

**CLEAR TEXT:**  
**WASO Ranger Activities'**  
**Electronic Newsletter**

March 26, 1993

CHIEF RANGERS' COMMENTS

The first report of the activities of the "Ranger Future" working group contained in CLEAR TEXT summarized the fact-finding and analysis we had been doing with Department and OPM officials as a prelude to developing a concept paper describing the working environment and scope of work of the ranger in the years ahead.

We've since completed our fact-finding efforts. We've confirmed the problems described in the Vail Symposium report and have added a good deal of detail to the Vail findings. We've also pinpointed many additional problems and looked into causes and solutions.

Concerns about the ranger work force and NPS personnel in general fall into three broad categories:

\* There is strong evidence that confirms the Vail Symposium finding that there has indeed been a steady erosion of staff capability within the National Park Service. Declining educational attainments of young park rangers, lowered qualification standards, declining ratios of staff to workloads, and atrophied grade levels are but a few of the indicators of the diminished ability of rangers to meet the challenges of today and - most certainly - of tomorrow.

\* A second, related concern is that Park Service management has not pursued proposals to update and modernize personnel management in the NPS. The personnel system is accordingly behind the times. The agency badly needs streamlined recruiting and examining procedures, career ladders that support opportunities for growth, better orientation and training, new techniques for managing work and positions, and money and commitment for developing better managers for park leadership positions.

\* A third major concern is that the personnel system is not viewed as fair and equitable - that the grade structure is lower for rangers than for others doing similar work, and that, because of this and the lack of an effective way into the ranger occupation, the best and brightest are looking elsewhere for careers. This affects the NPS mission in two ways - overall performance is lowered and employment patterns in the Service are not consonant with the diversity of the public we serve. Both are serious problems with long term consequences and need to be addressed now.

As noted before, we've been developing a paper which documents our findings, outlines a concept of ranger work and the ranger occupation, and designs a personnel system which fully supports the "new" ranger occupation. A first draft of the paper has been completed and circulated to all members of the working group (including OPM staff), and comments have been received which range from outright enthusiasm to "show me." Many good suggestions have since been incorporated into our revised draft. OPM staff have been very supportive of the "Ranger Future" initiative from the outset, and we've been assured that we can count on them for continued assistance in the days ahead.

We will soon be circulating the paper to the field and soliciting ideas from all of you in meetings throughout the country as part of our commitment to getting as many people involved in this change process as possible.

A work management study continues on a parallel track. Two experienced position classification and organization analysts are gathering detailed information about the ranger occupation and jobs within it. They have thus far interviewed 51 rangers and their supervisors in a cross-section of parks across the country. Our primary objective in this study is to gather facts and hard information regarding the ranger occupation. We are:

- \* Fully documenting work organization, position management and position classification for the park ranger occupation, and

- \* Developing an up-to-date picture of the occupation to compare the work being done now with the way it was performed in the past to determine if revisions to current policies and practices are necessary and to form a basis for making informed judgements about changes needed in the occupation for the future.

This study will be finished within the next few weeks. We fully expect that the job and work setting information will serve as the documentation to help us make informed decisions about a host of personnel issues affecting the ranger occupation, and that the information will help:

- \* Determine if the existing GS-025 classification standard is or is not an impediment to classifying ranger positions to meet legitimate management needs.

- \* Furnish information about work assignments, position management, and organizational structures.

- \* Serve as one source of information to help us decide where we should be going with the "Ranger Future" effort.

- \* Provide information for a revised classification guide or supplement, as needed.

- \* Provide front-end information for a complete study of occupational standards which should ultimately be required.

- \* Feed into an updated qualification standard.

- \* Help us get out of the position of always talking about career ladders and grades from feelings rather than facts.

The work management study team will also be looking at ways to strengthen the core ranger duties - protection, interpretation and resource management - and skill-based duties such as SAR and EMS. The study team is being guided by the draft "Ranger Future" concept statement in its discussion of what rangers should be doing.

We hope to brief senior management and get final approval for Servicewide distribution of the concept paper by mid-April. We'll then be asking for comments and work for implementation by July 1st. This is our plan, and we are on schedule.

## NPS ALL RISK TEAMS

Selections have been made for the Service's second national all-risk incident management team. The two teams, now renamed as the Grey Team (Rick Gale, incident commander) and Green Team (Bill Pierce, incident commander), have been placed on a rotation by assignment. The Green Team will be dispatched next.

The only positions that will be filled on a recurring basis are the incident commander, the four general staff section chiefs and the information officer. All other positions will be resource ordered at the time a team is dispatched based on the needs of an incident.

Team members are as follows:

### **Grey Team**

Incident Commander	Rick Gale, Fire Suppression Specialist, Branch of Fire and Aviation Management
Operations Section Chief	Bill Blake, Chief Ranger, New River Gorge
Planning Sections Chief	Bill Gabbert, FMO, Indiana Dunes
Logistics Section Chief	Steve Holder, Regional FMO, Alaska Region
Finance Section Chief	Marcia Blaszak, AO, Yellowstone
Information Officer	Pat Tolle, PIO, Everglades

### **Green Team**

Incident Commander	Bill Pierce, Chief Ranger, Olympic
Operations Section Chief	Jim Northup, Chief Ranger, Big Bend
Planning Sections Chief	Greg Stiles, Assistant Chief Ranger, Shenandoah
Logistics Section Chief	Bryan Swift, Chief Ranger, Lassen
Finance Section Chief	Henry Gause, Contracting Officer, Lake Mead
Information Officer	Sandy Rives, Management Assistant, Shenandoah

As with the first announcement, we received a number of quality applications, and the selection process was not an easy one. We will keep the names of other applicants on file for potential use as alternates or to fill other incident position needs.

