Student Scientists Help National Parks In The Americas

(NAPSA)—Throughout the Americas, national parks are coping with pressures from economic development and population growth. The impact caused by these forces remains uncertain, yet the importance of innovative science to protect the parks is very clear.

Since 1997, 49 graduate students have contributed their scientific research talents to national parks. They all are Canon National Parks Science Scholars, and the program is the first and only of its kind that helps develop the next generation of scientists working in the fields of conservation, environmental science and national park management.

"Throughout the hemisphere, it's clear that we need science for effective park management, and parks are extraordinary places for research in many scientific disciplines," said Dr. Gary Machlis, NPS visiting senior scientist and coordinator for the program. "'Parks for science, science for parks' is essential—and this program for the Americas does both. These young scientists are extraordinary."

Current students each receive $78,000 in scholarships over three years. They study in schools and national parks in Argentina, Brazil, Canada, Mexico, Peru and the United States.

Claudia Figueiredo from Ohio State University is identifying policies that facilitate the development of effective conservation strategies in several national parks in Brazil.

Sarah Nelson from the University of Maine in Orono is studying watersheds in Acadia National Park to identify hydrologic and mercury mass balances in national parks to improve understanding of the hydrology and chemistry of park ecosystems.

Gabriela Nunez-Iturri from the University of Illinois is studying the effects of hunting on tree regeneration in Manu National Park in Peru to identify the co-dependence of tree species in national parks and how they impact poaching.

Renata Santoro de Sousa Lima Mobley from Cornell University is studying the vocal behavior and reproductive strategies of humpback whales in the Abrolhos National Marine Park in Brazil. Her experiments will provide a scientific foundation in evaluating the impact of whale watching on breeding populations.

The program is a collaboration among Canon U.S.A., the National Park Service (NPS)—which preserves about 83 million acres in 388 national parks for the enjoyment of future generations —and the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS)—the science society that is the world's largest general scientific organization. Details about scholarships can be found at www.nature.nps.gov/canonscholarships/.