ROCKS AND ICE REVISITED: A ASSESSMENT OF THE GEOGRAPHICAL AND ECOLOGICAL DISTRIBUTION OF RESERVES IN THE UNITED STATES[TWS]

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Creation of a complete network of biological reserves in a country requires that the level of protection attained with existing reserves be known before new refuges are established. This knowledge can be used to further protect biodiversity with a minimum of duplication of past efforts and the most efficient filling of gaps in the reserve network. We present the results of a study in which we mapped the occurrence of biological reserves in different physical environments across the coterminous United States. We examined the occurrence of theses reserves by 500 meter elevation intervals, quantiles of soil productivity, five degree blocks of latitude and longitude, and ecoregions. Observed patterns of occurrence suggested uneven distribution within all these coarse filter features. The areas with the highest level of protection were those that were least productive and or least accessible. We discuss the implications of these findings for future siting of reserves.