

The Journal of the Association of National Park Rangers

RANGER

Stewards for parks, visitors, and each other

Fitness: It's more than just physical



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Spring
2021

Spring's a time to set personal fitness goals

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Welcome to the ANPR family & Kudos

On the cover: That's one way to stay fit: Ranger Mark Foster rock hops in Joshua Tree National Park. For safety and because it's a climbing park, JOTR rangers in the field are allowed to wear approach shoes, which provide extra grip in the rocky desert environment. Photo: NPS / Kelsey Graczyk

IN THIS ISSUE OF RANGER MAGAZINE, WE TACKLE THE IDEA OF "FITNESS." As a runner, and a longtime track and field and cross-country high school coach, this topic immediately motivated me. I began visualizing training plans, interval workouts and lactate thresholds. I reminisced about cycling Saguaro National Park East, hiking in the Colorado National Monument, backpacking through the Great Smoky Mountains National Park, kayaking the waters surrounding Kenai Fjords National Park. The idea of "fitness" and these great outdoor places just fits, right?

But this issue of Ranger magazine is about more than that. Try to restructure what "fitness" actually means among the National Park Service ranks. Physical wellness is indeed the cornerstone of being fit, and NPS employees should, ideally, be models of physical fitness. There is no better way to promote the part of NPS' mission that extols the value of outdoor recreation than to lead by example. For some, like Grand Canyon Park Ranger Nick Mann, being physically fit is a requirement of the job. He's outside – a lot. But not every National Park Service employee has that kind of job description, so we asked him to provide some basics to get anyone within the NPS ranks started.

After hearing his presentation at ANPR's Ranger Rendezvous 43.0 on the dangerous ramifications of fatigue, we asked retired NPS Operational Leadership program manager Mark Herberger to share even more statistics. Those late nights you've been having? They are taking a toll. The research Herberger shares can help motivate you to stay mentally sharp – on the job and at home.

The Office of Public Health, in continuing its yearlong celebration of its centennial partnership with the NPS, shares with us ways to become health ambassadors. This doesn't mean you have to become the next great Spartan race warrior or Ironman champion; rather, it encourages a balanced appreciation of physical fitness, nature, cultural diversity and environmental issues to help spread the word – and the attitude – that comes with being wholly healthy. As OPH intern Michael Mojarro aptly puts it, "being a health ambassador is more of a mindset." That's what its Power of Parks for Health initiative is all about.

We can't thank financial consultant Ann Vanderslice enough for sharing some of her observations from decades of helping federal employees retire in a "fiscally fit" manner. Vanderslice, owner of Retirement Planning Strategies in Lakewood, Colo., specializes in working with NPS employees, often in remote areas. See what she has to share on pages 8 and 9.

And finally, we have but this one world to call home, and John Morris, retired National Park Service interpretive ranger in Alaska, has long been a protector of it. He shares ways in which NPS employees can, at a very grassroots level, affect change so that we leave this planet more fit for our grandchildren.

So, as spring approaches, consider this the issue of Ranger in which you inventory where your current fitness is now and where it could be upped a notch or two. We need strong bodies and minds, a vibrant planet and the sensitivity and awareness around us to enjoy it with each other.

— Melissa DeVaughn
Ranger magazine editor

RANGER

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In meeting these purposes, the Association provides education and other training to develop and/or improve the knowledge and skills of park professionals and those interested in the stewardship of national parks; provides a forum for discussion of common concerns of all employees; and provides information to the public.

The membership of ANPR is comprised of individuals who are entrusted with and committed to the care, study, explanation and/or protection of those natural, cultural and recreational resources included in the National Park System, and persons who support these efforts.

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ANPR priorities: Push for positive change

President's message

— Paul R. Anderson

DURING MY 25 YEARS IN

ALASKA, spring was always a season for hope and excitement.

After a long, cold, dark winter, the lengthening days, bright

sunshine and growing warmth instilled a positive feeling of new beginnings and the potential adventures to come. This spring is the same, even though the winter in Arizona was much different from the winter in Denali. We have endured the darkest days and a whole new world of possibilities confronts us! Many of us have received our COVID-19 vaccines, and the rest of us will receive them in the next few months. The new administration is once again focused on issues important to us — racial equity and justice, climate change, protecting our environment and public lands, appreciation for our civil servants, and infrastructure repair. After four long years, the NPS will once again have a permanent, Senate-confirmed director. The NPS is now positioned to move forward in our mission to protect our park areas unimpaired, for the enjoyment and benefit of this and future generations.

The ANPR Board developed a set of priorities that we hope the new Administration will work to achieve, and we sent a letter explaining our reasoning to the Biden Transition Team. Those priorities included:

- quickly filling key leadership positions, including a Senate-confirmed NPS director;
- overhauling the NPS recruitment and hiring process for both seasonal and permanent employees;



- reinvigorating the NPS Employee Development Program;
- reviewing the complex role of NPS commissioned rangers and US Park Police, and supporting the full range of duties required for the preservation of park resources and education of park visitors;
- continuing to support the NPS Housing Initiative;
- supporting the fair and nonpolitical implementation of the Great American Outdoors Act and allocation of Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF).

The Board will continue to work with our members and the new NPS leadership to address these priorities over the next four years.

With widespread COVID-19 vaccinations, more consistent COVID-19 protocols, and a year of experience managing our parks during the pandemic, I hope that the coming spring and summer seasons will be safer and less stressful for everyone. It has been a tough year. I hope that going forward the information we are sharing in this issue of *Ranger* will help you achieve and maintain the fitness required to safely and successfully navigate these difficult and stressful times. Thank you for your service to the parks and to the American people! Stay safe and stay healthy!

— Paul R. Anderson
ANPR President



The case for Physical fitness

We all know it's important to be healthy; but how can we make it a priority amid the busyness of everyday life?

Editor's note: Part of the National Park Service's mission is "to extend the benefits of natural and cultural resource conservation and outdoor recreation throughout this country and the world."

The "outdoor recreation" part of that statement reinforces the notion that when we are physically active, we are able to experience and appreciate our natural spaces more meaningfully. In a real sense, National Park Service employees are the face of the parks. Whether you are a ranger required to trek miles into your park on a daily basis, an administrator at your desk all day keeping the inner workings going, or even a grader operator keeping the park roads safe, all of you can benefit from staying physically fit.

That said, your jobs are also demanding, and you may struggle to find the time or motivation to shoe-horn exercise into your already-busy schedules.

But consider this: A study published in the journal *Maturitas*, "Exercise and Mental Health," found that exercise helps reduce anxiety, depression, and stress. It also reduces inflammation and improves psychological, physiological and immunological functions – a finding that is particularly meaningful as NPS employees nationwide deal with the effects of the past year's world-wide pandemic. Clearly, maintaining our fitness is not only good for our health but also good for our careers.

To this end, we asked Grand Canyon National Park Ranger Nicholas Mann to offer some solid advice on getting and staying fit, which – as he so accurately points out ahead – has been an especially big challenge during the COVID-19 pandemic.

