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NLCJournal

“The public lands we manage offer tremendous benefits to the public. In these special places, Americans can draw strength and inspiration from the people and events that have shaped our nation, hope and comfort from the enduring rhythms of nature, and opportunities for relaxation and fun with family and friends. We are reaching out to the American public to encourage them to visit parks and other special places for experience of unity, hope and healing that are so important at this time in our nation’s history.”
—Director Fran Mainella, speaking to the Veterans Day Weekend Observation

Priorities, Opportunities and New Faces

Meeting October 9-10 in Shepherdstown, West Virginia, the National Leadership Council tackled a range of critical issues dealing with park operations, management of the Park Service, and long-term organizational directions. Joining the NLC was new Deputy Director Don Murphy, who assumed his responsibilities on October 1. Murphy most recently served as Director of the Department of Parks and Recreation for the City of Sacramento, California. Prior to that, he was Director of the California Department of Parks and Recreation. More information about him can be found on the Web at 165.83.219.72/release/Detail.cfm?ID=164.

Director Mainella announced that Pacific West Region Deputy Director Bill Walters had been selected as Associate to the Director, and charged with responsibility for office organization. He will serve as liaison to various NPS work teams and consult with the Department, Congress, and other outside groups on policy matters that come before the Director. He will also be a member of the NLC.

Secretary Norton, who was visiting the National Conservation Training Center for other reasons, participated briefly in the NLC meeting. She spoke to the importance of parks, and endorsed the concept of a Service-wide entrance fee-free Veteran’s Day weekend in response to the September 11 terrorist attacks. It will offer all Americans an opportunity to

visit parks and other special places for experiences of unity, hope and healing that are so important at this time in the nation’s history. The Director has taken the necessary steps to implement this initiative, effective November 10, 11, and 12.

The NLC discussed communications that are needed to make the observance a success, and selected a team to design and manage the effort. Centralized internal communications about the effort are posted at – www.nps.gov/unityweekend. The NLC observed that this event should be a template for future strategic communication.

Reducing the Maintenance Backlog

Director Mainella identified reduction of the maintenance backlog as a top priority for the Service, observing that both President Bush and Secretary Norton have repeatedly spoken to this commitment. She said that \$440 million per year has been allocated to address the non-road component of the backlog, monies that are budgeted in the Line-item Construction Program, the Repair/Rehab Program, the Housing Initiative, the Dam Safety Program, and part of the Fee Program. The road portion of the backlog will be addressed principally by the NPS proposing an increase in the legislated amount allocated under the Federal Lands Highway Program.

- National Leadership Council
- Fran Mainella, Director
- Denis (Deny) Galvin, Deputy Director
- Donald W. (Don) Murphy, Deputy Director
- William C. (Bill) Walters, Associate to the 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. (Rob) Aramberger, 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

Beginning in FY 2002, the Service will be required to allocate \$100 million of fee revenue annually to maintenance backlog projects. To meet this requirement, regional directors will be assigned a target amount based on the annual fee revenue collected and re-allocated to parks.

The NPS has been asked to accelerate implementation of both the Facility Management Software System (FMSS) and Facility Condition Assessment Surveys (FCAS). To accomplish this, FMSS is to be implemented in all remaining parks by the end of FY 2002. Annual condition assessments are to be completed in 123 parks by the end of FY 2002, and all remaining parks by the end of FY 2003. For FY 2002, \$7 million has been provided to support Service-wide implementation and training in FMSS and FCAS. Approval of backlog project funding in PMIS will ultimately be linked to facilities that have completed condition assessments.

The NLC directed that significant efforts be made to ensure the NPS will obligate the increased funding that is being allocated to reduce the backlog. This will involve additional efforts in project planning, compliance, design, contracting, and supervision—principally by the regions/parks and the Denver Service Center. Competitive sourcing and innovative approaches to contracting and project management will be needed to keep the Service on pace over the next several years. The Director assigned Deputy Director Murphy to coordinate the Service-wide effort.

