

CLEAR TEXT:
WASO Ranger Activities'
Electronic Newsletter

September 24, 1993

VISITOR MANAGEMENT - RESOURCE PROTECTION ASSESSMENT PROGRAM (VRAP)

Almost a standard feature of NPS guidelines or operation evaluations is the recommendation that parks undertake a needs assessment of a particular job function. Very little, if any, guidance has been provided to chief rangers as to what a good needs assessment should include. Jim Brady therefore asked a small group of Service employees, including chief rangers, a park superintendent, and regional and Washington staff, to develop an effective protection needs assessment program comparable to FIREPRO. The group was also charged with the development of a program which will link protection needs with the Service budget system through the identification and justification of prioritized staffing and support needs. Chris Andress, regional chief ranger from MARO, is chairing a parallel work group which will explore a major overhaul of the protection budget process in more detail. More on this later.

The group met recently, examined various law enforcement needs assessments, and found that they ranged in size from a single page to over 120 pages. Very little consistency was found in the content, format, or conclusions. The needs assessment group reached two early conclusions:

- * Needs assessments should address all protection jobs, not just law enforcement.
- * Needs assessments should be formulated following an objective process that uses available park data to determine the parks protection workload. An objective process would remove the subjective rhetoric that often accompanies our appeals and replace it with a defensible methodology.

VRAP is the name that has been given to this objective needs assessment process. VRAP stands for the Visitor Management - Resource Protection Assessment Program. VRAP will examine all protection jobs, except those in resource management and structural fire, and determine the staffing needs for each. In its current form, VRAP will include all aspects of law enforcement, natural resource protection, cultural resource protection, EMS, SAR, fee collection, and other protection occupations. VRAP will also identify clerical, supervisory, management, and support staffing needs as well as support funding.

The objectives established for VRAP are:

- * To develop an objective process to evaluate park protection operations.
- * To provide a process which can be used to compare levels and staffing between parks of similar size and complexity.
- * To establish a process that is easily understood and accepted by the parks, regions, and WASO; by budget officials in the Department and OMB; and by Congress.

The process begins with the completion of a park profile. The profile asks for data readily available in each park - visitation, geographic data (size, miles of roads, trails, rivers, acres of lakes), law enforcement data, EMS data, SAR data, etc. Analysis has shown that it takes about eight hours to fill out such a profile.

The data from the profile is then used in more than 34 different staffing tables. The total staffing allocated by each table is added up to give the total needed by the park to operate its protection function. In most cases, this total will exceed the park's current staffing allocation, but the process could also identify parks with excess FTEs which could be reallocated.

Three tests of VRAP have been completed and another test is scheduled in November. Each test includes parks that cover the gamut of types found in the NPS - large, small, urban, rural, natural, cultural, varying jurisdictions, etc. The tests are being conducted to refine the staffing tables and to see if the basic concept will work on a national basis. Thirty parks have assisted the needs assessment group in testing VRAP. They have been unanimous in their conclusion that VRAP is worth pursuing on a national basis.

At this stage, the data from the park profile is being compared manually with the staffing tables, but we plan to computerize VRAP and use it as a major component of the protection budget development process. Participants in the test feel that VRAP is one of the best and most defensible methods available to objectively measure the protection workload at each park. For more information, contact any of the following members of the VRAP team:

- * Larry Hakel, Shenandoah
- * Paula Rooney, Saguaro
- * Scott Erickson, Yosemite
- * Bob Dittolla, North Atlantic Region
- * Joe Smith, WASO Ranger Activities
- * Dick Martin, WASO Ranger Activities
- * Dale Dickerhoof, WASO Ranger Activities
- * Jay Wells, Wrangell - St. Elias
- * Pat Reed, Chickamauga - Chattanooga

[Prepared by Larry Hakel, CR, SHEN]

FIELD NOTES

Southwest Region

On August 25th, the state of New Mexico granted peace officer status to designated NPS law enforcement officers duty stationed in New Mexico. This authority came with certain restrictions. NPS law enforcement officers are authorized to enforce state laws, including the power of arrest, on lands outside of NPS jurisdiction, but only when on duty or traveling incident to official duties or at the request of the New Mexico state police. The authority is only to be exercised in the event that "they observe a SERIOUS act or violation"; this has been interpreted to mean that rangers with such authority may not enforce most traffic violations outside of NPS jurisdiction. Planning is underway to train New Mexico state police officers on this new authority. Guidelines will also be developed. Efforts are currently underway to obtain similar authority for rangers in Texas. [Tony Bonano, RCR, RAD/SWRO]

Coulee Dam

David Stiegelmeier, the ranger at Coulee Dam who was in need of leave donations, has qualified for disability retirement, so he no longer needs such contributions. [Charlotte Munson, PNRO]

PARK EXCHANGE

Golden Gate

The Army is willing to transfer a crash/rescue truck (airport or heliport operations) to the Service. The vehicle is in very good condition. The park may also be able to acquire several Type I structural fire engines. If you're interested in the crash/rescue truck or would like more info on the Type I engines, contact J.R. Tomasovic at 415-556-0245 extension 312. [J.R. Tomasovic, GOGA]

Big Cypress

The park has five brand new red plastic Coleman lantern cases for Coleman gas lanterns #290-#295. If you're interested, contact Noreen Allison at 813-695-2000 extension 41. [Bill Carroll, CR, BICY]

PARK VACANCIES AND OPM REGISTER OPENINGS

Petersburg

Resource management specialist (GS-025-9/11). No position number or closing date have yet been specified. The incumbent supervises one full-time permanent GS-9, two seasonal co-op students, some interns and an SCA - and, if funds allow, a full-time permanent GS-7. The park is in the process of developing an Atlas-based GIS system, and one of the incumbent's primary duties will be to get this system up and running. The position provides a great opportunity for someone with solid experience in GIS and natural resource management to diversify into cultural resource management because the park's natural resources literally grow right out of its cultural resources (its earthworks). The incumbent will be involved in hydrology, forestry, soil science, horticulture, archeology and other kindred disciplines, and will work with contract researchers. The park also has training money. Contact the chief ranger (804-732-3966) or personnelist (804-732-4160) for further information. [Mike Hill, Superintendent, PETE]

Golden Gate

Emergency services coordinator (GS-025-9). Position number GOGA-94-01. Closes on 10/12/93. The incumbent works under the assistant chief for public safety in a specialized group that supports field operations within the park's visitor and resource protection division. The emergency services coordinator handles the SAR, EMS, physical fitness, CISD and disaster programs, and interacts on a daily basis with the Presidio fire department's paramedic service, the city of San Francisco, and Marin and San Mateo counties. The incumbent will establish new programs for the Presidio and Golden Gate, so he or she should have above average writing and research skills. Required occupancy is being proposed for the position, but has not yet been confirmed. [J.R. Tomasovic, Assistant Chief for Public Safety, GOGA/PRES]

CLEAR TEXT is the bi-weekly electronic newsletter of the Ranger Activities Division in WASO. It is distributed via cc:Mail to all ranger training and operations centers (FLETC, HOAL, STMA, NIFC), regional office ranger divisions, park chief rangers, and other interested parties.

Short submissions for the last three sections of the report are welcome and encouraged. The deadline for submissions for the next issue is October 7, 1993.

If you would like to get CLEAR TEXT but don't currently receive it, please advise Ranger Activities via a short cc:Mail message. Any office may receive it, including districts and subdistricts within a park. PLEASE pass it along to others in your division and park.

Prepared by WASO Division of Ranger Activities

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