By Nicholas Mann

A brief survey of Tweets, memes, and Facebook comments confirms many of us struggled to prioritize our fitness and physical health last year. Mental and emotional drain aside, going to a gym or attending a class really isn't an option – and many of us don't live in a park with ultra-spacious fitness facilities, anyway. Even as vaccine distribution improves, normalcy may not return until late this year.

But before you throw up your hands in frustration and resign to a repeat of 2020's pandemic limitations, consider these tips and a routine or two that'll require little more than a bit of empty living space to do.

GOALS AND MOTIVATION

A ship without a sail, a car without a motor, your fitness routine without clearly defined goals—none are going anywhere fast. To be consistent, you'll need to define goals that will keep you motivated. When considering your goals, be specific and consider the practice of visualizing your success; a very potent tool among top performers. Stay consistent: schedule a time, and show up every time. Even if you only complete a small portion of your planned workout, showing up consistently helps establish the routine. A common mistake when starting a new program is doing too much too quickly, getting sore, and then struggling to return the next day to do the work. It is better to start slow, practice compassion and gentleness with yourself, and remain consistent.

EFFORT AND FREQUENCY

The Mayo Clinic recommends exercising with your heart rate in the target zone for about 30 minutes per day at least five days a week. The target heart rate is the minimum level of exertion needed to improve your fitness in a given exercise, and it will help you determine if you are exerting yourself too little, too much, or just enough. While you probably won't explode, exceeding the target

zone is not recommended as it may put strain on your heart. If you want to know more about heart rate and its relation to fitness, visit the American Heart Association or Mayo Clinic webpages and/or consult your doctor.

The target zone is between 50 percent and 85 percent of your maximum heart rate. To determine your maximum rate, subtract your age from 220. Let's use a 40-year-old as an example:

- $220-40=180$ (maximum heart rate)
- $180 \times 0.50=90$ (50 percent of maximum heart rate)
- $180 \times 0.85=153$ (85 percent of maximum heart rate)

Therefore, the 40-year-old will want to stay in the 90-153 beats-per-minute target heart-rate range when exercising.

MINIMALIST FITNESS WORKS

While it might be tempting to sit around and drink coffee until your heart rate reaches the target zone, I think you'll get more out of these healthier alternatives.

Walking/running: The simplest way to get moving is to just put on your shoes and go out for a walk, hike, or run. If you'd like to start running, start slowly to avoid injury. Runners World is an online resource that compiles lots of information for beginners. If you want to start a training program or dive a little deeper, texts like Jeff Gaudette's "Easy Running Plans" offer accessible guidance for beginners.

Yoga: Yoga is more than mere stretching. It can improve mental focus, breath awareness, as well as strength and flexibility. Digital resources, such as doyogawithme.com and the Yoga for Beginners App, offer free classes. If you would like to take your time with a self-guided course, I recommend Rodney Yee's "Moving Toward Balance," a beginner-level eight-week program. For instruction on postures, BKS Iyengar's "Light On Yoga" provides a complete visual encyclopedia of postures, and "The Key Muscles of Yoga" series helps students understand the physiology of each posture.

Body weight exercises: Calisthenic programs offer a safe, minimalist strength training option, and can provide enormous benefit to your overall functionality and durability without stepping foot in a gym or investing in weight lifting equipment. This well-rounded alternative to weight training incorporates compound movements such as squats, push-ups, and pull-ups. Programs in this category offer lots of variety and can be fun and challenging. Milo Kemp's "Gym-Less Workout" and Paul Wade's "Convict Conditioning" offer some options to help meet progress and program development goals. Additionally, the Mountain Tactical Institute will help you develop tailored programs with a \$35 per month subscription. I find following athletes, gymnasts, and other fitness influencers on social media platforms keeps me inspired and motivated to hit the mat or pull-bar.

With consistent effort, you will achieve your goals. Remember: If you feel like you're carrying the weight of the world on your shoulders these days, just squat with it. Trust me, you'll feel better once you have.

Nicholas Mann is a park ranger at Grand Canyon National Park.



Grand Canyon National Park Ranger Nicholas Mann on the Snake River. Photo: Nicholas Mann

Getting started A short and effective workout

Warm-up

- 10-15 arm circles (forward and back), 10-15 jumping jacks, wide-leg squat stretch, side lunge stretch, forward fold (free standing or leaning over a chair)

Core (abdominal) work

- 1 exercise such as mountain climbers at light to moderate effort for a duration of 1 minute, with 30-45 sec rest interval, 3-5 times

Compound Movements

- 2-3 exercises such as a push-up variations, squats, pull-ups, burpees, lunges, etc. You can pick opposing movements such as those that push/pull, or you can target a new body part each day (i.e., chest day, leg day, etc.). You can choose to complete as many repetitions as possible (AMRAP) within a set time or do set a number of repetitions for a number of sets such as 5x5 (5 sets of 5 reps, for a total of 25 repetitions broken up by 5-minute rest intervals)

Core (abdominal) work

- 1-2 exercises such as planks or v-ups, 3-5 sets of 10 reps each

Cool down

- This can be as simple as walking around the house or holding downward facing dog (a resting pose in yoga) for a minute or two

Stretch

- Do 5 to 6 yoga postures such as forward fold, wide-leg forward fold, pigeon variations, light back bends, chest openers, and twists

Tips for success

1. Be sure to get 8 hours of sleep.
2. Don't skip rest or leg days.
3. Log your personal progress.
3. Drink plenty of water, and fuel yourself with high-quality calories.

RANGERS *as* ROLE MODELS



A park ranger leads children on a hike at Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area. Rangers, through their interaction with the public, have a unique opportunity to be positive role models and promote a healthy lifestyle narrative for the future stewards of public lands. Photo: NPS

POWER OF PARKS FOR HEALTH INITIATIVE ENCOURAGES NPS EMPLOYEES TO LEAD BY EXAMPLE

By Michael Mojarro

AS A PARK RANGER, YOU ALREADY KNOW THE IMPACT THAT nature can have on those who slow down to appreciate it. National parks landscapes can cultivate a physically, mentally, and spiritually more healthful version of yourself. In this 100-year milestone partnership of the National Park Service and the Office Public Health, now could not be a better time to become a health ambassador through the Power of Parks for Health initiative. Being a health ambassador is all about self-improvement in a very self-guided approach, using parks as its primary resource. Through a six-step process, rangers and NPS employees can not only extol the value of fitness for visitors, but also enrich their own lives.

The steps are gradual and realistic. While each of these steps may have different meaning to each individual, embarking on this journey will create everlasting benefits for you and those around you.

