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“The goals of the NPS Strategic Plan are to preserve park resources; provide for the public enjoyment and visitor experiences of parks; strengthen and preserve natural and cultural resources and enhance recreational opportunities managed by our partners; and ensure organizational effectiveness. Implementing the Strategic Plan is a primary goal of the National Leadership Council.”

—Fran Mainella, Director, National Park Service

Business Agenda

Meeting in San Diego on April 17 and 18, the National Leadership Council acted on a number of immediate and long-term National Park Service issues. It recommended revised goal targets for the NPS Strategic Plan (for a reporting period of FY 2004 to 2008); continued its review of last year’s National Park System Advisory Board report, *Rethinking the National Parks for the 21st Century*; discussed the broad range of programs administered in the Washington office; and set-up a communications process for formulating the FY 2004 NPS budget. Director Mainella reported on progress in meeting the President’s Management Agenda and reducing the maintenance backlog.

National Park Service Goals

The NLC approved and recommended to the Director, with modifications, a new set of goal targets for the FY 2003 NPS Strategic Plan. The revised targets were developed over the past year by NLC-led working groups (“Goal Groups”), and will be provided to parks and programs to use in preparing their strategic plans during the summer of 2002. After the new targets are recorded in the Performance Management Data System (PMDS), a revised draft Strategic Plan will be prepared for stakeholder review and comment. The final Strategic Plan is scheduled for completion in the spring of FY 2003, with parks and programs completing their final plans by September 2003. Director Mainella endorsed the goal set, and voiced strong backing for the effort. She said that the Strategic Plan is an essential tool for helping accomplish NPS purposes.

National Leadership Council Goals

Reviewing critical priorities and issues, the National Leadership Council identified three goals to focus its work: (1) implementing the Strategic Plan, which sets forth specific strategies to address basic mission requirements; (2) implementing the National Park System Advisory Board Report, which speaks to future organizational purposes and prospects; (3) and acting immediately on one of the Board’s principal recommendations—that the Park Service, working with its partners, help build “a national system of parks” across America. The NLC also gives priority oversight to implementing the President’s Management Agenda, reducing the maintenance backlog, and managing the Natural Resource Challenge and Land and Water Conservation Fund.

Implementing the National Park System Advisory Board Report

When the Advisory Board Report was issued last year, Director Mainella asked the NLC to assess its recommendations and propose appropriate follow-up activities.

Natural Resources

The first action from this review was a commitment to tackle a key park protection recommendation: that the NPS increase its focus on the conservation and restoration of marine habitats. Following NLC discussions, the Director called for developing NPS capacity for coastal conservation. It was agreed that the Service would search for common understanding among the fishing and scientific communities and coastal park managers, similar to the way U.S. Civil War park superintendents have gathered with

- National Leadership Council
- Fran Mainella
• Director
- Randy Jones
• Deputy Director
- Donald W. (Don) Murphy
• Deputy Director
- 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 Resources
• Stewardship and Science
- Richard (Dick) Ring
• Associate Director
• Park Operations and Education
- Terrel (Terry) Emmons
• Associate Director
• Professional Services
- Robert L. (Rob) 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

scholars, interpreters, park neighbors and enthusiasts. Associate Director for Natural Resource Stewardship and Science Mike Soukup was directed to lead the effort. He is assisted by Dr. Gary Davis, formerly Senior Scientist at Channel Islands National Park, now working from Washington to advance the strategy.

National Network of Parks

The NLC also embraced the Advisory Board's recommendation that the Park Service "should serve as a catalyst to encourage collaboration among public and private park and recreation systems at all levels – to build a national network of parks and open spaces across America." In San Diego, the NLC reviewed a draft three-year NLC vision and goals and objectives it had developed previously to guide implementation of this recommendation. (The Director reported on work to launch this effort in her April 2 all-employees memorandum). Building upon the NPS mission, goals, and core values, the vision statement reads:

"By 2005, the National Park Service, working with its partners, will be one of the leaders in connecting Americans with a seamless national network of parks, historic places, and open spaces that enhances the protection and understanding of America's heritage and resources and provides recreational opportunities for all."

