



RANGER ACTIVITIES INFORMATION EXCHANGE

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Chief Ranger's Comments

We've been talking about position management for several years now as the subject has evolved with the Director's "grade comparability" working group. As can now be seen, many of our personnel and morale problems result in part from a poor understanding of how to organize our work effectively and then how to manage our positions to accomplish that work.

Without a knowledgeable, considered approach to channeling a limited number of people and scarce dollars toward meeting objectives, we frustrate our people and reduce the likelihood that our most important work will be accomplished. Accountability is also diminished, because it is generally true that if everyone is responsible for ensuring that something is achieved, then no one is responsible. Greater, more complex and specific responsibilities in a position generally improve accountability for the accomplishment of work and commonly result in higher grades for those positions.

An example of poor work force planning, organization of work and position management is the incorporation of every conceivable type of work into the park ranger (025) series. Of approximately 3,200 ranger positions, nearly 800 are GS-5 or below. Some of these positions could be classified in a more appropriate series for the specific work being accomplished. With over half of all 025 positions below the grade of GS-7 and a three to four percent turnover rate at GS-9, it's not hard to see that we are exacerbating our problems.

A purpose of any technician series is to provide for full performance positions at the lower grades. Virtually all other agencies use this approach. The responsibilities within these positions includes the technical level work needed to implement agency programs. Program planning and direction occur generally at GS-9 levels and above. But we incorporate everything from parking cars to superintending Yellowstone in the 025 series. By "managing" positions in this manner, we are in fact suggesting to anyone who "gets in" that the sky is the limit. The mathematics indicate that's simply not true. Our people have come to realize this, and we are now seeing turnover rates at lower grades climb each year. This is in part due to false expectations created by non-management of the work force.

I've talked to many field employees who are in their current park location in order to get career status and move somewhere else. As a result, some urban areas are experiencing 50% turnover rates annually. I got a letter the other day from one area that had eight vacancies - approximately half of the total park protection staff - in three months, six of which were caused by people leaving for other agencies. All positions were GS-7 and below, and most were GS-5. On another occasion, I talked to a GS-5 ranger on a visitor center desk

who had recently been transferred from one region to another. This person said that the Park Service didn't plan on his staying very long at the new location, because there was no way he could make it on the local economy.

Again, one of the original reasons for the use of technicians was to try to employ some local people. In many cases, these people already have a place to live, know the area, and are already a part of the local community. In many cases, they are not interested in moving. It might be time to reconsider the value of employing local people to fill some of our positions with basic duties, i.e. fee collector, information receptionist, and policeman, etc. I'm not suggesting that such an approach should be used to fill most or all positions. That's up to individual managers.

We constantly hear complaints from managers who say their programs are getting killed financially by constantly having to train new employees, pay relocation costs, etc. It may be time to look at some of these positions and see if there are other options. In some cases, continuing business as usual will not prove to be good business. We need to look seriously at proper classification of jobs, special pay rates where justifiable, and creative ways of recruiting locally for some future vacancies in some areas. Special pay rates, for example, may not be available for an 025 position where it is available in the same location for the 083 (police) series. If the position is truly a police or guard position, you might have better luck recruiting from those registers and increasing retention using special pay provisions.

If we are to foster greater understanding of position management and increase related skills in our supervisors and managers, we will have to provide the necessary training. That training will now be available on a regional basis through regional training teams. These team trainers just completed two weeks of work at Mather Training Center developing a two-day position management course. The training they will be offering will include basic classification principles, program accountability, grade structure, utilization of personnel, utilization of proper classification series, cross-referencing other series for grading purposes, and career development considerations. The course will be creditable toward required supervisory training. This course is dynamic and will be improved continuously.

It is critical that we try to improve our ability to manage our people and resources as effectively as possible. Many of our "problems" are based on ignorance of "the system" and of our responsibilities and options within this system. I wish I'd had the opportunity for this type of training early in my own career. It would have helped.