STEP 1: START WITH YOU

Health and healing kick starts the experience. While this may be the hardest step to overcome, once you dedicate your mind to it, it gets exponentially easier. All that is needed is the ability to get up and get after it, whatever you decide “it” to be. An easy start could be running. Running is an economically friendly chance to boost overall physical health, ease the mind, and most important, help ensure a much-needed good night’s rest. All you need to do is get up and start at your own pace, not worrying about distance or time or speed. Mix walking with running and gradually build a base. The

most valuable, and obtainable, achievement of Step 1 is that you are beginning. After this, the rest of the steps will much more easily fall into place.

STEP 2: TUNE INTO NATURE AND YOURSELF

This next step is really about slowing down and taking time to smell the proverbial roses. It’s also about recognizing that our mental health is as important as our physical fitness. To coalesce with nature, take a break from a fast-paced schedule and live in the moment, even if just for a few minutes. Try stepping away from your desk to feel the crisp air hitting your face, or take a quick morning walk in a local park. Even hearing the natural sounds of wildlife (preferably in one of our hundreds of national parks) can better improve overall health. National parks also provide the opportunity to learn about and connect with our nation’s rich history. Many trails, for example, have a connection to indigenous history and culture such as hunting, migration, and trade of days past. Any time spent outdoors can really bring you to a better understanding of nature and sense of peace within yourself.

STEP 3: CHOOSE SIMPLE ACTIVITIES

As you progress along your health-ambassador journey, be sure to choose activities that can easily be incorporated in your life and schedule. For those with more time, biking is an extraordinary opportunity to enjoy a scenic experience on all levels of terrain, from





Author Michael Mojarro, above, is an intern with the Office of Public Health, and creator of the health ambassador illustration. A photo of his cross-country team on his desk serves as a reminder of the benefits of being a health ambassador. Photo: Michael Mojarro

beginner to advanced, roads and trails, and even beaches for those who live and work near the sea. A simpler option is taking a walk or jog through your own park – after all, what better way to appreciate the park you represent than by experiencing it yourself. At the very least, morning meditation in the yard or with a nice view through the window also can be extremely valuable. The mental benefits of any of these options includes reduction in stress levels, depression, and anxiety, as well as helping you to get one step closer to being a health ambassador.

STEP 4: GOAL-FREE ZONE

With Step 4, we are reminded of the saying “life is about the journey, not the destination.” While goals are truly the key to success for specific objectives – such as losing 10 pounds or hitting that new 5K PR – being a health ambassador is more of a mindset. If a precise and possibly overly ambitious goal is the only notion you think about, then you miss out on the enjoyment of the rest of the experience, and the self-growth that comes at each step. Remind yourself that being a health ambassador is about embracing and enjoying your improved fitness for the sake of its positive contribution to your wellness. As such, feel free to change your activities as your moods and interests change. Nothing is set in stone here. If you started out walking, but that’s getting boring, just try a new activity.



Everglades National Park Ranger Tony Terry examines the flora and fauna surrounding him, including this intricate spider web. Sharing your experiences is the key to being an effective health ambassador. Photo: Daniel Miguel / NPS

Fitness is about more than just your physical body. For example, try tuning up your conservation fitness by going fishing. Targeted fishing contributes to the conservation of native fish for future generations. Or flex your academic fitness by reading up on national parks outside of your own unit, or local community parks to better understand the ecological ties in your area. Improve your self-esteem by learning, taking on, and getting better at tasks that perhaps you have avoided in the past. All of these small steps can bring long-term benefits for the well-conditioned health ambassador.

STEP 5: SHARE YOUR EXPERIENCES

Step 5 is when your health ambassador role really launches. Enhance and share your experience with others. As a ranger interacting with the public, that might be though recommending your favorite trail to a visitor. As a NPS administrator who might spend most of her time at her desk, it might mean recruiting her office mate to take lunchtime walks. As a maintenance crewman who spends most of his time keeping campgrounds clean, it could mean bringing his kids back on the weekend to see the family of beavers hanging around the pond by that campground.

For me, I still remember the inspiration and freedom I gained through camping and running in Yosemite National Park with my cross-country team in high school. I still remember my awe upon reaching the peak of a mountain with my best friends right beside me. We came back to school that fall eager to tell fellow classmates about our experience, in the hopes that they would return with us the following year.

Through that shared experience with my classmates, I glimpsed what it takes to become a health ambassador before I even knew what a health ambassador was. Now that I’ve transitioned into working for the National Park Service through the Office of Public Health, a picture of my team sits framed on my office desk. It is a constant reminder of the wonders and memories that await in the outdoors. Each time I see this picture, it brings me back to a space where my mental and physical happiness flourished. It encourages me to share the magnificence of our national parks. By incorporating these very steps in my life, I understand first hand the fulfillment of building a relationship with parks.

As the National Park Service’s 100-year partnership with the Office of Public Health continues throughout the year, it is fitting to become a health ambassador today. For more information, check out <http://go.nps.gov/popforhealth>.

Fiscal *fitness*

It's never too late to improve the state of your savings

By Melissa DeVaughn

ANN VANDERSLICE IS A FINANCIAL PLANNER BY TRADE, but when she's not at work, she and her husband enjoy camping. That pastime is why she now focuses a large part of her professional career helping National Park Service and other U.S. Department of Interior employees plan their financial futures.

"I decided that I wanted to help people who weren't in major metropolitan areas," said Vanderslice, who owns her own financial planning business in Denver and specializes in helping federal employees make sense of their options. It all started in Rocky Mountain National Park, roughly nine years ago, where Vanderslice had been asked to present a seminar to employees there.

"After a full day of class, and as I was driving out of the YMCA Center where the class was held, a truck was flashing its lights behind me," she said. "I pulled over and it was a class participant who said he had 'Just one more question.' That got me thinking that if an employee so close to a major metropolitan area as Estes Park is to Denver felt like they couldn't get personal attention, what about employees who were even more remote? The idea of getting an RV and traveling to parks was born."

Now, Vanderslice and her husband, Randall Werts, are eager for these work trips. With their fifth-wheel camper, they have traveled to, and she has taught classes to NPS staff at Dinosaur National Monument, Glacier National Park, Hot Springs National Park, Chiricahua National Monument, Guadalupe Mountains National Park, Saguaro National Park, Nachotches National Monument, Buffalo National River, Amistead National Recreation Area; and Hovenweep National Monument, among others. She likes that she might be helping those who don't have ready access to information, and appreciates getting to see some of the country's most prized natural spaces.

Vanderslice said becoming, and staying, financially fit is a very personal matter, and every employee is different. Some may have large families or special health concerns to address; others may be coming into their NPS careers late in life and are playing catch-up. Still others may be shifting in and out of careers with different agencies and changing locations. But they can all benefit from financial advice.

"The three areas of focus that you should always have your eye on are pensions, the Thrift Savings Plan, and insurance benefits," she said.

PENSIONS

Managing one's pension is a no-brainer – it's synonymous with "financial fitness," and those who watch it like a hawk know this. But for mere humans who are just trying to perform their daily jobs well and move up and through the NPS ranks, this area can go unmonitored.

