



United States Department of the Interior

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
P.O. BOX 37127
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20013-7127

IN REPLY REFER TO:
N1623(473)

AUG 15 1986

Your
National Park Service
Reminds You...



"TAKE PRIDE IN AMERICA"

Memorandum

To: Directorate and Field Directorate
From: Director, ~~William Penn Mott, Jr.~~
Subject: Wilderness Task Force Report

Transmitted to you herewith is a copy of the REPORT OF THE SERVICEWIDE TASK FORCE ON WILDERNESS POLICY AND MANAGEMENT (July 1986) for your review and comments.

In its comprehensive review of the National Park Service's and other Federal agencies' wilderness management policies and practices, the Wilderness Task Force was careful to address the issues identified in the NPS 12-Point Plan: The Actions. Its six major recommendations and Five-Year Action Plan (by Quarter Year Increments), with its more discrete and specific recommended actions, are the result.

As you will note, the Wilderness Task Force identified some non-systematic, inconsistent practices in our current wilderness management efforts. After you have reviewed the document, and sent in your comments on its findings and recommendations--including those dealing with your opinion of the feasibility of implementing the proposed Five-Year Action Plan--I believe we can prepare and adopt a five-year action program that will ensure a systematic and consistent approach to wilderness management throughout the System.

I feel encouraged, and am sure that you will, that the work of the Wilderness Task Force, as indicated in this report, has moved the Park Service further along the road of developing the best possible long-range strategy for protecting our wilderness areas.

Please return your comments to the Associate Director, Natural Resources (Attn: John Dennis) no later than September 19, 1986.

Attachment

REPORT OF THE SERVICEWIDE TASK FORCE
ON WILDERNESS POLICY AND MANAGEMENT

July 1986

INTRODUCTION

The 12-Point Plan of the National Park Service calls in general terms for several activities relating to management of legislated wilderness areas. The Action Plan for implementing the 12-Point Plan calls specifically for ensuring that designated, potential, and proposed wilderness areas in the National Park System are managed according to the principles of the Wilderness Act and, for Alaska, of the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act. In addition, the Action Plan also calls for, among other actions, specific steps to improve coordination and consistency in management of all wilderness areas; to monitor human use, air quality, and noise trends in wilderness areas; to develop an initiative on interpretation and public information regarding wilderness areas; and to develop a systematic resource management strategy for such areas.

SERVICEWIDE TASK FORCE ON WILDERNESS POLICY AND MANAGEMENT

To implement these action steps, the Service convened a task force of wilderness specialists from eight of the ten regions, two of the Service's WASO programs, the Bureau of Land Management, the Forest Service, the Fish and Wildlife Service, the Office of the Solicitor, the National Parks and Conservation Association, the Conservation Foundation, and the Audubon Society. Most task force members prepared a background evaluation of an assigned topic. Several members additionally led the group's discussion on an assigned topic, guided development of the group's recommendations on the topic, and drafted the corresponding section of the task force report.

In conducting these activities, the Task Force systematically reviewed the National Park Service Management Policies, major wilderness management issues as identified in 1985 by the Steering Committee of the First National Wilderness Management Workshop, and the intent of the Wilderness Act of 1964 as applied to the overall National Park Service mission. In addition, the Task Force examined wilderness management programs of the Forest Service, Fish and Wildlife Service, and Bureau of Land Management as examples of policies and practices developed and implemented by the other federal members of the National Wilderness Preservation System.

FINDINGS

The following statements constitute the principal findings of the Task Force:

