some programs engage "citizen scientists" while others recruit high school and college students as interns and volunteers. Research findings are shared with school groups, partner organizations, managers and park staff, as well as the general public. On-line multi-media approaches such as digital video, audio recordings and electronic field trips are used along with more traditional products and approaches such as project summaries, briefing papers, seminars, and newsletters.

The success of this vibrant program lies in its collaboration with more than 230 partners, including universities, schools, non-profit organizations, community groups, federal, state, and tribal agencies and a range of NPS programs. By engaging partners in park research, scholarship, and educational activities, Centers are able to leverage in-kind and financial support, broaden the understanding of national park resource issues, and improve stewardship of some of our nation's most treasured landscapes.

Research Learning Centers increase the effectiveness and communication of research and science results in the national parks by:

- Facilitating use of parks for scientific inquiry
- Supporting science-informed decision making
- Communicating relevance of and providing access to research knowledge
- Promoting resource stewardship through partnerships



"National parks need to be thoroughly understood, not only for their beauty and their wildness and deep history, but also to realize their unique and vital contribution to science and education, particularly of the future."

-- E. O. Wilson, Discovery 2000 NPS conference

Research Learning Centers are making a difference to park managers, the public, and researchers alike. They are evolving to meet the needs of their particular location and are providing models of excellence for collaboration and communication on a wide range of research and resource management issues. Currently over 100 of the 390 units in the National Park System are served by a Research Learning Center and other Centers may be created as current successes are replicated throughout the NPS.



Research Learning Centers leverage existing NPS resources with in-kind and financial partnerships to acquire new knowledge about parks.



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Each Research Learning Center is located in or near a national park and many serve a network of associated parks.