"The No. 1 thing I see for federal employees is they don't manage their Electronic Official Personnel (EOP) file," Vanderslice said. "Every time a federal employee is hired, an SF-50 form is generated. Most tend to start out as seasonals, and then they move into a term position, and it's rare that they stay in one place, so they accumulate many, many SF-50s. They need to keep track of those SF-50s."

Because pensions are dependent on years of service and their "high-three" years of pay, a paper trail is required for each of those positions. Vanderslice warned: Don't be fooled. These forms are not always preserved.

"These forms used to be provided in carbon duplicates," she said. "As soon as they became electronic, people began to think, 'I don't have to keep track of it. My agency will take care of it.' 'Well, your agency may not take care of it. Missing records are the No. 1 reason for delays in the process. This doesn't impact you when you are working, but when you get to the end of your career, and now they can't find your documents, it can cause a lot of headaches."

THRIFT SAVINGS PLAN

The main questions Vanderslice says she fields with the federal Thrift Savings Plan (TSP) is "How much of my income should I be contributing?"

The TSP requires a 5 percent contribution to receive a match on that investment, but ideally, the answer would be 10 percent, she said.

"But in the real world, early in their careers, employees can sometimes barely manage to save the 5 percent to get the match," she said. "But try to understand the benefit of time and compound interest. Have a plan to increase it over time."

For instance, Vanderslice said, if you receive a raise, keep living as you are and put that extra money into your TSP instead.

"You don't have to get from 5 percent to 10 percent immediately – you just have to get there eventually," she said.

And don't panic if you've started slow, she added.

"You can make up a lot of ground at the end of your career, because that is when you are making the most money, maybe your mortgage is gone, or the kids are out of the house," she added.

The other TSP consideration is *where* to put your contributions.



Financial consultant Ann Vanderslice and her husband, Randall Werts, at National Elk Refuge in Jackson Hole, Wyo. Vanderslice often travels on site to advise NPS employees on their finances. Photo: Ann Vanderslice

The TSP has several funds — the G Fund, C Fund, I Fund, Life Cycle Fund, etc. — within it from which employees can choose to contribute. Vanderslice said federal employees in general are more conservative than the average investor, and it shows in the prevalence of investing in the most conservative funds such as the G Fund. The Life Cycle Funds, too, tend to earn less than allocating directly to the C and S funds, she said.

All of these choices are best made one on one with your financial adviser, Vanderslice stressed, but in general, she suggests waiting as long as possible before becoming more conservative with your investments.

“If you are mid-career, with 10-12 years to go, it still may not be a time to be more conservative,” she said. “Most 10-year periods have had positive outcomes, and that’s where all the compounding happens. So the time to really consider allocations and making a shift is when you are five years from retirement. That’s when you might think, ‘I’ve accumulated enough now,’ or ‘I’m going to go into protective mode.’”

INSURANCE BENEFITS

When we think of staying financially fit, we may not even factor health insurance into the equation, but that is one of the highest expenses retirees incur.

“Federal employees, I would argue, have some of the best health insurance out there,” Vanderslice said. “Access to affordable health care, after their pension, is the second-most important part of their benefits.”

“If you’re young and on a fairly tight

budget, figure out how to pay the least amount because your risk is low,” she said. “Even if you have a bad accident, it’s not going to bankrupt you. The next year you can switch coverage.”

Blue Cross, Blue Shield is the most common provider, she said. For large families the BC/BS Standard Plan may be the best option because it is about \$650 per month, regardless of how many additional family members there are. If it is just the employee and a spouse, and you are both healthy, that plan may not make as much sense, she added.

“If you’re younger, a high-deductible health plan with a Health Savings Account (HSA) is an option. The premiums are significantly lower with a higher deductible, and the insurance will provide a rebate to meet that deductible. It grows tax-free.

“I also recommend they consider Blue Cross Blue Shield basic,” she said. “As long as you stay in network, it makes the most sense financially.” And that saved money can go into the TSP, she added.

IT’S NEVER TOO LATE

Vanderslice acknowledges: Getting, and staying, financially fit can be intimidating.

“Federal benefits are complicated and I believe federal employees in remote areas deserve the same access to good training as their counterparts who might work in larger agencies or metropolitan areas,” she said.

The goal, she said, is to enjoy great careers now, so an even better retirement is waiting at the other end. She and Randall get a taste of it now and then themselves, sitting around a campfire at a national park, taking hikes and watching the stars.

Q & A with Ann

Q. If a federal employee works for five years in a permanent job (the minimum required to qualify for a pension under the Federal Employee Retirement System), and they leave federal service thereafter, when do they qualify for a deferred pension, and will the payout for the pension be based on their grade level’s equivalent salary or their actual salary at the time they leave the government?

You would be eligible to receive a pension beginning at age 62 that would be based on your High 3 when you left federal service.

Q. Some staff live for 30 years or more in parks and do not have the opportunity to build equity in a home. For employees who serve continuously in the field, what types of investments is suggested to make up for this inability?

It’s possible that because of park housing made available to some employees, they’re actually paying less than if they had to rent or pay a mortgage in that area. Hopefully, this could leave some extra funds to be put away for a down payment on a home in the future. If you’re early in your career and thinking long-term about housing, you might invest these funds more aggressively, but if you plan on buying something sooner, you might be more conservative. Although you’re allowed to borrow up to \$50,000 from your Thrift Savings Plan for your primary residence, you would likely want to save your “housing” funds outside the TSP.

Q. Do you have any advice about strategies to “invest by conscience” in sustainable industries?

The TSP’s Environmental Social and Governance fund, has underperformed. So the challenge is choosing companies that you want to be invested in, like Tesla (and others heavily weighted to tech). We investigate it a lot, and we present the options, but for most people, when they see the performance, they believe in it until it affects their portfolio.

Q. Generally speaking, are you inclined to advise employees to make substantial investments outside of the Thrift Savings Plan (TSP), and, if so, how much as a percentage of income, and how should employees select investments?

The Thrift Savings Plan offers some of the lowest fees available in the investment world, so starting by maximizing your investments there is always a good option. Reasons to consider investments outside the TSP would be if you wanted the investment to be liquid prior to retirement or age 59½, if you reached the maximum contribution limit (\$19,500 for 2021 + \$6,500 catch up if over age 50), you wanted access to a wider variety of investment choices, or you want to contribute to a Roth IRA in addition to the TSP.

For free webinars and live Q&As to answer questions about your TSP, investment options, insurance and more, visit Vanderslice’s website at www.annvanderslice.com.

A HEALTHY PLANET



WHAT WILL NATIONAL PARKS BE LIKE FOR OUR GRANDCHILDREN AND WHAT CAN RANGERS DO TO HELP

By John Morris

I JOINED THE NATIONAL PARK SERVICE IN 1980. CLIMATE change wasn't a "hot topic" at the time, if you'll excuse my pun. Scientists were beginning to build a consensus about it, and the impacts of change were starting to show up in parks, but not many visitors had yet taken notice. Over the course of the last 40 years, however, circumstances have evolved. Changing climate in the parks today is not only apparent, it's also a serious concern. And now, visitors are asking about it too.