- 1) The National Park Service's Management Policies statements (the "Blue Book") concerning wilderness management, e.g., Chapter VI and others, are consistent with the intent of the Wilderness Act of 1964 and are adequate as general policies for the management of wilderness areas in the National Park System, including those areas added by the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act of 1980. The organization, cross-referencing, and indexing of the Management Policies contain several short-comings with respect to providing ready access to all of the provisions that are applicable to wilderness.
- 2) Management of individual wilderness areas of the National Park System is not carried out on a systematic, consistent basis Servicewide. This lack of consistency is true for designated, potential, proposed, and defacto wilderness areas. The primary reasons for lack of consistent management appear to be:
 - varying interpretations of, or failure to follow, the Service's Management Policies;
 - no central coordination of Service wilderness management practices;
 - lack of guidance on specific management issues (e.g., aircraft use); and
 - insufficient exchange of information about wilderness management techniques among National Park System areas and among the different bureaus that manage wilderness areas.
- 3) Wilderness areas within the National Park System should be recognized as integral parts of, though managed differently than, the generic "backcountry."
- 4) Wilderness areas should be managed to preserve those biological and sociological values that specifically are wilderness dependent.
- 5) The set of recommendations developed in 1985 by the National Wilderness Management Workshop Steering Committee generally are applicable to the National Park System. These recommendations can serve as a basis for developing an effective 5-year wilderness management action program.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The task force developed six recommendations regarding management of National Park System wilderness areas. The task force also proposed a series of action steps for implementing each of those six recommendations, to be accomplished over a 5-year period in accordance with the schedule shown in Table 1. The recommendations are as follows:

A. Designation of Wilderness Coordinators

The presence of adequate policy statements together with inadequate consistency in their interpretation and application suggests a lack of coordination regarding the Service's management of its wilderness areas. Many of the more specific concerns addressed by the recommendations of this task force will not be resolved easily in the current situation of inadequate Servicewide coordination. To increase the effectiveness of policy application and to improve coordination and consistency Servicewide, the National Park Service should:

- 1) Designate a Washington Office official who is knowledgeable of, and sensitive to, wilderness management needs to serve as the Service's representative for issues of wilderness management (wilderness coordinator). Because most wilderness management concerns derive from activities conducted as a part of park operations, the task force suggested that the Washington Office coordinator be in the Park Operations directorate of the Washington Office.
- 2) Designate within each Regional Office an official to serve as the Region's wilderness coordinator. The task force suggested that, because of the nature of wilderness management concerns, the Regional coordinator also be a member of the Park Operations directorate.
- 3) Assign to each WASO and Regional Office wilderness coordinator the responsibility to:
 - ° Advocate proper and effective wilderness management practices.
 - ° Assess Servicewide/Regionwide wilderness use and management issues and policies and propose needed solutions and policy changes.
 - ° Advise in solving specific management action problems and promote consistency among parks/regions.
 - ° Provide review and evaluation of existing wilderness policy and recommend changes that may be needed at such future time that a complete review and revision of the National Park Service Management Policies is conducted.
 - ° Disseminate information within the Service.
 - ° Sponsor interagency coordination and sharing of wilderness management information.
 - ° Develop workload factors and standards for a wilderness management section of the Operations Evaluation Manual and compile a roster of wilderness management experts available to serve on Operations Evaluations teams.

B. Management Techniques Appropriate for Wilderness

The Service's actual management of wilderness in some cases misses the intent of the wilderness designation because of inconsistency in applying Service policies, inadequate plans for managing specific wilderness areas, lack of application of available wilderness management techniques, or inadequate development of new management techniques. To improve its techniques for managing wilderness, the Service should:

- 1) Reaffirm National Park Service dedication to, and application of, concerned and sensitive wilderness management and use practices.
- 2) Reassess, from the wilderness perspective, all actual and potential threats to the wilderness resources of park areas having designated, potential, recommended, or study "wilderness" to assure that resource threats and their mitigation, use monitoring, baseline monitoring, and research needs are identified, analyzed, and given proper prioritization in park Resource Management Plan project statements and five year programming sheets.
- 3) Examine and reassess existing wilderness management and use practices in each park having wilderness to ensure that only those practices which require wilderness for their existence are permitted to be conducted. The goal of this examination is to ensure:
 - that each park with wilderness maintains a wilderness management plan either as a separate document or as a component of an appropriate other management plan, such as a resource management plan, back-country management plan, or visitor use plan;
 - that all visitor uses permitted within wilderness are restricted to those which specifically require a condition of wilderness for their performance and that such uses are managed to conform with the philosophy and directions of the Wilderness Act and the implementing National Park Service Management Policies;
 - that all administrative practices and uses of equipment in wilderness comply with the "minimum tool" concept as expressed in wilderness law and National Park Service Management Policies, in recognition that reliance on economic efficiency, alone, to guide decision-making may result in resource management and maintenance practices that are disruptive to wilderness character and experience. Of special concern are Servicewide inconsistencies and lack of control in use of aircraft, mechanized/motorized equipment, cabins, caches, etc.;
 - that all existing or proposed commercially offered visitor services in wilderness are consistent with the purposes expressed in the Wilderness Act and are treated consistently in the Service's Management Policies, the upcoming Special Uses Guidelines, and concession practices and contracts. Such commercial services must truly

contribute to achieving the types of visitor experiences envisioned by the Wilderness Act and meet the "necessary and appropriate" test of the Concessions Policy Act;