Good position management needs to be institutionalized in the agency. It can result in better organization, improved staff morale, reduced attrition rates and, in general, make you a more effective manager. There are some excellent examples out there where individuals are doing some pretty exciting and creative things with position management. We suggest that you pursue the presentation of this course in your area.

Field Incidents

Lake Mead: On the morning of December 14th, a maid working at the Lake Mead Lodge noticed a letter in a room in the lodge which indicated that the resident was Steven Cox, a fugitive wanted by the FBI whose case had recently been publicized on the television program, "Unsolved Mysteries." Cox was wanted for insurance fraud in Oregon and for other offenses in other states. According to lodge records, he had been residing there under an assumed name since November 21st. When rangers arrived at the lodge, they were informed that Cox had gone to breakfast, probably at the nearby Gold Strike Inn. The rangers found his car at that location, waited for him to leave the inn, then arrested him at a location where it would be possible to make a safe felony stop. During a subsequent search of Cox's room and his car, rangers found over \$250,000 worth of property, including unset emeralds, diamonds and rubies; over 100 gold rings; silver bullion; gold chains; an assortment of rare gold coins; \$4,000 in cash; assorted baseball memorabilia, including a Mickey Mantle baseball card worth \$6,000; and keys to two safe deposit boxes in Medford, Oregon.

Big South Fork: On the morning of December 22nd, a magnetometer placed in Rock Shelter 187, an archeological site in the Peters Mountain area of the park, emitted an alarm over the park radio system, indicating that someone was excavating with metal tools at the site. Rangers arrived at the location shortly thereafter and caught three adults and a juvenile in the process of digging up the shelter. The three adults - Timothy Reynolds and Billy and Jack Parriman, all local residents of McCreary County - were arrested and charged with violations of the Archeological Resources Protection Act, destruction of government property and possession of marijuana. Their vehicle, which was impounded, was found to contain 37 blasting caps. The three were arraigned before a magistrate on December 23rd and released on their own recognizance.

Great Smokies: On December 29, 1984, a family of hikers came upon skeletal remains near the loop road in Cade's Cove. The subsequent investigation by park rangers and FBI agents revealed that the victim was Rosalyn Goodman of Memphis, Tennessee, and that she had been murdered. The primary suspect was William Hewlett, a convicted bank robber who was on the FBI's "Ten Most Wanted" list and who was being sought for parole violations, rape and social security fraud. Efforts to find him proved fruitless. Last September 4th, the television show "America's Most Wanted" aired a show on the case which they had filmed on location in the park. As a result, Hewlett was spotted in Perlinton, Mississippi, and the FBI arrested him and his wife there on social security fraud charges on December 19th. During subsequent interrogations, Hewlett confessed to the murder of Goodman. He said that Goodman had become friends with the Hewletts when all three were hiking in the park on September 26, 1984. Following a trip to town to drop off Hewlett's wife, Hewlett and Goodman had returned to the park, consumed alcohol, marijuana and psilocybin, then engaged in sexual relations; during their tryst, Goodman became angry at Hewlett and he strangled her in the ensuing fight. On January 5th, Hewlett pled guilty to second degree murder, and was scheduled to be sentenced to 60 years in prison.

Hawaii Volcanoes: Ranger James "Kimo" Cabatbat, 37, died of cancer on the afternoon of January 18th. Cabatbat began his career in the NPS in 1979 at Haleakala, and was the ranger at Kalapana in Hawaii Volcanoes at the time of his death. He was also a member of the regional special events team for the last six years. He is survived by his wife, Nan, and their three children, Trahern, 9, Aislin, 6, and Cavan, 4.