Wildland fires have become a year-round phenomena, with more intense fires occurring, for longer durations, and at more frequent intervals. Severe and extreme weather events bring more frequent storms and flooding events, while prolonged warm spells trigger more intense and unprecedented droughts. Coastal parks struggle to adapt to rising sea level and coastal erosion, and they're seeing additional changes to the marine ecosystem through increasing acidification, warming, and unpredictable die-offs of marine mammals and fisheries. Many of these changes have consequences for the future of the parks, as well as to their gateway communities.

For many rangers, it's the NPS mission of preserving and protecting these places and their stories of heritage that drew us to them in the first place. That idea of saving the parks unimpaired for future generations was hardly ever questioned. Yet today, impairment is not only happening, much of it is beyond our control to prevent – it's a global condition. How do we manage it now? What will the parks be like for our grandchildren? The future of our mission, and of the parks, has become uncertain.

The scientific understanding for changing climate and its implications is pretty well understood. Even the steps needed to bring about significant resolution of its causes are well known. So what can rangers do to affect a meaningful response to this critical moment in time?

I have four suggestions to offer. Not only do I believe these steps to be important for the parks, I know they'll provide a healthy benefit to rangers on a personal basis, as well.

EMBRACE YOUR SPACE

Number 1: Spend time every day in the parks, and get to know as much as possible about the science of changing climate, at both global and local scales. Talk with the researchers, read their studies,

follow their conferences and symposia, and ask them serious questions. Take every opportunity to make direct observations for yourself. Make climate change your favorite topic to discuss with others, not only to appreciate what we've already figured out, but also to begin to grasp the uncertainties that we must learn to live with.

WALK THE TALK

Number 2: Take specific steps to change your own relationship to energy use and consumption, both at work and in your personal life. Eliminating fossil fuel emissions in the coming years has been identified as key to successfully responding to the climate crisis, so see what you can do to reduce emissions for yourself. Change out your heating systems, your light bulbs, your diet, and anything else where you can consciously choose alternate means that release less carbon. Doing so will not only educate you about the costs and benefits of adapting, but it also will enable you to "walk the talk" when it comes time to demonstrate how to do it for others.

STAY OPTIMISTIC

Number 3: Make the conscious choice to be hopeful about the future. Dr. Kate Marvel, a climate scientist at NASA's Goddard Institute for Space Studies, says "We need courage, not hope, to face climate change." She's not alone. Many scientists find the results of their studies to paint a grim picture of what the future holds, often bringing them to the point of despair.

In this case, I suggest that we need both courage and hope, or rather, we need to have the courage to CHOOSE hope! Hope comes from taking action in the face of uncertainty, of doing the impossible and overcoming those grim scientific impacts. It's truly through innovation, and creative solutions, that we will, collectively, find the courage to do what is needed. This is harder than walking the talk, but it's also more powerful when we do.

TALK ABOUT CLIMATE CHANGE

Number 4: Finally, probably the most important thing rangers can do to affect change is to just talk about climate change as often and with as many people as possible. In the words of the renowned climate communicator, Dr. Katherine Hayhoe, director of the Climate Science Center at Texas Tech University: "I crunch the data, I



At top: Rangers study the sloughed-off land of thawing permafrost in Gates of the Arctic National Park in 2012. At left, the Carr fire at Whiskeytown National Recreation Area in 2018 devastated the area. Both images illustrate the negative affects climate change is having on our national lands, and the world. Photos: NPS

analyze the models, and I help people ... The most important thing you can do to fight climate change: talk about it.” It’s through having a wide-ranging civic dialogue about how climate is changing, and its implications to society, that we might have the chance to help bring about an effective response to this crisis.

These steps will take time, but they can be successful. We are on the early steps of a journey that will take decades to complete, but complete it we must. The health and happiness of our grandchildren is depending on us.



John Morris retired in 2014 after 34 years with the NPS. In 2004, he joined an inter-agency working group called Earth to Sky, a partnership between NPS and NASA that seeks to bring interpreters and educators together with scientists and researchers to help them effectively communicate the science of climate change. He continues to work with Earth to Sky and NASA on this important issue. (earthtosky.org)

The science of Fatigue

By Mark Herberger

How NPS Operational Leadership helps employees stay mentally fit

STAYING MENTALLY AND emotionally healthy has obvious benefits to one's overall well being and ability to perform daily tasks. It's simple: When we feel good, life is just better.

NPS Operational Leadership (NPS OL) is the behavior-based component of the National Park Service's Safety, Health & Wellness Management System. A goal is to help NPS employees mitigate and prevent negative behavioral factors (science calls them "human factors") *before* accidents occur. Fatigue-related decrements from sleep loss generally top the human factor list.

The links between fatigue and unsafe acts are one of the most studied human factors. Fatigue is defined as a state of feeling tired, weary, or sleepy resulting from prolonged mental or physical work, extended anxiety, harsh environments, or the loss of sleep. Most of these factors cross-pollinate. As fatigue progresses, errors of omission increase, followed by errors of commission. These are followed by microsleeps – involuntary sleep

lapses – lasting from a few seconds to a few minutes. Fatigue can cause automatic shut-down of the brain, regardless of how hard you try to remain attentive, your professionalism, or your training.

THE ARCHITECTURE OF SLEEP

One way to study fatigue is to look at "sleep architecture." There are two forms of sleep distinguished by specific brain-wave activity: non-REM and REM sleep. A sleep "cycle" begins with a period of non-REM stage 1 progressing through stage 2, followed by stages 3 and 4; then cycling back up and ending in REM. A typical night's sleep consists of four or five non-REM/REM cycles, with occasional, brief episodes of wakefulness. One sleep cycle lasts slightly longer than 90 minutes. Therefore, a normal restful night's sleep averages 8 hours.

