CHARTER OF THE CHIHUAHUAN DESERT NETWORK

INVENTORY AND MONITORING PROGRAM

May 10, 2007

Introduction

This is the first update of the Chihuahuan Desert Network (CHDN) charter since the fall of 2003.

The purpose of this charter is to describe the basic practices that will be used to plan, organize, manage, evaluate, and adapt the efforts of the Chihuahuan Desert Inventory and Monitoring (I&M) Network as it carries out the National Park Service Natural Resource Challenge with respect to the inventory of natural resources and monitoring of vital signs for the network. The Chihuahuan Desert Network comprises seven national park units in West Texas and southern New Mexico including:

Amistad National Recreation Area	AMIS
Big Bend National Park	BIBE
Carlsbad Caverns National Park	CAVE
Fort Davis National Historic Site	FODA
Guadalupe Mountains National Park	GUMO
Rio Grande Wild & Scenic River	RIGR
White Sands National Monument	WHSA

All parks in the network have active relationships with local entities including other state and federal government agencies, educational institutions, municipalities, the general public, and Mexican protected areas and communities. A successful network program will be fully integrated into park and cluster programs. Key to this success will be the development of communication systems that enhance the network's ability to collaborate within park programs and throughout the Southwest Cluster. The Chihuahuan Desert Network must be seen and must operate as an effective collaborative partner between the network parks, within the Southwest Cluster and with the Intermountain Region and Washington offices directing the Natural Resource Challenge.

Board of Directors

The Board of Directors will provide oversight of the network activities. The permanent, voting members on this Board are the six park superintendents of the network parks, and the Regional I&M Coordinator. Additional Ex-officio members include the Chihuahuan Desert Network (CHDN) Coordinator, the Desert Southwest Cooperative Ecosystem Studies Unit (DSCESU) Coordinator and the Chair of the Technical Committee.

The permanent voting Board members represent the network in carrying out the Natural Resource Challenge in the Chihuahuan Desert Network. Ex-officio members are called upon for specialty expertise and as links to the regional/Washington program. The Board of Directors recognizes the need for involvement and input from the scientific community and will seek the contributions from subject matter specialists as needed, especially during the planning phase of the monitoring program.

Responsibilities of the Board of Directors

The Board is committed to operate in an atmosphere of fairness, trust, and respect throughout the network. It is the intent of this charter to implement the I&M program in support of all the parks in the network using scientifically credible standards.

The major responsibilities of the Board of Directors are to:

- Provide leadership to conduct a credible I&M program for the benefit of the network.

- Promote accountability and effectiveness for the I&M program by reviewing progress, ensuring quality control for the network, and overseeing spending of network funds.
- Provide guidance to the Technical Committee and resources management staffs in the network for the design and implementation of inventories, vital signs monitoring, and other management activities related to the Natural Resource Challenge.
- Establish strategies and procedures for leveraging network funds and personnel to best accomplish the inventory and monitoring and other resource needs of network parks.
- In concert with the CHDN Coordinator, review staffing plan and hiring actions of I&M personnel using NPS and other funding provided to the network, and coordinate and approve the commitment of existing park personnel, facilities, and equipment to I&M programs and activities.
- Provide input and secondary review to the midseason and annual performance appraisals of the Network Coordinator.
- Seek additional funding from other sources to leverage the funds provided through the servicewide program.
- Solicit professional guidance from and partnerships with other individuals and organizations.

Procedures

Board Selection

Due to the small size of the network, the Board will be a permanent board, with the six superintendents representing the seven park units, and Regional I&M Coordinator. Ex-officio members may be added or removed from specific meetings and communications depending on expertise or identified needs.

Board Meetings

The Board will select a chairperson and vice chairperson from among the Board. Each officer will serve one year. At the end of the chairperson's term, the vice chair will automatically assume the role and responsibility of chair. The Board chair will normally schedule and coordinate all meetings of the Board. A meeting can also be called at any time by way of consensus of the Board's voting members. Minutes will be produced for each meeting and distributed to the network. Either a Board member or recorder will be responsible for preparing the minutes. An independent facilitator may assist meetings as needed. Meetings will be scheduled at least twice each year. Meeting can be a joint meeting with the network's Technical Committee. Meetings can be conducted either in person or via conference call. The method of meeting will be chosen by a majority vote of the Board. Formal meetings will require a written agenda distributed at least two weeks before the meeting and shared with the network for comment. Network staffs are welcome to attend any meeting. Telephone conference meetings to deal with a small number of discussion or decision topics may also be called by any member. Less complex issues or decisions can be resolved via electronic mail among all Board members.