Biscayne: Between midnight and 1 a.m. on January 25th, a 37-foot sloop caught fire a mile east of Old Rhodes Key. The two men in the forward cabin were able to escape through a hatch, but the two women in the aft cabin - Katheline Ryan, 40, and Lynda Smith, 40 - were trapped by the fire and killed. The fire completely consumed the cabin. The two men - owner Harry Spade, 57, and John Donahough, 52 - were not seriously injured and rowed their dinghy two miles to reach help. The Coast Guard arrived at the scene at 4:30 a.m., and were later joined by the Florida Marine Patrol and NPS rangers. All four people were employed by United Airlines. A burning alcohol stove is thought to have caused the fire.

Yellowstone: On the night of February 6th, Don Anderson, 48, of Geraldine, Montana, was snowmobiling on a park road with several friends when he collided with a bison and suffered a broken neck and head and chest injuries. CPR was begun by his friends and later continued by rangers, but without success. When last seen, the bison was still walking around. Anderson's friends admitted that they had all been drinking heavily before the incident.

Yellowstone: On the morning of August 16, 1988, a 20-year-old Job Corps member from Salt Lake City was sexually assaulted by a Utah State Prison inmate while both were in a fire camp for the North Fork Fire. The assailant, Roger Lopez, 33, of Layton, Utah, pleaded guilty to a charge of felony sexual abuse on January 27th. The victim has since filed a federal suit against Lopez and Utah corrections officials seeking unspecified damages, lost wages and medical and court costs. The suit charges that Utah officials were negligent for placing Lopez on the fire crew and for failing to properly guard him.

Sequoia/Kings Canyon: A fire broke out in one of the park's SAR caches at 2:30 a.m. on February 16th and totally destroyed the facility and its contents. Total damage has been estimated at \$20,000 for the SAR equipment and \$10,000 for other equipment and the structure itself. The source of ignition appears to have been an electrical failure in a water heater in the building. One park ranger was hospitalized for a minor case of smoke inhalation.

Death Valley: On the evening of February 16th, park ranger Nancy Blomquist, 31, became seriously ill. Nancy Mulady, a seasonal park ranger and paramedic who came to her aid, found that Blomquist was experiencing severe internal bleeding and placed her on advanced life support due to her weakened and deteriorating condition. The Flight-for-Life helicopter which was dispatched from Las Vegas had to land prior to arrival due to pilot vertigo, which made it necessary to provide continued life support until a fixed-wing aircraft could arrive at Furnace Creek and transport Blomquist to the a hospital in Las Vegas. Doctors later said that Mulady's care saved Blomquist's life. Blomquist has since been released from the hospital and is recuperating.

Fire Weather Forecast

The Boise Interagency Fire Center has issued its February weather briefing, which examines weather patterns and precipitation from October through January and analyzed future trends.

With the return of a more normal precipitation pattern this winter, drought indices began recovering from the extreme conditions of last summer, particularly in the Pacific coast states. The northern Rockies and eastern Oregon, however, continue to suffer severe to extreme drought. The Palmer Drought Index also revealed that severe drought was occurring in California, central Minnesota, Illinois, southeast Texas, southern Florida and along the Appalachians in the Carolinas and Virginia. Upper air patterns continued to indicate that no major changes would be taking place in the near future.

"With the type of weather pattern expected," the report concludes, "an increase in fire potential may be expected in portions of the southeast during the spring months until the normally more humid flow from the Gulf of Mexico penetrates the area and brings shower and thundershower activity. The northern Rockies will remain a question mark, with the fire season being very dependent on spring rains and snows. The remainder of the west looks to be in for a more normal season, along with Alaska, which has experienced a fair amount of precipitation thus far this winter."

Update on Aircraft Overflight Studies

On August 18, 1987, President Reagan signed into law the NPS Overflights Act, a law which requires the Service to review overflight impacts at a minimum of 11 units and to develop recommendations of minimum altitudes or other actions to mitigate the effects of overflights on park resources and visitors. The law also requires that this information be submitted to Congress by August, 1990.