In stage 1 we are perched on the brink of sleep and can be readily aroused. An individual in stage 2 requires more intense stimuli to awaken. Brain activity shows rela-

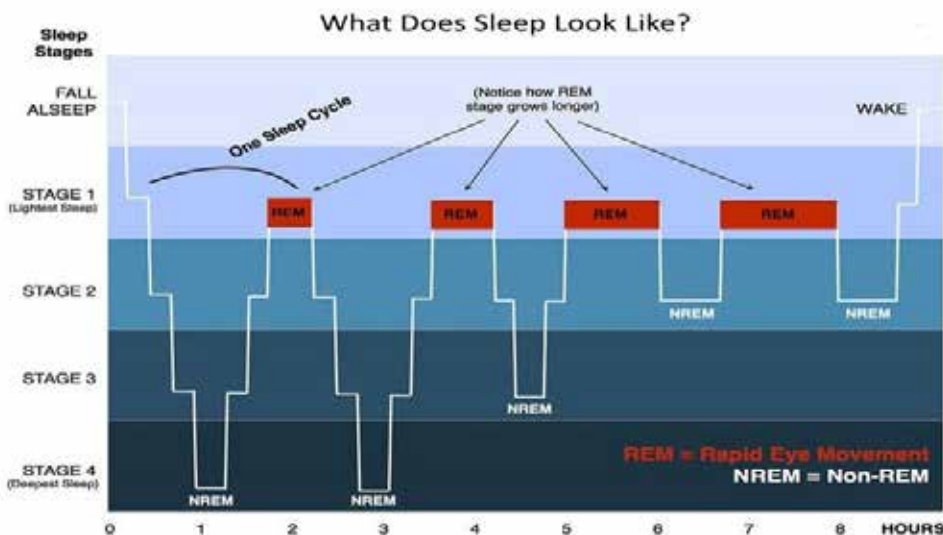
tively low-voltage, mixed frequency activity characterized by "sleep bundles." It is hypothesized that sleep bundles are important for memory consolidation and learning new tasks.

Stage 3 lasts for a relatively short time and shows increased high-voltage, short-wave activity. By stage 4, or delta slow-wave sleep, we are dead to the world; breathing slows, and blood pressure and heart rate drop as much as 30 percent. The brain becomes less responsive to external stimuli; difficult to awaken. This is when the body repairs muscles and tissues, stimulates growth, boosts immune function, and builds energy for tomorrow.

During REM sleep, brain waves are faster and less organized; eyes scan back and forth. Vivid dreams mostly occur during REM. Loss of muscle tone and reflexes serve to prevent "acting out" one's dreams. During a night's sleep, REM becomes progressively longer and longer. There's a good chance you'll awaken from a dream in the morning. REM stimulates brain regions used in learning and mental skills, and is associated with increased protein functions.

GOOD SLEEP = BETTER FITNESS

We sometimes take sleep for granted, yet it is as important to life and health as the air we breathe. The lack of sleep, and accumulation of sleep debt, deletes the critical benefits of complete sleep cycles. Inadequate sleep can introduce or exacerbate health consequences: arthritis, asthma, high blood pressure, digestive disorders, diabetes, seizures, infections, and reproductive problems. Decades of studies show that fatigue degrades memory (ability to integrate, store, and retrieve information), attention (atten-



tion span, attention to minor, but potentially important details), attitude (motivation, effort, and mood i.e. “it’s good enough” attitude prevails), teamwork (communication, cooperation, and team coordination), and performance (accuracy, timing, and cross-checking, relevant cues missed, decisions) – the human factors of accidents, injuries, and fatalities.

DANGEROUS SLEEP DEPRIVATION

Fatigue is insidious. It is generally not even apparent to the victim because physical and mental performance drops at an unnoticed pace. The effects of double shifts, “burning the midnight oil,” and alternating shift work are shrugged-off; accumulated sleep debt builds over days of missed sleep hours. The underlying latent errors to accident, injury, and fatality rates in the NPS, due to human factors like fatigue, are staring us in the face; sometimes we are in denial or “must push-on for the sake of the mission.”

Science provides NPS OL a simple tool to calculate an individual’s fatigue level at any point in time. It considers hours awake and sleep debt. Step 1: How many hours has it been since you awoke? (If you woke up at 5:30 a.m. to prepare and travel to work, and it is now 5:30 p.m., your “hours of wakefulness” equal 12 hours). Step 2: How many hours of sleep debt have you accumulated over the past four nights? (Remember the average adult has a baseline sleep of seven to eight hours. If your baseline is eight but you have gotten only six hours of sleep the past four nights because of, let’s say extra overtime, your cumulative sleep debt is 8 hours). Step 3: Add Step 1 and Step 2. 12 hours of wakefulness + 8 hours of sleep debt = 20 hours. So what?

CALCULATING FATIGUE

A fatigue level of 20 hours is equivalent to a 0.09 blood alcohol level. You may not have taken a drink, but driving home at 5:30 p.m., you will be exhibiting the physical and mental abilities of a legally drunk driver!

A full night’s sleep is a physical and

Moderate Sleep Deprivation Impairments³

Task	Measure	Baseline BAC 0.0	BAC 0.05	BAC 0.10
Reaction Time	Speed (ms.) Accuracy (misses)	489 0.36	Slowed 9% Decrease 225%	Slowed 16% Decrease 680%
Dual Task	Speed (ms.) Hand Eye Coordination	662 50.59	Slowed 10% Decrease 10%	Slowed 20% Decrease 53%
Tracking	Hand Eye Coordination	47.76	Declined 7%	Declined 57%
Vigilance (Signal Detection)	Speed (ms.) Accuracy (targets detected) Accuracy (false alarms)	958 12.64 1.05	Slowed 14% Declined 14% Declined 55%	Slowed 42% Declined 40% Declined 326%
Spatial Memory	Length of recalled series	5.34	Decreased 13%	Decreased 30%
Tiredness	Personal rating	17.84	Increased 77%	Increased 150%

Look carefully at these impairments and consider how your performance and safety are affected.

³Williamson, A.M., Feyer, A. (2000) Moderate sleep deprivation produces impairments in cognitive and motor performance equivalent to legally prescribed levels of alcohol intoxication. *Occup Environ Med* 57: 649-655

Calculating Fatigue Level

Work Day	Equivalent Blood Alcohol Concentration (BAC)
10 Hours =	0.0
12 Hours =	0.01
14 Hours =	0.03
16 Hours =	0.05
18 Hours =	0.07
20 Hours =	0.09
22 Hours =	0.10
24 Hours =	0.14

mental necessity, not a luxury. The key to address any physical or mental performance decrement(s) associated with human factors such as fatigue begins with awareness. NPS OL assists us in increasing our awareness and

knowledge of risk management. With that awareness, the principles of NPS OL will help all employees make good risk decisions once we realize how we are influenced by things such as fatigue. Because of its leading and lagging successes, NPS OL has become known as one of the most significant change initiatives in the 100-year history of the NPS. Through NPS OL, we can become aware of our limitations, be responsible for our individual and team safety, health and wellness, and go home safely at the end of the day.

Mark Herberger has served 43 years with the National Park Service, the past eleven as program manager for NPS Operational Leadership. He retired in December 2020 but can be reached at markeherberger@gmail.com or follow him on Facebook.



“We sometimes take sleep for granted, yet it is as important to life and health as the air we breathe.”

– Mark Herberger, retired program manager for NPS Operational Leadership



The photo pros among us

Ranger Rendezvous photo contest reveals ANPR talent

THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC QUASHED PLANS FOR AN IN-PERSON Ranger Rendezvous 43 in 2020, but that didn't stop organizers from coming up with the next best thing. Ranger Rendezvous 43.0, a virtual alternative to ANPR's in-person conference, took place in October 2020, with presentations, social hours and, of course, the annual photo contest.