Management Reforms

Associate Director Masica led a discussion of proposed management reforms identified by the Administration, as well as separate program management issues emphasized by the Department. The NLC considered the implications of improved performance in competitive sourcing; electronic government; strategic management of human capital; integration of

budget and performance management; and improved financial accountability and performance. The Service is identifying jobs for cost comparisons in FY 2002 and FY 2003 in administrative support; maintenance; architecture and engineering; natural resources; archeology; and motor vehicle operations. The NLC decided the NPS should commission a highly reputable outside source to study three issue areas that the Department has highlighted in its management reform plan: (1) personnel; (2) contracting; and (3) information technology. The Department has expressed interest in greater consolidation of these functions across all bureaus. Associate Director Masica will be responsible for this effort, in consultation with associate regional directors for administration.

Looking to the Future

The NLC broadened deliberations begun at its August meeting about the National Park System Advisory Board report, Rethinking the National Parks for the 21st Century. That report, available on the Web at www.nps.gov/policy/futurereport.htm calls on the National Park Service to: (1) develop its capacity as an educational institution; (2) sharpen its focus on the conservation of natural systems and biodiversity; (3) make sustainability integral to all park operations; (4) connect native and ancestral people to the parks; and (5) collaborate with other federal agencies, the states and local governments to help build a national network of parks and open spaces across America.

Associate Director Ring offered a power point presentation entitled “National Park Service Education Program In-Motion: Providing Memorable Experiences—A FY 2000 Retrospective.” The presentation depicted NPS education in its broadest sense and was meant to provoke thinking about the scope of the organization’s future activities in this area. The presentation can be viewed at www.nps.gov/experiences/. The NLC endorsed a series of self-education “seminars” for members on current

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education theory and practice. The seminars will take place prior to any additional decisions regarding future directions in NPS education. The content of these programs will be made available Service-wide. The first seminar has been scheduled for the February NLC meeting and will focus on “place-based” education. The NLC anticipates using scholars and experts outside the Service to broaden perspectives and learn about different approaches. The NLC education workgroup, co-chaired by Associate Directors Ring and Stevenson, will be expanded to include representatives from all regions and program areas.

Regional Director Rust facilitated a discussion about the Board’s recommendation that the Service be an “energetic advocate of outdoor recreation and open space conservation...[and] a catalyst to encourage collaboration among public and private park systems...to build a national network of parks and open spaces....” Chris Brown, Chief of the National Designations Division within the National Center for Recreation and Conservation, and Superintendent Marc Koenings also participated in the discussion, which revolved around three concerns: (1) a lack of clarity about the meaning of “recreation” to different people; (2) perceptions that the Service should do a more effective job in communicating that national parks are but one part of a spectrum of outdoor recreation resources; and (3) the mechanisms by which the NPS could serve as “catalyst” and “convenor” to encourage a broad coalition of partner organizations in creating a national network of parks, open space and protected lands. The NLC agreed that the next steps would be to stimulate Service-wide dialogue on these issues, to define a process, and to engage outside partners.

Regional Directors Reynolds and Schenk and Associate Director Soukup provided an update on strategies to implement the Board’s recommendations on “Protecting

Nature, Protecting Ourselves.” The NLC approved actions that ranged from developing the intellectual link between “wild life” (per the NPS 1916 Organic Act) and biodiversity, to taking a broad look at the extent of protection of the nation’s biodiversity in the present array of national parks, refuges, forests, and marine sanctuaries, and state, regional, county, and city parks. The long-term goal is to create a seamless system of linkages between these and other partners to provide public access to and protect the full spectrum of America’s natural heritage.

Regional Directors Arnberger and Wade reported on the extreme complexity of issues relating to the Board’s recommendation that the NPS “connect [native and ancestral] people with parks and other areas of special significance to strengthen their living cultures.” They offered, however, that the NPS should explore the kinds of understandings and relationships needed to do this, as well as any necessary and appropriate new authorities that would have to be vetted through the public review process. The NLC agreed that the workgroup should continue and broaden its dialogue on the issues and report back recommendations.

The Impairment Prohibition

The NLC revisited the Organic Act’s prohibition against impairment of park resources. Assistant Solicitor Molly Ross provided an overview of the legal aspects of the no-impairment mandate; Environmental Quality Division Chief Jake Hoogland provided examples of how the mandate is applied under various circumstances; and Chick Fagan of the Office of Policy reviewed progress on implementation. Director Mainella reiterated her commitment to protecting the parks against impairment. The NLC will schedule future updates as needed.

Future NLC Meetings

December 12-13

Washington, D.C.

February 20-21

Washington, D.C.
