



Patuxent Science Meeting 2004 Poster Abstract

Development of protocols for tracking nutrient enrichment to estuaries: National Park Service Vital Signs Monitoring Program, Maine to Virginia

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Knowing the condition of natural resources in national parks is fundamental to fulfilling the National Park Service mission of managing park resources "unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations". The National Parks Omnibus Management Act of 1998 established the framework for fully integrating natural resource monitoring into NPS management processes. In response to this act, NPS established a Vital Signs Monitoring Program to track indicators of park ecosystem condition within 32 biogeographic networks. Each network is charged with developing network-wide, long-term monitoring protocols to meet natural resource management goals. Along the U.S. Atlantic coast from Maine to Virginia, the NPS Northeast Temperate Network and the Northeastern Coastal and Barrier Network contain nine national park units with significant estuarine resources. Nutrient over-enrichment has been identified by resource managers as one of the highest priority threats to estuarine integrity in the North Atlantic parks. The USGS is assisting with developing appropriate, feasible, and cost effective protocols for monitoring estuarine nutrient enrichment throughout these parks on a regional scale.