- that all ongoing and proposed research projects conducted in wilderness areas are truly necessary from a wilderness management or use perspective, that there is no alternative to their being conducted in wilderness to be successful, and that research involving manipulation of resources or establishment of intrusive physical sampling stations or permanently marked plots must be given special attention; and
- that existing management actions and policies being applied to "recommended" and "potential" wilderness lands are adjusted to make them more consistent with approved wilderness practices in expectation of eventual designation of these lands as wilderness and of their visitor and park uses as wilderness uses.

C. Wilderness Uses and Capacity Determinations

The nature and amount of use of wilderness determine whether or not that wilderness is being maintained in true wilderness condition. To ensure that wilderness use remains within the limits of the wilderness condition, the National Park Service should:

- 1) Ensure that specific, measureable wilderness management objectives are established for each approved use of each wilderness area.
- 2) Reassess all existing uses found in each wilderness area, including overnight and day uses, noncommercial and commercial activities, and administrative practices, and, using guidance available from the Special Use Guidelines, Aviation Guidelines, and other available guidance, eliminate any uses that are found to be incompatible with wilderness philosophy and purpose.
- 3) Recognizing that many solutions to overuse problems already exist, ensure, through the efforts of the WASO and Regional coordinators and the proposed National Wilderness Coordinating Group, that information about these solutions is shared with all National Park Service and other bureau wilderness managers.
- 4) Adopt the Forest Service developed "Limits of Acceptable Change" or similar methodology for determining wilderness condition standards, condition monitoring practices, and thresholds of use-induced change above which management action must be taken, recognizing that the standards and thresholds developed by this methodology must necessarily include considerations of physical, natural, and social characteristics of the wilderness.

- 5) Adopt computer technology and networking to support real time wilderness use permit decision-making and to provide applicants for permits with information on availability and characteristics of alternative trails and campsites.
- 6) Sponsor research on inobtrusive methods for monitoring visitor use characteristics and visitor attitudes and concerns regarding wilderness use management practices.

D. Education and Training of Wilderness Management Personnel

The Service's career and seasonal management and staff personnel generally are knowledgeable about the mission and ethic of the Service but in some cases lack specific knowledge and/or understanding of wilderness management ethics, philosophy, and techniques. This lack leads to inability of these personnel to translate concepts into effective wilderness management practices, an inability that can be eliminated with encouragement, education, and information exchange. To achieve this encouragement, education, and information exchange, the Service should:

- 1) Inventory and document training needs of Service personnel with respect to wilderness concerns using the individual development plan process and other appropriate survey mechanisms.
- 2) Develop a comprehensive list of training sources for wilderness concerns and encourage Service personnel to make the broadest possible use of those sources.
- 3) Develop training materials to meet the identified individual development plan needs that cannot be met from other sources. Give special attention to producing materials which deal with the broad area of capacity and concentrated use, including the topic of "Limits of Acceptable Change".
- 4) Revitalize the in-Service wilderness training program by focusing on the values of wilderness, its legal concepts, its ethics, and uses that are dependent on wilderness.
- 5) Sponsor or co-sponsor workshops and other programs nationally, regionally, and locally to promote the sharing of ideas, concerns, and techniques relating to wilderness management.
- 6) Include by specific mention all appropriate wilderness management responsibilities in position descriptions, performance standards, work plans, and other documents dealing with personnel duties.
- 7) Identify, on a Servicewide basis, management and staff positions which would benefit from specific training about wilderness.
- 8) Encourage the attendance of wilderness personnel at meetings sponsored by educational institutions, special interest groups, and other agencies as a way of meeting wilderness training needs.

