WADEABLE STREAM MONITORING IN SOUTHEASTERN NATIONAL PARK UNITS

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The National Park Service Inventory and Monitoring Division's Southeast Coast Network (SECN) has initiated a monitoring effort to assess habitat conditions in wadeable streams at parks, battle fields, and monuments in Alabama, Georgia, and South Carolina. These parks include Chattahoochee River National Recreation Area, Kennesaw Mountain National Battlefield Park, Congaree National Park, Horseshoe Bend National Military Park, and Ocmulgee National Monument. The purpose of this monitoring program is to provide relevant data to assess the types of streams within each park and determine their physical conditions with respect to the aquatic and riparian habitats that are present. The methods used in this monitoring program rely on standard data collection methods currently in use by other government agencies (e.g., the USGS) and have been modified to better meet the needs of NPS managers. The objectives of this protocol are to: 1) determine the status of and trends in watershed characteristics that are known to affect stream habitat; 2) accurately describe the geomorphic dimensions of wadeable streams so that changes over time can be determined; and 3) determine the status of and trends in benthic and riparian habitat, including the size, type, and distribution of bed sediments and large woody debris as well as the amount of canopy cover. Data collected under this protocol will allow the wadeable stream resources within SECN parks to be compared to streams surveyed by other organizations, highlighting similarities and differences in these resources as they relate to general stream habitat and geomorphic conditions. The streams selected for survey highlight known issues related to stream habitats in SECN parks, highlighting important linkages between the physical condition of streams and park resources. Most importantly, this protocol will provide early warnings of changing conditions that will inform managers of appropriate site mitigation procedures that may be needed.

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