We continue to encourage managers to use these teams for those complex incidents and special events which are beyond the scope of park or regional teams to handle. Both teams have the diversity and ability needed to function effectively on any all-risk incident or special event.

### INCIDENT REPORTING

Early this week, Secretary Babbitt received a letter from Leon Panetta, Director of the Office of Management and Budget, emphasizing President Clinton's strong interest in being promptly advised of major incidents that occur anywhere in the country. The first paragraph of that letter explained the White House's perspective:

"The President is committed to responding swiftly and effectively to domestic emergencies, including natural and man-made disasters, environmental and health crises, civil disorder and extreme criminal activity. In order to do so, the President must receive up-to-date information on the status of such emergencies, as well as potential federal remediation options, from the Executive departments and agencies involved."

OMB has accordingly mandated that all departments establish procedures for immediately notifying the White House of major incidents. Specific criteria will be forthcoming, probably after a meeting with White House representatives on Monday. It appears, however, that our current reporting criteria and procedures will be sufficient to meet their needs with one exception - it will be important for parks to advise us immediately of truly major incidents that conform with the criteria noted above in Director Panetta's letter.

We will be providing you with supplemental information as soon as possible, along with a 24-hour cellular phone number for contacting one of us in Ranger Activities. In the interim, please call the following persons in the order listed for major incidents during off-duty hours:

Bill Halainen	703-522-4756
Bob Marriott	703-787-9549
Dick Martin	703-893-8851
U.S. Park Police Dispatch	202-619-7310

One other matter while on the subject of incident reporting. You may recall having recently seen an incident report from Big Bend which provided a concise but informative summary of the impacts of heavy visitation on the park during spring break. This report brought attention to an increasingly common problem - coping with expanding visitation with reduced staffs. If you have similar problems, please give thought to summarizing them in a short, factual report and submitting them for the morning report.

#### CHIEF RANGERS' DIRECTORY

Attached is the final 1993 version of the chief rangers' directory. It contains all the corrections that have been submitted since the draft directory was sent out a few weeks ago. Please continue to submit changes as they occur. We will update and transmit the directory again in the fall.

#### NOTES FROM THE PARKS

##### **Yosemite**

Steve Stockdale, assistant subdistrict ranger and field training officer at Yosemite, won a gold medal in the mountain bike competition at the 1993 National Police Olympics in Phoenix, Arizona, last week. Steve's experience with mountain bikes comes from a previous assignment at Grand Canyon, where he founded the mountain bike patrol operation on the South Rim and compiled a bike patrol operations manual.

##### **Yosemite**

Parachuting off cliffs in Yosemite without a permit has been prohibited by the superintendent under 36 CFR 7.16(c) and 36 CFR 2.17(a)(3). Since the park does not issue permits, such parachuting is illegal. Five defendants recently filed an appeal to U.S. District Court in Fresno in a criminal matter where the magistrate judge denied their motion to dismiss based on equal protection and due process. The defendants claim that the prohibition discriminates unreasonably against BASE jumpers, that the classification which discriminates against BASE jumpers violates appellants' rights to equal protection under the Constitution, and that the prohibition violates the due process clause of the Fifth Amendment. The defendants argue that many other activities, such as climbing and hang gliding, are permitted, and that they should accordingly be allowed to parachute. The magistrate judge followed

the Supreme Court precedent that "the legislation generally will be upheld if the classification established by the legislation rationally relates to a legitimate government interest." No case law was discovered concerning recreational or sport legislation created by an administration authorized by Congress in the realms of equal protection.

The park would like to know if these issues have been raised and challenged in any other park area and the results of any such challenges. If you can help, call Scott Connelly at 209-372-0243.

PARK VACANCIES AND OPM REGISTER OPENINGS

**Independence**

Mid-Atlantic Regional Office will be issuing a vacancy announcement (MARO 93-B-17) for the GM-025-14 assistant superintendent position at Independence. The vacancy announcement will open on Monday and close on April 12th. Housing will not be available. This position will appear shortly in the pink sheets and copies of the announcement will be distributed through normal NPS channels. Additional information may be obtained from the Judy Merriweather, the park's personnel staffing specialist, at 215-597-9986.

QUESTIONS?

Is there something you'd like to know about that we can answer? Let us know and we'll publish the question and answer in an upcoming edition of Clear Text. Please be sure to specify that the question is for response in this newsletter, as questions also come in via cc:Mail which are for individual staff member response. If you've got a question that needs answering, it's likely that other rangers will also be interested in the reply.

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Clear Text is the bi-weekly electronic newsletter of the Ranger Activities Division in WASO. It is distributed via cc:Mail to all ranger training and operations centers (FLETC, HOAL, STMA, NIFC), regional office ranger divisions, park chief rangers, and other interested parties. If you would like to get it but don't currently receive it, please advise Ranger Activities via a short cc:Mail message. Any office may receive it, including districts and subdistricts within a park. PLEASE pass it along to others in your division and park.

Prepared by WASO Division of Ranger Activities

Telephone: Branch of R&VP - 202-208-4874  
              Branch of F&A (WASO) - 202-208-5572  
Telefax:   Branch of R&VP - 202-208-6756  
              Branch of F&A (WASO) - 202-208-5977  
cc:Mail:   Branch of R&VP - WASO Ranger Activities  
              Branch of F&A (WASO) - WASO Fire and Aviation