

## **The Process Used to Develop This National Monitoring Framework**

This monitoring Framework was developed over two years of biannual Committee meetings, monthly conference calls, two formal reviews, and many informal reviews. Many different monitoring needs and tasks were identified at the first face-to-face meeting of the Committee. From among all the tasks and needs that were identified, the Committee decided to focus on two parallel efforts: (1) develop better integration between the wilderness program and other resource programs to capitalize on the monitoring that was already being conducted inside wilderness, and (2) develop a new protocol to monitor wilderness character because this is what is truly unique in wilderness and no other resource program has direction to monitor it.

Initially, a subgroup of the Committee worked to craft the general direction of this Framework document. As the Framework matured, the entire Committee became involved and work on this document has to date dominated the time and energy of the Committee.

Two specific projects were undertaken and completed to provide background information for developing this Framework. First, the Committee conducted an exploratory survey in Spring 2002 to evaluate the types of monitoring currently being conducted in all National Forest System wildernesses. This survey showed there was a lot of resource-specific monitoring, especially related to recreation, but no systematic monitoring of conditions specifically related to wilderness character. The second project was to develop specific questions about the Committee's interpretation of wilderness legislation in crafting the conceptual foundation for this monitoring program. The Committee solicited informal opinions on these questions from several lawyers familiar with wilderness legislation and judicial decisions regarding this legislation. In all cases, the Committee's interpretation was supported by these informal opinions.