

CLEAR TEXT:
WASO Ranger Activities'
Electronic Newsletter

February 18, 1994

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. Short submissions for the last four sections of the report - Field Notes; Park Exchange; Vacancies, Register Openings and Details; and Calendar - are welcome and encouraged.

Next issue: March 4, 1994
Submission deadline: March 2, 1994

EDITOR'S NOTES

Because of the very high concern about "streamlining" Servicewide, we thought you might be interested in further information on the subject. This issue of CLEAR TEXT, therefore, is dedicated to two documents - the text of the video presentation Director Kennedy made on the subject following the February 15th meeting in Atlanta, and the Director's February 17th memorandum on the employment freeze.

STREAMLINING

Although the video of the Director's comments, which was made by Paul Winegar of SERO, is making the rounds, a transcription of the text was also made by Ben Moffet of Rocky Mountain Regions' Public Affairs office. That transcript follows. Please keep in mind that Director Kennedy is speaking to a camera, and that the references to documents are papers that he has in front of him:

"We spent a couple of pretty hard-working days with the directorate and the senior managers of the park service and a couple of superintendents to go through the consequences over the next couple of years of the necessity to streamline and strengthen the work of the Service.

"I'm going to use pieces of paper here, because I want to be sure that I give you an up-to-date and accurate report upon the conclusions which we have reached. These (papers) have dates in them and numbers in them and I want to use these prompters to be sure I give you that report accurately.

"Before I do, I want to stress that the fundamental program that we commenced is still in place. We have gone forward and will continue to go forward with a program to do right by the people of the National Park Service to get adequate pay for adequate work. And there's a chunk of money in this year's budget as there will be in succeeding years budgets to that...to be sure that the classification process works. There is legislation going in and there will be more to pay seasonals and temporaries who are really permanents, and to have an adequate benefits and retirement package for those folks. We're going forward as well with our intentions to take care of our national parks.

"Parts of that require that we get more money out of the fee process and the fee legislation that goes forward next week. We propose to keep half of the additions that we earn and that's important. Further, a concessions bill is in and we have a few amendments to go, but we are in favor of it and it has

now passed the Senate committees, and that'll get us additional revenue to take care of the parks.

"And we're very serious about our intention to use partnerships more effectively with other interested federal agencies, states and localities that manage land. None of that gets disrupted by our accommodating the budgetary requirements of what is known as the budget agreement. The budget agreement is a bi-partisan agreement in both houses of the Congress with the administration that over the course of the next three fiscal years, 200,000 federal jobs will go out of the system. Allocating the Interior Department's share of that is about 9,000 federal jobs, and the National Park Service's piece of that is somewhere around 1300 jobs.

"Now, I want to tell you, as precisely as I can, how we're going to move in those directions. First, we've already said and we will adhere to the rule that the parks, taken as an aggregate -- all the parks -- will not have FTE cuts in the personnel serving the public in the parks, taken as a whole. There will be shifts, of course, among parks as there always have been. As we've also said before, we're aiming in the direction of a 25 percent cut in the number of people employed in the Washington office and we're aiming in the direction of an aggregate of 25 percent out of all the regional offices, taken as a whole. And something like that will be achieved in the service centers over time, but because of their heavy emphasis upon contract work, that won't all come out at the top.

"Allocating those total percentage cuts has the implication that we're going to be diminishing the size of the work force in the National Park Service roughly in the following numbers:

- * in fiscal year 1994 about 400...that's the number of people we're already over our FTE limits. We are being instructed to bring ourselves down to those FTE limits;

- * in fiscal year 1995, another 400;

- * in fiscal year 1996, a third 400, and in general that process of cutting the number of people who serve personnel management that you've heard a lot about. We think by doing that, as we now think that we will do -- handling our personnel management within the National Park Service and that is our proposal to the Dept of the Interior as a whole. That's going to require us to cut about another 125 people.

"That means that the total is 1325. I can't tell you today, of course, where each of those persons is going to come from, but the general policy remains: within the parks themselves, taken as a whole, no cuts, that we can possibly avoid, and I believe we can.

"Those cuts will be taken in the regions, the service centers and Washington. By the first of March, we're going to have reports in from a number of specific task forces, whose job it is to report to us on information in a number of discrete areas.

"We've asked people to look at the Washington office to tell us where we should go to get that, roughly speaking, 25 percent quota out. With respect to that Washington aspect of the matter, Maureen Finnerty is going to be the team leader to look at the Washington Office. She will be advised as a kind of consulting guru by Jack Davis, brought back out of retirement for that purpose.

"With regard to the service centers, there's a group of people who will be

headed by Deny Galvin, but which will include some regional directors -- probably three -- and a couple of superintendents to look at slimming down the service centers. With regard to the regional directors and the slimming down of the regions, Jim Coleman will be leading that effort, though there will also be represented in that effort some working, and skeptical, superintendents.

"Kate Stephenson will be collating the information that's derived from those task forces, and getting questions asked and answered among the members of them.

"Now, as we go through this, you're going to see a variety of documents... I want to be candid with you about this. Inevitably the jungle telegraph is going to carry with it books like this which I saw for the first time today, which has some nifty maps in it, and all kinds of ginned up calendars and schedules of numbers. These are working documents. They have very interesting maps. You've all been through maps before in the National Park Service.

"There are a variety of alternative ways of cutting up the pain and cutting up the responsibilities. These documents show a variety of options. We haven't settled on any one of those options and I won't settle on any one of those options shown in these kind of documents until this process is a great deal farther along. By that I mean, I'm not going to settle down on where we're going to come out nor these groups settle out until, first of all, the first of March gets past us, and we've got a batch more information as to what the consequences of each of these steps will be.