Accordingly, a Servicewide coordinator position was established in Ranger Activities early last year, and Steve Hodapp, former chief of resources management at Grand Canyon, accepted a reassignment to this office to take on the responsibility of meeting the law's requirements. Although limited progress has been made on these objectives due to a lack of funding, a task directive has been developed which fully outlines the overall scope of the analysis which must be completed. This document, which has been reviewed and concurred with by all regional offices, identifies the specific studies to be accomplished, park areas proposed for study, resources required and project timing.

The concept outlined in the task directive calls for the overall effort to be directed from the Washington Office and for the actual work to be completed by large, nationally-recognized acoustical engineering firms. Major areas of study would include the gathering of acoustical/ambient data and the measuring of visitor reactions to various aircraft acoustical signals. The total cost of the project is estimated at \$3.4 million. It's anticipated that it will require from two and a half to three years to implement the study once funding is secured.

In FY 87, Western Region awarded a contract to an acoustical engineering firm to review various noise metrics (noise measuring scales used to quantify sound energy) and determine which acoustic data gathering methodology would be most appropriate for use in NPS settings. This review involved thorough background research as well as several field trips to NPS areas to test different types of equipment.

A fundamental deficiency which was identified under this contract in virtually all existing aircraft noise measuring programs was that they fail to consider ambient or background sound levels. This is a critical factor, particularly in terms of describing visitor experiences. The metric which was finally recommended in the report is one called "detectability", which permits a calculation of the difference between ambient and non-natural sound levels (i.e. aircraft). Since this metric has never been used to predict human reactions to aircraft signals, further investigation will be required to determine whether it can accurately predict such reactions. The study also suggests that other variables critical to determining visitor reactions include the onset rate of sound, numbers of flights per day and the audible duration of the sound. These variables will have to be verified through field studies.

The final contractor report, copies of which will be available in mid-March, provides a detailed description of the instrumentation required to collect this acoustical data. Also included is information on ways in which parks can establish their own aircraft monitoring programs. The contractor will present the results of this study at a workshop to be scheduled for San Francisco in late March.

The Act also required the establishment of three new rules restricting flights over units of the NPS. These rules are the first regulatory flight restrictions over NPS areas. Certain minimum flight levels are now in effect over portions of both Yosemite and Haleakala; at the Grand Canyon, all but emergency flights are precluded from flying below the rim and flights are prohibited below 14,500 feet MSL over 44% of the park. This is the largest area in the world where aircraft overflights are precluded for environmental reasons.

This past December, the Director approved the allocation of \$215,000 to begin aircraft studies at Grand Canyon. The NPS has decided to cooperate with the US Forest Service in the implementation of overflight studies, and will be contracting jointly for the work through the Denver Service Center. The US Forest Service has allocated \$1.0 million to conduct studies in FY89 and FY90 to implement its portion of the studies mandated in Public Law 100-91. At the present time, however, no additional NPS funding has been identified for the program in FY90.

Bangert and NFFE v. Hodel

On January 30th, Judge Harold H. Greene of the United States District Court for the District of Columbia issued his opinion in two civil actions - Patricia Bangert, et. al. v. Donald P. Hodel and National Federal of Federal Employees, et. al. v. Donald P. Hodel. Both suits challenged the Department of Interior's drug testing program.

The opinion begins with a description of the Department's program, which included both random and "reasonable suspicion" urinalysis testing. The random testing plan was aimed at employees in sensitive positions, defined as those "'characterized by critical safety or security responsibilities as related to the mission of the Department.'" One quarter of DOI employees were determined to be in positions of sufficient sensitivity to warrant random testing. Following a description of the program and how it was to be conducted, the judge offered his appraisal of the case.

"Courts must weigh four factors in considering a motion for preliminary injunction," Judge Greene said in his analysis. "(These are) (1) the likelihood that the plaintiffs will succeed on the merits; (2) the threat of irreparable harm to plaintiffs if the injunction is not granted; (3) the possibility that the defendants and others will suffer substantial harm in the event that injunctive relief is issued; and (4) the interest of the public. Consideration of these factors leads the Court to conclude that a preliminary injunction against random drug testing should be issued."