Alternates

Any Board member who cannot attend or otherwise participate in a meeting will provide an alternate. Ex-officio members may send an alternate if desired.

Decision Making

All decisions will be made by consensus. Decisions will be documented with responsible individuals and deadlines identified, as appropriate. Decisions will be distributed to all Board and ex-officio members, as well as the Technical Committee and network staff.

Technical Committee

A Technical Committee comprised of resource managers, park managers, and scientists from both inside and outside the NPS will be formed to provide technical assistance and advice to the Board. The core

membership of this committee will include the network I&M Coordinator, and one resources management representative from each park. The DSCESU and regional I&M coordinators will serve as ex-officio members. A committee chair will be elected from one of the resource management representatives on the board and will serve a one-year term. The position of committee chair will be rotated among the park resource representatives. The committee chair will organize and chair committee meetings. Additionally, the chair will act as staff to the Board of Directors, and operate as a liaison between the Board and Technical Committee. Other participants including park managers, research representatives from various universities and institutions, USGS science staffs, and others may attend meetings when requested or as interested.

The Technical Committee's responsibilities are:

- Ensure that existing information about parks is compiled and summarized.
- Keep track of the inventories and make recommendations to fill information gaps.
- Ensure that vital signs workshops are held to develop a network-monitoring plan with materials prepared in advance and findings and recommendations summarized.
- Assist in the selection of indicator species, communities, and processes.
- Evaluate initial sampling designs, methods, and protocols.
- Review annual data reports and interpretations as well as participate in the preparation of the annual work plan and annual report.
- Develop materials for and facilitate the program review.

The products and recommendations of the Technical Committee will be presented to the Board for discussion and approval or modification.

When needed, the Board, Technical Committee or Network Coordinator may form committees to work on a particular task or in a particular sub-program area. The Board may form an Education Committee comprised of interpretation, education, resources, and public affairs staff. An important element of an Education Committee would be the development and organization of a network learning center in partnership with one or more learning institutions and not-for-profit organizations in the network.

Each year the Board and the Technical Committee will prepare a budget for the travel and other costs associated with the committee's activities. These costs will be summarized in the annual work plan.

Vital Signs Monitoring Plan

The entire network will be responsible for developing the vital signs monitoring plan. The Technical Committee led by the Network Coordinator will prepare and draft a vital signs monitoring plan that identifies what, where, and how monitoring will be done. The plan will include a discussion of the scope and goals of the network I&M program and its relationship with other NPS and land management programs. Following network-wide review and comment, the Board will approve the plan, which will be periodically evaluated and updated as necessary.

An approved long-term monitoring plan is critical to the long-term I&M funding for CHDN. The Washington Office (WASO) has final approval authority for long-term monitoring plans (Phase III). The draft plan for CHDN is due to WASO by June 1, 2008. The final long-term monitoring plan is due to WASO by December 31, 2008. Once the plan is approved, significant changes to the monitoring plan that alter schedules for protocol development, or the list of high priority vital signs, must be approved by WASO I&M program leadership.

Network Coordinator

The Network Coordinator serves as the principal representative of the Board of Directors and is responsible for the overall management and administration of the I&M program. This position functions as the lead employee for the network and is responsible for much of the day-to-day work of the network. The Network

Coordinator will act as staff to the Board to help arrange meetings and logistics, produce agendas, and coordinate between the Board of Directors and the Technical Committee. The Network Coordinator is encouraged to maintain a wide range of professional contacts both inside and outside the National Park Service.