"On the tenth of March we're going to meet again, probably in Denver with a good number of the folks who met this time, to see whether we can't bring that process forward, and by the end of 60 days we're going to have a completed plan to submit to the Department of the Interior and to all the other affected interested parties. We don't have that plan yet.

"We're going to get there as quickly as we can. We're going to consult as widely in the Service as we can, and the fundamental principle is that the National Park Service is going to have its plan for its own management up there, by itself, and we'll submit that for all of us. That way somebody else want do it. I just want to stress that the stuff that gets into the rumor market is not a final plan. It can't be at this stage. But we're going to move to a final plan just as fast as we can.

"Let me give you another couple of guiding principles. We're doing our part and our share in reducing the overall cost of government. We're going to try in the process not just to shrink, but to upgrade the quality of the services that we perform.

"In the shrinking process, I want to be as clear about this as one can be in going through an unpleasant process like this -- we're going to make every conceivable effort to avoid RIFs. Every one of you knows what RIFs do. RIFs provide bumping rights for some people, who can bump others. And some of the people who do the bumping are people you'd rather have less than some of the people who under that system get bumped.

" Secondly, RIFs have the effect of knocking out the most recent employees. And everybody knows that has adverse effects upon whatever affirmative action the system has been effective in articulating in recent years.

"We think that one of the reasons is we'll be able to avoid RIFS is, as the Secretary of the Interior told the press last week, because we very much

expect that the Congress is going to give us buyout legislation, which is going to induce some folks, who can benefit by buyouts, to go.

" Now, we've got to consider in the next 24-48 hours what it is we're going to be doing about freezes. I need the best advice I can get, and I haven't got quite as much of that yet, as I want. I need that advice to tell me what kind of freezes implemented in what kinds of ways would have the best effects to produce two consequences.

"First, protection to people in the park service who will be dislocated, and secondly, to be sure that we sustain the highest possible level of performance within the park service.

"Within let's say, 48 hours, we'll have a freeze policy, which will be in writing and everybody will see it, and it will be applied generically to the whole system so that we have some coherence of policy.

"Now, this is not going to be easy or painless, but I can assure you one thing: it's going to be a lot less painful than it would be if a meat ax were applied by persons not in the National Park Service. We are going to manage our way through this set of requirements, recognizing that there is no budge in the total obligations upon us, but we're going to manage our way in the park service...in the park service way.

"That's why we're not just imposing a pattern from the top. That's why we're trying to get as many good ideas from the people in the field as we possibly can.

"I think that's about enough for any of us for today. We've had a couple of pretty tight, hard working couple of days. Thank you for your help. Thank you for your understanding. Let's get on with this together."

JOB FREEZE

The following memo was signed by Director Kennedy on February 17th and transmitted to the Directorate and Field Directorate:

"The National Park Service is reorganizing to strengthen itself, to make itself more responsive to the people it serves and to become more efficient in providing that service. Pending issuance of an implementation plan for Streamlining/Strengthening the National Park Service, and effective immediately, I am implementing an agency-wide employment freeze. The filling of all permanent positions at WASO, regional offices, Harpers Ferry Center and Denver Service Center, and of all permanent positions at the GS-9 and above in field areas is suspended until further notice.

"The following are excepted from the freeze if the positions are established and funded:

1. Superintendent positions. (The Leadership Selection Process outlined in the Deputy Director's September 7, 1993, memorandum remains in effect.)
2. Seasonal, temporary and term positions.
3. Non-supervisory Federal Wage System (WG) positions (In keeping with efforts to reduce the supervisory ratio from 1 to 7 to 1 to 15, WS and WL positions are frozen.)
4. Positions for which firm offers have been made to prospective employees prior to the date of this memorandum.

5. Same grade reassignments and changes to a lower grade from WASO, regional offices, Harpers Ferry Center and Denver Service Center to field offices (Reassignments and changes to a lower grade to central offices from the field are frozen.).

6. Promotions for employees in employee developmental and upward mobility positions, regularly scheduled promotions in multi-grade, career ladder positions and promotions due to accretion of duties are not affected.

"Criteria for granting exceptions: Regional directors, center managers and, for WASO, the Deputy Director, may grant exceptions to the freeze if one of the following criteria is met:

1. Filling of the position is critical to the mission of the Service and an alternative method to accomplish the critical task is not feasible.

2. Filling of the position is consistent with the Streamlining/Strengthening objectives of the Service.

3. Filling the position is in response to employee hardship.

"Exceptions to the freeze must take into consideration the professionalization efforts currently underway in the natural and cultural resource areas.

"This is also a reminder that, notwithstanding this memorandum, as of January 26, any administrative position to be permanently filled through promotion, appointment or reassignment must be approved by the Assistant Secretary for Fish and Wildlife and Parks and all GS-14/15 level positions continue to require Departmental approval before filling.

"As we go through this streamlining process, I reaffirm my commitment to avoid RIF's and want us to work together to ensure the least possible impact on our employees. I expect supervisors and managers to, wherever possible, fill positions that are excepted from the freeze with employees that may be dislocated from WASO, regional offices and Harpers Ferry or Denver Service Centers. The WASO Division of Personnel is developing a central referral process to aid in the out-placement of affected employees to field positions. If you have a position which will be filled as an exception to the freeze approved by the Regional Director, Center Manager or Deputy Director before the development of this out-placement process please contact Mario Fraire at (202) 208-5093 or Mary Martin at (202) 208-4577."

If you would like to get CLEAR TEXT 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

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