



# United States Department of the Interior

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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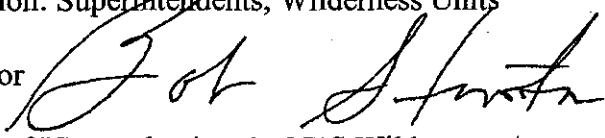
IN REPLY REFER TO:

N1623(2460)

**FEB 27 1998**

## Memorandum

To: Regional Directors  
Attention: Superintendents, Wilderness Units

From: Director 

Subject: Status of "Strengthening the NPS Wilderness Accountability System" Initiative  
**Reply Due: May 15, 1998**

The National Park Service (NPS) maintains the Nation's, and in fact the world's, largest inventory of wilderness with over 43 million acres of designated wilderness and an additional 6 million acres identified as "recommended" or "potential" wilderness. Wilderness also comprises over 58 percent of the total area administered by the NPS and, as such, has a significant influence on the Service's natural and cultural resource management programs.

On March 28, 1997, former Director Kennedy signed a memo directing your attention to the improvement of the Service's wilderness accountability system. By re-issuing the elements of former Director Kennedy's memorandum, I want to take this opportunity to reaffirm the Service's commitment to the preservation of wilderness and emphasize my own personal commitment to improving the Service's record of managing this resource.

Accordingly, I would appreciate your attention to the following four actions intended to strengthen the Service's wilderness accountability system.

First, wilderness management should be added as a component within one of the five "**Critical Results**" elements within the performance plans of the park superintendents who administer any wilderness including "designated," "proposed," "potential," "suitable," "recommended," and/or "study area" wilderness units. I encourage you to integrate the following language into an appropriate place within the five Critical Results elements of Part I. Performance Plan of Form DI-2002, United States Department of the Interior Employee Performance Plan and Results Report so that it is in place by the next rating season (1998-99):

"Wilderness values are protected through an approved wilderness management plan, key park staff responsible for wilderness management are identified, and an effective "minimum requirement" decision making process is implemented."

Second, if wilderness management is not already clearly identified within the "Major Duties" portion of current position descriptions (Optional Form 8) for positions having direct accountability for the management of these resources, I encourage you to integrate language similar to the following into these PD's:

"Protects Wilderness Values. The incumbent administers designated or potential wilderness to ensure that wilderness values are not adversely impacted. They ensure that the park is operating with an approved backcountry and/or wilderness management plan which: (1) clearly identifies key park staff responsible for the protection of the wilderness resource and (2) establishes a system to determine the "minimum requirement" for actions otherwise prohibited within wilderness. The incumbent ensures that wilderness resources are managed in keeping with the letter and spirit of the Wilderness Act."

Third, when recruiting for park positions with significant wilderness responsibilities, the vacancy announcement should include a KSA element which identifies these responsibilities. This requirement also applies to central office positions with significant wilderness responsibilities.

Fourth, integrate the management and protection of wilderness into the individual strategic plan developed for your park in response to the Government Performance and Results Act requirements. In preparing measurable activities/processes concerning wilderness in your strategic plan, I encourage you to consider the following:

- As soon as possible, but no later than the year 2002, the park has a current, approved wilderness management plan meeting the criteria identified in Director's Order # 41 Wilderness Preservation and Management.
- The park has implemented an effective system to assess the "minimum requirement" for all actions affecting wilderness, including NPS administrative activities.
- The park has effectively integrated responsibility for wilderness management into appropriate position descriptions and performance reports and accountability for wilderness is clearly identified within the park's organizational structure.

The implementation of the above wilderness accountability measures will also be used to generate the information needed for the Secretary's Annual Report on the status of the National Wilderness Preservation System per the requirements of the Wilderness Act.

As a final request, and since it has been almost 1 year from the release of the original memorandum on this subject, I would appreciate receiving from each Region a brief report describing their accomplishments within each of the four elements identified above. I am very interested in assessing the progress we are making in improving the Service's stewardship of the wilderness resource. Please have this information to the Associate Director, Park Operations and Education, Maureen Finnerty, by May 15, 1998.

Thank you for your attention to the re-issuance of this directive and for your continued protection of the Service's wilderness resource.