



July 6, 2001

# NLC Journal

*“The Board’s report should contain a vision to be shared with the public and their elected representatives, defining the future legacy of our national parks, and the Service’s role as a leader in conservation of our nation’s natural and cultural heritage.”*

Robert Stanton, Former NPS Director, December 1999 charge to the NPS Advisory Board

## Looking to the Future

The main business before the National Leadership Council at its May 30-June 1 meeting in Washington, D.C. was to consider the National Park System Advisory Board’s draft report on the future of national parks. A congressionally chartered body appointed by the Secretary of the Interior, the Board makes recommendations on designating national landmarks and provides advice to the Director about all matters relating to the national park system and National Park Service.

In December 1999, former Director Robert Stanton charged the Board to develop a report that focuses “broadly on the purposes and prospects for the national park system over the next 25 years.” He asked that the report address long-term strategic directions, not immediate day-to-day operational challenges. While the Board was carrying out its task, the Park Service planned and convened the Discovery 2000 General Conference, a principal goal of which was to develop a vision of the Service’s role in 21<sup>st</sup> century American life. Board members participated in, and were enthusiastic about, Discovery 2000. Their work, now nearing completion, offers suggestions about organizational directions in the new century.

The NLC devoted a full day to discussion of the report, with Board Chairman John Hope Franklin and five Board members presenting key findings and issues. (Members accompanying Dr. Franklin were Mr. Robert Chandler, Dr. Sylvia Earle, Dr. Shirley Malcom, Ms. Marie Ridder and Mr. Tom Williams). Dr. Franklin said the report builds on National Park Service mandates and the demonstrated importance of parks in society. He said it highlights the considerable potential of parks to contribute to education and enlightenment. In brief summary, it identifies:

- ◆ new opportunities in resources stewardship, specifically emphasizing the conservation of biodiversity and protection of aquatic and marine systems;
- ◆ the value of integrating “living cultures” (ancestral and indigenous peoples) into park life;
- ◆ advantages and opportunities in sustainable park

design and operations; and  
◆ leadership opportunities in outdoor recreation.

The report observes that the national park system grows to reflect our experience as a nation and a people, and that the Service today manages a broad array of programs that extend the benefits of the park ethic into our communities nationwide. Finally, it states that additional capabilities and resources are needed to meet existing and new century challenges.

Dr. Franklin told the NLC that the Board has collaborated with the National Geographic Society to produce its report, and 10,000 copies will be distributed to decision-makers and key organizations nationwide. The report will be released later this summer. Dr. Franklin expressed heartfelt appreciation for the support that Park Service employees have given the Board as it has carried out its task.

The NLC applauds the Board for its work. The NLC believes the report affirms evolving park purposes and Park Service responsibilities, and will speak to passions within the organization to engage the American public on a broader front. Meeting in executive session, the NLC discussed the central issues that were offered and agreed to explore a wide range of possible follow-up actions at the next meeting (August 1 and 2). NLC members will present proposals that concentrate on the key areas of the report.

Learn more about Board members and this effort at <http://www.nps.gov/refdesk/policies.html>.

## Implementing the No-impairment Mandate

The NLC reviewed actions since the last meeting to enhance employee understanding of the Service’s core purpose as mandated in the 1916 Organic Act—to conserve park resources and values “unimpaired” for future generations. At its last meeting, the NLC considered the new policy wording, the reasons for the new wording, and how it must be implemented (see [NLC Journal, 3rd Edition](#), at the web site identified above).

K.C. Becker, Staff Attorney with the Branch of

- National Leadership Council
- Denis (Deny) Galvin  
• Deputy Director
- Sue Masica  
• Associate Director  
• Administration
- Katherine (Kate) Stevenson  
• Associate Director  
• Cultural Resource Stewardship and Partnerships
- Michael (Mike) Soukup  
• Associate Director  
• Natural Resource Stewardship and Science
- Richard (Dick) Ring  
• Associate Director  
• Park Operations and Education
- Terrel (Terry) Emmons  
• Associate Director  
• Professional Services
- Robert L. (Bob) Arnberger  
• Regional Director  
• Alaska
- Karen P. Wade  
• Regional Director  
• Intermountain
- William (Bill) Schenk  
• Regional Director  
• Midwest
- Terry R. Carlstrom  
• Regional Director  
• National Capital
- Marie Rust  
• Regional Director  
• Northeast
- John J. Reynolds  
• Regional Director  
• Pacific West
- Jerry Belson  
• Regional Director  
• Southeast

National Parks in the Solicitor's office, presented legal perspectives on Park Service activities to date. She emphasized that the policy is not really new, but is a more rigorous interpretation of an old statute; the required manager's decision document is crucial when implementing the policy; and the Service must be consistent in the way it applies the policy. The best way to ensure consistency is through good communication at all levels of the organization (and within the Solicitor's Office). Apparent inconsistencies are best defended with a good administrative record.

At the last NLC meeting, Doug Morris, superintendent of Shenandoah National Park, was asked to represent the issue at regional meetings. After participating in a number of Servicewide gatherings, he reported on questions that are being raised. The questions - such as "What distinguishes an impact from an impairment?" and "What do we do about existing impairments?" - indicate a sincere desire to conscientiously implement the policy. There is clearly a strong focus on this issue in the field and a growing determination to address the policy as effectively as possible.