Here, we present you with the winners of that contest. Thank you, ANPR members, for your submissions. Start planning and shooting photographs now for this year's photo contest. For more details on the contest, visit www.anpr.org, and we will see you at Ranger Rendezvous 44, set for Oct. 12-17, 2021, in Jacksonville, Fla.

Best in Show

Submitted by: Tom Banks
Category: Landscape
NPS Unit: Glacier



History & Culture • Submitted by Ben Walsh
NPS Unit: Knife River Indian Villages



2020 Contemporary
Submitted by Darby Robinson
NPS Unit: Mount Rainier



After Dark • Submitted by Steve Moore • NPS Unit: Grand Canyon



Wildlife • Submitted by Ben Walsh • NPS Unit: Kenai Fjords

Many thanks for sponsoring our Ranger Rendezvous 43.0

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ANPR creates tiered donor program to help us grow stronger & better

AS THE ASSOCIATION OF NATIONAL PARK RANGERS GRAPPLED with the COVID-19 pandemic, along with the rest of the world during these past 14 months, the Board of Directors took some additional time to look at how contributions to the organization can help it stay viable and useful for its members.



This year, and just in time for its spring fundraising campaign, the board is launching its Donor Recognition List, which includes any donations that come to the organization within each magazine cycle. Without the generous contributions from members and other donors, ANPR would not be able to do the work it does.

The top-level among the donor recognition list is, fittingly, the Denali Level, which recognizes donations of \$1,000 and more. But all donations, even at the Liberty Bell Level (up to \$25) are appreciated.

Unrestricted cash donations are most welcome, as they help ANPR carry out the ongoing business of the association on behalf of members.

If you prefer your donation to be earmarked to a specific area, though, there are “restricted” ANPR accounts from which to choose:

- **The Bill Supernaugh Scholarship Fund** provides money to support Supernaugh Scholars selected to attend and assist with ANPR’s annual Ranger Rendezvous.
- **The Rick Gale Fund** provides money to carry out ANPR’s oral history interviews in cooperation with the NPS Division of History.
- **The International Ranger Federation/World Ranger Congress Fund** has been renamed the **Rick Smith Honorary International Fund**. It provides money to fund scholarships (from the U.S. and Latin America) to attend the World Ranger Congresses, and periodically to support families of fallen rangers in Latin America.

All donations will receive recognition, according to the National Park System elevation levels. Those levels include Liberty Bell (sea level) up to \$25, Little Rock Central High School (335 feet) \$25-\$49, Appalachian Trail (3,000 feet average) \$50-\$99, Devil’s Tower (5,120 feet) \$100-\$249, Cliff Palace (6,811 feet) \$250-\$499, Half Dome (8,694 feet) \$500-\$749, Mauna Loa (13,678 feet) \$750-\$999, Denali Peak (20,310 feet) \$1,000 or more, and Old Faithful, for scheduled monthly donations of at least \$25 for a minimum of one year.

Another way to support ANPR is through a Life Membership (\$750) or Century Upgrade (\$125 for the first upgrade and \$250 for each one thereafter). These memberships go into ANPR’s investment account. Visit anpr.org/LCC to learn more about these options and see the full donor list.

Finally, consider a Legacy Contributions. Naming ANPR as a beneficiary in a will or insurance policy is a way to leave your legacy after you are gone. We are available to discuss options.

ANPR is a nonprofit, 501(c)(3) corporation and all donations are deductible to the extent allowed by law. We welcome new members, and encourage you to reach out to us if you’d like to become more active in the association by joining a committee.

Email Jeanette Meleen, head of ANPR’s fundraising committee, for more options, jmeleen@anpr.org.

Donor Recognition List

(Updated 2/20/2021)

Denali Peak (20,310 ft.) - \$1,000 +

National Park Foundation
Grand Teton Distillery
Linda Rae Emerson

Mauna Loa (13,678 ft.) - \$750-\$999

John Townsend
Gilbert Soper

Cliff Palace (6,811 ft.) - \$250-\$499

Deanne Adams & Tony Sisto
Russel Wilson
Paul Anderson
Rick Mossman
Scott Pfeninger
Jim Northup
Barb Maynes
Sean McGuinness

Devil’s Tower (5,120 ft.) - \$100-\$249

Meg Weesner
Noemi Robinson
Charles Strickfaden
John Case
Gregg Fauth
Mary Bradford
Frank Dean
Marty Huseman
Bob Love
Bill Wade
Craig Axtell
Noel Poe

Appalachian Trail (3,000 ft. avg.) - \$50-\$99

John Sacklin
Nancy Ward
Jared Koreff
George B. Walsh
Eric Trogon

Little Rock Central High School (335 ft.) - \$25-\$49

Valeska Cambron
Denis Galvin

Liberty Bell (sea level) - Up to \$25

Jeanette Meleen
Larry Frederick
Lyndel Meikle
Maya Seraphin

National Park Foundation grant keeps *Ranger* press rolling

We all know that life doesn't always go according to plan! In 2020, ANPR applied for a grant from the National Park Foundation to help fund oral history interviews at Ranger Rendezvous. The NPF also agreed to fund travel for the winner of the Harry Yount Award to attend the rendezvous. After the cancellation of the in-person rendezvous, and the income that it usually generates, ANPR board members discussed publishing an online-only version of this month's issue of *Ranger* magazine, to offset those losses. ANPR thanks the NPF for generously agreeing to re-direct the money for the Yount Award winner to the production of the issue you are holding right now. Thank you, National Park Foundation, for your steadfast communication and support throughout 2020.



ANPR urges improvements to NPS recruitment and hiring practices

In a letter to Shannon Estenoz, principal deputy assistant secretary, Department of Interior, Fish and Wildlife and Parks, ANPR board president Paul Anderson urged changes to the current Executive Order that addresses the hiring of federal job candidates.

"While our organization strongly supports the modernization of

the federal hiring system, we do have concerns about E.O. 13932," Anderson wrote. The specific issue, he wrote, is the secondary assessment tool called USA Hire, which ANPR argues does not meet Department of Interior guidelines for fair, accurate and relevant hires.

"This assessment is more of a generic standardized cognitive test instead of one that measures specific relevant skills/competencies of the job," he wrote. "The assessment appears to provide little additional valid evidence of eligibility ... or suitability."

Anderson stressed that ANPR supports the use of secondary assessments in hiring, but does not think USA Hire is the right tool.

To see the complete letter to Estenoz and learn how to appeal to your congressional leaders to support a change, visit anpr.org/usahire.

Renamed ANPR fund honors Smith

At its February meeting, the ANPR board of directors unanimously voted to rename one of its donation funds for Rick Smith, a long-time supporter of Latin American rangers. The International Ranger Federation/World Ranger Congress Fund funds scholarships, and provides occasional financial support to fallen rangers and their families in Latin America. The scholarships are for rangers from the U.S. and Latin America to attend the World Ranger Congresses. The fund will now be called the Rick Smith Honorary International Fund. Smith was the second president of ANPR and went on to become the president of the International Ranger Federation.