"Two bedrock principles are clearly established and could not be disputed," he said. "First, urinalysis testing constitutes a search within the meaning of the Fourth Amendment...Second, 'individuals do not lose Fourth Amendment rights merely because they work for the government instead of a private employer.'"

Judge Green then considered the legality of the testing, since the Fourth Amendment only bars unreasonable searches. In order to determine reasonableness, he said, it's necessary to balance "the nature and the quality of the intrusion on the individual's Fourth Amendment interests against the importance of the governmental interests alleged to justify the intrusion." The courts apply two criteria to such an evaluation - whether there are reasonable grounds to suspect that a search will turn up evidence of work-related drug use, and "whether the measures adopted are reasonably related to the objectives of the search and not excessively intrusive."

The judge said that the Department's random drug testing program "entirely fails the first prong of the test", because "the government's own figures confirm that illegal drug use is virtually nonexistent within the Department of Interior" - 44 cases per year over the last five years out of a workforce of 70,000. There were no indications that any of these employees were in the "sensitive" positions targeted for random testing. And DOI could not point to any drug-related accidents or incidents within the Department.

"While the goals (of the program) are certainly laudatory, they do not justify a significant intrusion into an employee's privacy," said the judge, "particularly when there is absolutely no showing that drug use exists that is impairing the routine functions, let alone the critical responsibilities, of the Department...To be sure, some of the covered employees - park rangers and park police, for example - engage in activities related to law enforcement. However, courts all over the nation have rejected random or compulsory drug testing of ordinary law enforcement officials similar to these officers."

Since the government "utterly failed" to prove the need for such testing, the second criteria - whether the tests would be unduly intrusive - took on more importance, and Judge Green ruled that "the interests asserted and demonstrated by the government simply are not so compelling as to outweigh these very potent privacy interests."

The judge declined to invalidate the "reasonable suspicion" aspect of the testing program, however. "Without belaboring the point," he said, "this Court will simply state that it agrees with the decisions in this Circuit and elsewhere that have upheld reasonable suspicion testing but have decided that it must be conducted under circumstances exhibiting individualized suspicion of on the job impairment, and with evidence of substantial reliability."

The Service has since issued a memorandum to the field which discusses the effects of Judge Green's decision: "The Justice Department has not decided whether the injunction will be appealed. However, because the plaintiffs in the case did not challenge the other categories of testing (applicant, voluntary, post-accident or unsafe practice, and follow-up), these categories have not been enjoined. The Interior Department reports that it is reviewing the criteria for reasonable suspicion testing and will modify them to comply with the court order." Questions regarding the ruling should be addressed to your servicing personnel office.

Briefly...

- Yes, we missed both the January and February issues of Exchange. Because of the pace of activity in the division this winter, it proved impossible to get them out as planned. So we begin the year with the March issue.
- The Servicewide Traffic Accident Reporting System (STARS) went into effect on March 1st. Revised NPS Form 10-413's can be ordered by regional offices or individual parks from Brentwood. Coding manuals may be obtained from either Bill Cottrill or Jim Straughan in DSC (FTS 327-2175 or 303-969-2175) or Philippe Clark in WASO Engineering and Safety (FTS 343-7040 or 202-343-7040).
- Last year, Congress passed the Uniform Federal Crime Reporting Act of 1988, which, in part, requires that all federal agencies provide crime statistics to the FBI in a uniform manner and on a monthly basis. We have been meeting with representatives of the Department to determine how this requirement is to be met. Initial plans called for the development of a fully automated data system, but that proposal is currently on hold due to budgetary constraints.

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The Ranger Activities Information Exchange is produced by the Washington Division of Ranger Activities. Walt Dabney, Chief Ranger. Address letters, comments and inquiries to: Ranger Activities (650), Stop 3310, National Park Service, Box 37127, Washington, D.C. 20013-7127; FTS 343-4874 or (202) 343-4874. Attn: Bill Halainen, Editor.