- 9) Conduct, in parks with designated wilderness, potential wilderness, or proposed wilderness, in-house training programs for all personnel in topics covering, at a minimum, wilderness values, ethics, law, and use.
- 10) Provide each wilderness manager a set of key references and an annotated bibliography of wilderness materials.

E. Educating the Public

Recreational uses of, and needs for, natural environments are increasing in the United States. The popularity of National Park System areas for satisfying these uses and needs will grow as the rate of use grows. Since wilderness management is primarily people management, it is essential that public understanding of wilderness includes respect for the resource, an ability to exercise self-restraint in demanding to use it, and willingness to adhere to appropriate user techniques when using it. The major challenge in developing this understanding lies in the promotion and perpetuation of wilderness values and ethics while avoiding activities that may serve to advertise areas and unduly stimulate a demand for use in excess of what is manageable. In developing a public education program that responds to these guidelines, the National Park Service should:

- 1) Develop and widely disseminate information on the role of wilderness in society, on its value to human beings, and on the relative rarity of wilderness in our increasingly urbanized country.
- 2) Develop an informational brochure for the wilderness user that shows the role of wilderness legislation in the management programs of each of the four bureaus which manage wilderness, emphasizing the consistency of wilderness management practices among the four while pointing out the many generic differences that separate their overall management missions.
- 3) Participate in Secretary Hodel's "Take Pride in America" initiative as a means of spreading wilderness philosophy and ethics across the country.
- 4) Provide, in appropriate formats and at appropriate places, the public with information on the overall National Park Service wilderness mission and include in that information specific statements regarding management zoning and the differences between back-country and wilderness with respect to management practices.
- 5) Sponsor visitor perception research to determine the efficacy of the public information program.

- 6) Increase existing interpretive activities to provide wilderness messages to users and to rebuild and expand environmental programs for schools and other educational groups.
- 7) Educate, train, and obtain the cooperation of outreach groups such as Outward Bound, the Boy Scouts of America, conservation groups, service clubs, and other organizations to instill, transfer, and exhibit the wilderness philosophy and ethic.
- 8) Enlist private sector support and cooperative assistance in using consumer and public service advertising to provide public education on minimum impact wilderness use philosophy and techniques.

F. Interagency Coordination and Consistency

Units of the National Wilderness Preservation System managed by the several federal agencies are inherently managed differently due to basic differences in agency missions. Some activities that are resource consumptive are allowed in some wildernesses (e.g., hunting, mining and mineral extraction, timber harvesting, grazing) but not in others. None the less, there are a number of management situations in which interagency coordination is not only possible, but necessary and beneficial for wilderness preservation. Such coordination, whether with respect to visitor use management, resource management, or information dissemination, generally does not now occur on a formal basis and even on an informal basis often is inadequate.

Lack of management consistency is both an inter- and intra- agency problem. For a variety of reasons, management of national park wilderness (or proposed and recommended wilderness) is not consistent among National Park Service regions, nor is there strong Servicewide guidance. These conditions of inter- and intra- agency inconsistencies are a result of inconsistent application of, rather than weaknesses in, the National Park Service's Management Policies. The Service can reduce deficiencies in intra-agency consistency by adopting other recommendations contained in this report. To reduce deficiencies in, and capitalize on opportunities for, interagency consistency, the Service should:

- 1) Seek the establishment of a National Wilderness Coordinating Group composed of managing agency representatives and assigned the tasks of facilitating consistency where possible in agency wilderness policies and management applications, encouraging common management solutions and joint public information programs, and emphasizing the exchange of information, training, research findings, and personnel among its member agencies. In sponsoring such activities, the proposed National Wilderness Coordinating Group will reduce duplication of effort, increase fiscal savings, and make those few necessary differences in the management programs of the different agencies be more understandable to the public.
- 2) Seek specific cooperative activities with the managers of all wilderness units adjacent to each National Park System wilderness area for the purpose of:

- developing interagency management planning teams; and
 - adopting joint management practices (such as common maps, regulations, permit procedures, etc.) for adjacent wilderness areas where such joint practices make management more efficient and understandable and are compatible with the various enabling and authorizing statutes for the wildernesses.
- 3) Seek consistency in agency curricula for training of wilderness personnel and develop joint training programs where possible.
 - 4) Communicate across regional boundaries and with other agencies to promote consistency, prevent duplication of research effort, and encourage cooperative approaches to problem solving.