The Network Coordinator position will be supervised on a day to day basis by the Regional I&M Coordinator. The Regional I&M Coordinator, with input from the Board, will approve and sign as the reviewing official, the mid-season and annual evaluations of the Network Coordinator. Duties of the Network Coordinator include:

- Bi-monthly briefings (by memoranda, electronic mail or telephone conference) to the Board reviewing project status, status of funds, issues, problems, concerns, etc.
- Maintenance of the administrative record of files in an orderly and usable fashion.
- Development of a concept and plan for development and implementation of a network Learning Center.

Annual Work Plan

The Network Coordinator, with involvement from the Technical Committee, will prepare an annual work plan for the following fiscal year for the Board to review, discuss, and approve by the summer of each year. The final plan will be revised and approved no later than October 15 of each year, or date as set by the Regional I&M Coordinator and/or WASO I&M Program . The annual work plan will identify specific goals and objectives, responsible individuals and deadlines, I&M program budget, and additional and potential funding sources (both NPS and others).

Annual Report

The Network Coordinator, with involvement from the Technical Committee, will write an annual report to the Board for review, discussion, modification, and approval. The annual report will detail specific accomplishments and products, lessons learned, coordination with others, and a budget summary. A detailed accounting of the I&M program funds will be appended. The annual report will be completed and distributed to all member park units and interested parties no later than mid-October of each year, or date as set by the Regional I&M Coordinator and/or WASO I&M Program.

Personnel Management and Budget

The network budget and any I&M program staff will be managed and administratively supervised by the Network Coordinator. The Network Coordinator will also develop a staffing plan (as part of the Phase III process). The Board of Directors will review and approve this position management plan of current and future network positions, prior to submittal of the draft Phase III to WASO. Administrative assistance will be provided by Guadalupe Mountains and Carlsbad Caverns National Parks, and the Regional I&M Program for personnel actions, budget tracking, contracts and agreements, processing of travel vouchers and similar transactions.

Program Review

The network will hold a comprehensive program review of both the inventory and monitoring activities following the successful completion of the Phase III report. The Board will conduct the review with invitees from the national and regional offices as well as other qualified independent specialists. The purpose of this review will be to evaluate functions of the Board of Directors and the Technical Committee accomplishments and products, protocols used for gathering data, data management, and fiscal management and staffing. The review will provide the principal basis for any significant changes in program direction as well as reassignment of resources to any park or office.

WASO will lead a program review 3 or 4 years after the long-term monitoring plan (phase III) is approved. The review includes WASO and Regional Leadership for the I&M program, the BoD, and internal and external scientists with expertise in long-term monitoring.

Coordination

To be most effective, the Board of Directors will need to maintain a close working relationship with each other as park superintendents, resources program managers, members of the Technical Committee, and the network and regional I&M coordinators. Board meetings are open to all of the above. Board members are expected to participate and keep informed with respect to the work of the Technical Committee.

Partnerships

The Chihuahuan Desert Network I&M program may evolve to include other land and resource managers (federal, state, tribal) in New Mexico, Texas, Mexico and elsewhere. The Board and Technical Committee should assist in identifying effective partners (whether NPS and non-NPS participants) such as the Western Archeological and Conservation Center, Intermountain Region International Conservation Program Office (IMRICO), Chihuahuan Desert Research Institute, USDA ARS Jornada Experimental Range, and others. Partnerships can be created only with majority approval of the Board.

Reporting

Minutes of any Board, Technical Committee and Science Committee meetings will be distributed to all core and ex-officio members, network parks and offices, and other interested individuals as requested. Meeting minutes, charters, monitoring plans, annual work plans; annual reports and other relevant documents will be used to develop an annual report to Congress.

Amendment

The Board may evaluate and amend this charter at any time. The network parks and offices, Technical Committee, and the Regional I&M Coordinator will have a 30-day advance notice to comment on any proposed amendments before changes are approved.

Signatures

We, the following, agree to the terms of the above-described charter.

_____ _____

Superintendent, Amistad National Recreation Area Date

_____ _____

Superintendent, Big Bend National Park Date

_____ _____

Superintendent, Carlsbad Caverns National Park Date

_____ _____

Superintendent, Fort Davis National Historic Site Date

_____ _____

Superintendent, Guadalupe Mountains National Park Date

_____ _____

Superintendent, White Sands National Monument Date

_____ _____

IMR Inventory & Monitoring Program Coordinator Date