Chick Fagan, Program Analyst, Washington Office of Policy, presented a proposed Servicewide strategy for implementing the "no-impairment" policy. The strategy focuses on how the Service will develop the more comprehensive guidance needed to ensure the consistent application of the policy (Section 1.4 of *Management Policies*). Key steps include convening a workgroup with expertise in natural, cultural, and recreational disciplines; developing criteria and standards to help determine when an impact constitutes an impairment; clarifying how to respond to conflicting or questionable advice; and compiling case studies. A handbook will eventually be prepared and a plan will be developed to deliver appropriate training to all segments of the workforce. The information contained in Section 1.4 and various supplemental materials will have to suffice until they can be supplemented with more detailed guidance. An intranet web site has been set up on this topic at [www.nps.gov/protect](http://www.nps.gov/protect).

### **Developing Effective National Park Service Leadership**

Following its December 2000 meeting, the NLC announced it would "explore opportunities to work with experts in the fields of management and organizational change to strengthen itself as a leadership body" (*NLC Journal, 1st Edition*). In keeping with that commitment, the NLC assessed its purpose and role, and established criteria for selecting organizational development assistance. A workgroup of Associate Directors Sue Masica and Kate Stevenson, and Regional Directors John Reynolds and Karen Wade was selected to pursue consultation opportunities. Recommendations will be made at the August 1-2 NLC meeting. Linda Wright, NPS Organizational Consultant, has been asked to assist in this endeavor and to provide advice

to the NLC more broadly on issues of organizational effectiveness.

The 1996 NLC Charter was revised (and will be made available this summer) to reflect the vision of the future organization emerging from Discovery 2000:

- ◆A National Park Service that is a world environmental leader and a preeminent resource management agency;
- ◆A national park system that is one of America's revered educational institutions;
- ◆An organization that is the best it can possibly be, where every employee has the opportunity to develop to their fullest potential and have their contributions recognized and valued.

The NLC reaffirmed its desire to incorporate principles of shared leadership and strategic approaches to its work as an executive team.

### **Proud Partners of America's National Parks**

The National Park Foundation joined the NLC for a discussion of the Proud Partners Program. Last fall, the Foundation launched a campaign that builds on the Message Project goal to invite the public to deepen their connection to the national parks by learning about, experiencing, and getting involved with the parks. To support the effort, the Foundation enlisted the help of five corporate partners: American Airlines, Discovery Communications, Eastman Kodak Company, Ford Motor Company, and TIME Inc.

Among the developments that have already taken place:

- ◆Ford Motor Company has completed the restoration of the first of a fleet of bi-fuel Glacier "Red Buses," which will qualify the buses for an "ultra low emissions vehicle" rating.
- ◆On May 21, TIME Magazine published the first of nine special sections devoted exclusively to the national parks.
- ◆Discovery Communications Inc. has produced the Mount Rushmore film, the first of several park films or special programming to be produced by the communications leader.
- ◆Kodak managed and promoted the "Parks Pass" photo contest, required by law and aimed at finding great photographs for the new "Parks Pass."

Through our corporate partners we have access to a larger segment of the public and to a wide range of specialized expertise that we can apply to Servicewide issues. The NLC discussed the potential of the program as well as ways to improve sharing of information about directions and successes.

### **Concessions Program**

The NLC discussed the implications of the PricewaterhouseCoopers (PWC) risk analysis of the concessions program. According to PWC, the NPS lacks the organizational capacity to deal with the most lucrative 8% of concessions contracts, which

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generate 75% of all concessions revenue. This lack of capacity could result in NPS liability for a potential \$387M in concessioners' claims of possessory interests, and a \$23M annual loss in revenue stream if the rate of return on concessions contracts is not increased from the existing 2% average to a more reasonable 6%. Hiring the necessary outside expertise will require a significant dollar investment. The NLC agreed that necessary funding would be taken from the benefiting park's 80% concessions monies and 80% recreation demonstration fee monies during FY '01 and '02. In the case of CRLA, DENA, GLCA, and YELL, where such funding sources are likely to be inadequate, the Servicewide 20% recreation demonstration fee account may be utilized to make up the deficit.

#### **NPS-McKinsey Fee Study**

The NPS-McKinsey fee study team presented the NLC with options and preliminary recommendations on fee program strategy. The study is the result of discussions between the NPS and the National Park Foundation regarding the need for a review of the National Park Pass program and other fee revenue programs. McKinsey and Co., a nationally recognized consulting firm, contacted the Foundation and expressed an interest in the work. The team's recommendations were the result of superintendent surveys of all parks; interviews with regional, park, and Washington Office staff; site visits to over 30 park areas; and a thorough analysis of fee, budget, visitation, and other data. The NLC was asked to provide guidance on key decisions and direction for implementation of the recommendations, which are aimed at optimizing revenues, supporting the NPS

mission, and preparing NPS management for upcoming legislative hearings.

#### **Safety Concerns**

The National Leadership Council reaffirmed its unwavering commitment to an injury-free workforce. Each of us must be uncompromising in our expectation that all work will be performed in a safe manner and that the welfare and safety of our employees will always come first. To fail in this is to fail as managers.

#### **A Visit from the Secretary of the Interior**

At the conclusion of its meeting, the National Leadership Council was honored to receive Secretary of the Interior Gale Norton, who conveyed President Bush's strong support for the national parks and spoke about the Administration's **National Parks Legacy Project**. The Secretary emphasized her strong interest in partnerships and encouraged even greater efforts to recruit volunteer talent in support of Park Service work. She expressed support for making permanent the Fee Demonstration Program, looking at creative ways to use fees, and developing "business plans" to better track the management and deployment of park budgets. She spoke favorably about the Natural Resource Challenge and said the scientific credibility of Park Service decision-making is of primary importance. She emphasized that an ongoing concern must always be the enhancement of the visitor experience, and she concluded by expressing support for Land and Water Conservation Fund and other local technical assistance programs.

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