In actively engaging in the types of interagency cooperative activities outlined above, the Service does not need to respond at this time to other recommendations of the Steering Group of the First National Wilderness Workshop regarding adjustment of unit boundaries, encouraging consistency merely for the sake of consistency, or seeking consistent management of authorized non-conforming uses.

PRIORITY OF ACTION

The recommended priority for implementing these suggested actions is derived from considering what steps are dependent on what other steps, what steps can be done with existing dollar and personnel capabilities, and what steps require additional resources. The highest priority clearly is to designate the coordinating officials in the Washington and Regional Offices, for it is these officials who will ensure that the rest of the program is undertaken. The next highest priority is to develop and conduct the various employee training activities, for without this training effort Service personnel will be less than well equipped to respond to the other suggested initiatives. A parallel, equally high priority is to encourage development and implementation of the suggested National Wilderness Coordinating Group, for this group will bear the burden of stimulating more effective interagency coordination and cooperation. The next level of priority will be developing the public information materials and programs, for without public understanding and support, the succeeding level of priority, the strengthening of use management and resource protection efforts, will be unattainable.

SUMMARY

The National Park Service convened a task force of Service and other agency personnel to review the Service's wilderness management policies and practices and to suggest opportunities for improvement. The task force found that the policies, per se, are adequate and suggested an action plan involving six categories for improving the Service's management of its wilderness areas: policy coordination, wilderness management techniques, use and capacity determinations, training of personnel, public education, and interagency coordination. The task force concluded that the essential steps in its suggested action plan could be carried out over a five-year period and proposed a schedule of activities and recommendations for responsible officials that would permit the Service to accomplish the suggested plan.

TABLE 1. NATIONAL PARK SERVICE WILDERNESS POLICY AND MANAGEMENT: A FIVE YEAR ACTION PLAN
(BY QUARTER YEAR INCREMENTS)

Recommended Action	Responsible Official	Year 1				Year 2				Year 3				Year 4				Year 5			
		1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
<u>A. Designation of Coordinators</u>																					
1. Designate WASO key person	Director					x															
2. Designate Regional key people	Regional Director																				
3. Designate Park key people	Superintendent																				
4. Promulgate responsibilities of key people	Director																				
<u>B. Management Practices</u>																					
1. Reaffirm purpose	Director																				
2. Ensure wilderness needs are identified in park RMP	Superintendent									x	-----			ongoing	-----						x
3. Reassess wilderness use and management practices	Director									x	x										
	Regional Director																				
	Superintendent													x	-----			ongoing	-----		x
4. Develop and maintain an inventory of influences originating internal or external to park wildernesses that threaten wilderness values	Director													x	-----			ongoing	-----		x

TABLE 1 (CONT.). NATIONAL PARK SERVICE WILDERNESS POLICY AND MANAGEMENT: A FIVE YEAR ACTION PLAN
(BY QUARTER YEAR INCREMENTS)

Recommended Action	Responsible Official	Year 1				Year 2				Year 3				Year 4				Year 5			
		1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
<u>C. Use and Capacity</u>																					
1. Develop inventory of all parks having designated, recommended, or potential wilderness	Director				x																
2. Establish objectives for each approved use	Superintendent								x												
3. Eliminate incompatible uses	Superintendent								x	-----											x
4. Share use management information	Director				x					-----	ongoing	-----									x
	Regional Director				x					-----	ongoing	-----									x
	Superintendent				x					-----	ongoing	-----									x
5. Implement and conduct a "Limits of Acceptable Change" type use management and mitigation/restoration methodology	Director				x	---			x												
	Regional Director				x	-----				ongoing	-----									x	
	Superintendent								x	-----	ongoing	-----									x
6. Implement use of computers in backcountry permitting process	Director				x																
	Regional Director				x	-x															
	Superintendent								x	-----		x									
7. Conduct research on visitor use and attitude characteristics	Regional Director				x	-----				ongoing	-----									x	
	Superintendent				x	-----				ongoing	-----									x	