The National Leadership Council affirms that "a seamless national network..." will help the Park Service accomplish its mission (see discussion of the network concept in *NLC Journal*, Volume 1 Number 7). A network of parks results from collaboration among partners who share common purposes of preserving resources and providing public access. Network partners extend their capacity to deliver services through cooperative activities that include joint planning and research; sharing information, resources, equipment and staff; joint management; and coordinated communications with the public. Resource protection is advanced by the physical connecting of parks to other protected areas, providing critical biological linkages among disparate habitats and helping preserve biological diversity.

Before developing its vision statement, the NLC engaged key stakeholders to learn about their thinking regarding the network idea and to develop ideas about steps to make it happen. (Deputy Director Don Murphy and NLC members John Reynolds, Marie Rust and Mike Soukup met with executives from The Conservation Fund, Trust for Public Land, and National Recreation and Park Association, Members of the National Park System Advisory Board, State and local park directors, and a university researcher knowledgeable about statewide Greenways development.)

The NLC concluded discussions on the network by agreeing to six-month work objectives. They include identifying key organizations and experts to help build a network; creating a broad-based steering committee; and planning a major national conference to bring together citizens, organizations, and partners and launch a public campaign to create a national network of parks.

Education

The Advisory Board Report declares that education is central to the mission of the National Park Service, and states that the Service can not accomplish its mission without a more coherent and comprehensive educational focus. It observes that parks are powerful educational resources, and the NPS has enormous potential to advance its purposes through education. It calls on the Park Service to become a more significant part of America's educational system, with budgets, policies and organizational structure reflecting this vision.

In response, the NLC has devoted a portion of each meeting since last fall to explore state of the art education theory and practice and to consider Park Service opportunities. The goal is to inform decision-making for devising a comprehensive 21st Century National Park Service education program. In discussions, the NLC has looked at Park Service history in education; the wide and diverse range of educational and interpretive activities the NPS conducts; the value of "asset mapping," of assessing and evaluating existing programs; the effectiveness of park "place-based" education; opportunities for building upon existing program successes;

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and the promise of enriching park education and interpretation by knowing more about audience learning styles. At the upcoming June NLC meeting, discussions will close with a presentation on media/technology and distance learning, and a synthesis of what's been learned to date. The NLC will then address proposed performance-based goals in education and a new century Action Program to accomplish them.

Washington Office Program Portfolio Review

With the goal to strengthen program operations, the National Leadership Council reviewed the 120-plus programs administered in the Washington Office, functions managed directly by the Associate Directors, as well as the Director. In examining the myriad functions in headquarters, the intent is to identify opportunities to eliminate duplication and streamline decision-making. No decisions were made to arrange programs differently than at present, though the functions were grouped according to their relatedness of purpose and/or similarity of process. Director Mainella asked NLC members to comment both on the review effort and program groupings, paying particular attention to growing demands and evolving opportunities in the areas of facility management; law enforcement; communications/public outreach; educa-

tion; and partnerships. The program review provides an excellent opportunity for NLC members to appreciate and learn more about the complexity of the existing Washington Office. This discussion will continue at the June meeting, with consideration as to whether any fine tuning of portfolios is necessary.

Budget Formulation

The NLC agreed to a communications process and schedule to address the formulation of next year's NPS budget (FY 2004). In the next few weeks, members will forward views about NPS strategic goals and budget priorities to Associate Director for Administration Sue Masica. The Comptroller will analyze these responses vis-a-vis the Operations Formulation System (OFS) and line item construction entries. The NLC will consider the analysis prior to an early-June budget formulation conference call.

Upcoming Meetings

The next three meeting dates and locales are:

- June 19-21 in Washington, D.C.
- September 17-19 at Acadia National Park (in conjunction with the National Park Foundation Board)
- November 19-21 in Reno, Nevada (in conjunction with the Association of National Park Rangers)

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