TABLE 1 (CONT.). NATIONAL PARK SERVICE WILDERNESS POLICY AND MANAGEMENT: A FIVE YEAR ACTION PLAN
(BY QUARTER YEAR INCREMENTS)

Recommended Action	Responsible Official	Year 1				Year 2				Year 3				Year 4				Year 5			
		1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
<u>D. Training of Personnel</u>																					
1. Inventory training needs	Director		x					x				x				x				x	
2. Develop and promote the use of a list of training sources	Director Regional Director	x				x	-----			ongoing	-----									x	
3. Develop specific training materials	Director	x	-----					x													
4. Develop statement of wilderness values	Director	x																			
5. Sponsor/Cosponsor workshops	Director Regional Director Superintendent	x						x				x				x				x	
6. Insert wilderness reference in personnel and management documents	Director Regional Director Superintendent	x				x		x		x		x		x		x		x		x	

(BY QUARTER YEAR INCREMENTS)

Recommended Action	Responsible Official	Year 1				Year 2				Year 3				Year 4				Year 5				
		1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	
<u>E. Educating the Public</u>																						
1. Cooperatively develop and disseminate information about the role, value, and rarity of wilderness	Director				x	-----					ongoing	-----					-----				x	
	Regional Director				x	-----					ongoing	-----					-----				x	
2. Develop a brochure on similarities and differences of wilderness management in the four management bureaus	Director								x													
3. Incorporate the wilderness message into the "Take Pride in America" program	Director								x													
4. Develop and install interpretational materials regarding the NPS wilderness management mission and strategy	Director					x	-----					ongoing	-----					-----				x
	Regional Director								x	-----					ongoing	-----					-----	x
5. Conduct research on the efficacy of the interpretation effort	Regional Director													x	-----					ongoing	-----	x

(BY QUARTER YEAR INCREMENTS)

Recommended Action	Responsible Official	Year 1				Year 2				Year 3				Year 4				Year 5				
		1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	
<u>E. Educating the Public (cont.)</u>																						
6. Extend wilderness interpretive program to school and other educational groups	Superintendent					x				ongoing												x
7. Extend wilderness infor- mation to the public via outreach groups	Regional Director Superintendent					x				ongoing												x
						x				ongoing												x
8. Seek private sector sponsorship of public service advertising about minimum impact use techniques	Director Regional Director Superintendent					x				ongoing												x
						x				ongoing												x
						x				ongoing												x
<u>F. Interagency Coordination</u>																						
1. Seek establishment of an interagency National Wilderness Coordinating Group	Director								x													
2. Utilize interagency coordination on a site by site basis to improve overall wilderness management	Regional Director Superintendent					x				ongoing												x
						x				ongoing												x

TABLE 2. LIST OF PARTICIPANTS, NATIONAL PARK SERVICE WILDERNESS POLICY AND MANAGEMENT TASK FORCE (JANUARY, 1986)

<u>Name of Participant</u>	<u>Agency Affiliation</u>
Carol Aten	National Park Service, WASO
Ed Bloedel	U.S. Forest Service, WASO
Richard Briceland	National Park Service, WASO
John Chapman	National Park Service, RMRO
Keith Corrigan	Bureau of Land Management, WASO
Dave Porter	Bureau of Land Management, WASO
Stuart Croll	Isle Royale National Park, MWR
John Dennis	National Park Service, WASO
Brock Evans	National Audubon Society
Jim Gillett	Fish and Wildlife Service, WASO
Albert Greene	National Park Service, WASO
Bob Jacobsen	Luray, Virginia, MAR
Jon Jarvis	Crater Lake National Park, PNR
Marv Jensen	Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks, WR
Laura Loomis	National Parks and Conservation Association
Tom Lubbert	National Park Service, SWRO
Ken Mabery	National Park Service, SWRO
Michael Mantell	The Conservation Foundation
Dave Mihalic	Great Smoky Mountains National Park, SER
John Reed	National Park Service, WASO
Karen Simpson	National Park Service, WASO
Theodore Sudia	National Park Service, WASO
Dave Watts	U.S. Department of the Interior, WASO
Bill Welch	National Park Service, ARO