Rick Smith



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CULTURAL RESOURCES

NPS could lead way in cultural competency

After tumultuous four years of neglect, justice and equity can be celebrated again

AFTER NEARLY A YEAR OF COVID-19 RELATED CLOSURES AND lockdowns I have become much rounder than I would prefer. I'm guessing that the practice of cultural competency within the National Park Service has also gotten a little soft recently.

For four long years the previous administration declared war on the values of justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion. The argument went that such values produced ideas and policies that were inherently un-American. An executive order from the former president prohibited Park Service employees and contractors from participating in any trainings that were deemed to criticize truth, justice, and the American way by promoting, well... justice and equity.

Such absurd restrictions did not stop NPS employees from continuing to do good work on the diversity front. That work was, however, driven underground. And I think the agency and its partners suffered duly.

Then on January 20, 2021, President Joseph R. Biden issued an executive order instructing all federal agencies to pursue a "comprehensive approach to advancing equity for all..." Joy cometh in the morning.

Civil rights, police reform, and racial and environmental justice will be the biggest pillars supporting this presidential directive. But every effort should also be made to ensure that racial equity extends to conservation and preservation as well. The National Park Service should help lead this work.

National parks should be the nation's premier spaces for civic engagement, education, and healing. The National Park System should represent the stories of all Americans. The ranks of the service ought to reflect the population it serves in a racially and ethnically diverse 21st century United States.

To get there, however, NPS will need to embrace controversy, acknowledge difference, and celebrate the complex nature of our shared American experiences. Whether the agency is tackling issues such as "land back," the proper place of Confederate commemorative works on NPS-managed landscapes, or the critical need to diversify National Register listings, and whether this work is being done by interpretive rangers in the parks or planners in WASO, this is the time for a reinvigorated and culturally competent NPS to shine.

So how can NPS get its cultural competency muscles back into shape? Better budgets and more personnel will help. But more mon-



The post-Civil War-era Buffalo Soldiers, shown here in 1889, are considered heroes by many African Americans. But would they evoke that same sentiment among descendants of the indigenous people they helped to subjugate? Those are the tough questions NPS can, and should, address to become culturally competent. Photo: NPS

ey and people won't set the Park Service up for success if the preferred way of engaging partners and interpreting our shared history remains fixed and fearful.

Good practitioners of cultural competency see how common things (battlefields, monuments, the National Register) may have different meanings for various people. For example, the black regular troops (known more commonly as Buffalo Soldiers) who served in the post-Civil War army and who are generally regarded as heroes by many African Americans enjoy a less idealized reputation among the descendants of the indigenous people they helped to subjugate. What's the culturally competent way to tell this story?

Cancel culture enthusiasts would have NPS remove all traces of the Buffalo Soldiers from the parks. Traditional military history buffs might desire the Park Service to focus on weapons and tactics

"NPS will need to embrace controversy, acknowledge difference, and celebrate the complex nature of our shared American experiences."

– Alan Spears, National Parks Conservation Association

IN PRINT

'Quirky' collection of vignettes provides glimpse into ranger life*By Rick Smith*

When I first heard about "Accidental Ranger," I thought it might be an interesting book to review for *Ranger*. When I emailed the author, whom I have known since the '70s at Yosemite, she warned me that it was a "quirky" book. And quirky it is. It mostly consists of short vignettes from the time where Meko (as she is commonly known) spent the majority of her career, Grant-Kohrs Ranch National Historic Site, in Montana.

If readers of *Ranger* say, "Huh? Grant-Kohrs Ranch NHS?," you'll want to read this book. I confess my general ignorance of the site but after reading Meko's book, I now want to visit it. As she says in the forward, "it's the story of the education given her by hooves, claws and paws. My teachers ranged from several ants and a caterpillar to university professors, curious children and liars. Add roots, both vegetal and historical, and you have nearly forty years at Grant-Kohrs..."

Why "accidental"? Because, unlike many others, Meko didn't dream of being a ranger. After high school and a brief college stint, she worked at an ad agency, as a flight attendant, a store clerk, an insurance manager, an ice-skating instructor and a few other jobs. She finally ended up working for the Yosemite Park and Curry Co., the principal concessioner in the park. In her spare time, she was a VIP. She was good enough at it that her supervisor gave her a form to fill out. And bingo, she became a seasonal interpreter. And then on to Golden Gate, Alcatraz, until she saw a job announcement for Grant-Kohrs in her beloved Montana, a place she always vowed she would return to when her family moved to California.

Grant-Kohrs is a working ranch. Meko was the only law enforcement ranger at the site. While she was there, she continued her role as a part-time interpreter and learned to be a blacksmith, assuredly the only female blacksmith in Montana. She became a keen observer of the animals on the ranch, both domestic and wild. Some of my favorite parts of the book are when she describes cows at calving time. Since this is a subject about which I knew zilch, I can now say I am a couple steps above zilch, thanks to her descriptions. In fact, I didn't know much about ranching either, but I learned a lot from this book.

I think the ending of the book is perfect. "Every day on the ranch has something to offer, and it will continue to do so, not just for me but for everyone who experiences it. Stories of the open range of the late 1800s will continue to reward diligent researchers, even as today's events will become tomorrow's history. And the plants and animals the land, and the turning of the seasons will write their own tales.

The story isn't over, but this book is."

Rick Smith worked in six parks, two regional offices and WASO, and ended his career as the Acting Superintendent of Yellowstone.



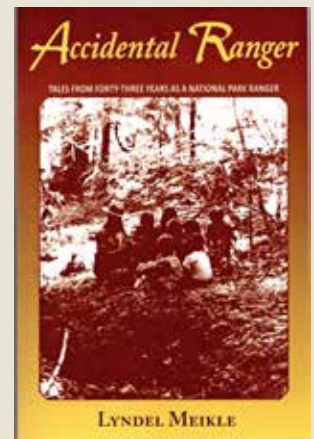
Then-Alaska Regional Director Burt Frost speaks during a dedication of the raising of the Healing Totem in Glacier Bay National Park in August 2018, signifying a renewed commitment to open, respectful communication; finding common ground on programs and projects of mutual interest to both partners; and willingness to explore innovative solutions to challenging issues. The totem pole, said Glacier Bay National Park and Preserve Superintendent Philip Hooze, "embodies a living relationship which will continue to require nurturing." Photo: Andy Hall

and exclude the human component altogether. I believe a plurality of contemporary park visitors would eschew both those options in favor of learning about the powerful, untidy ways in which formerly enslaved African Americans and Native Americans both struggled to defend their ways of life and secure for themselves and their posterity a future worth living.

NPS rangers routinely provide this kind of interpretation at national parks across the country. But what we need now, more than ever, is for the practice of seeing all sides and embracing complexity to be bigger, more universal, and more widely promoted. The future of our national parks and (dare I suggest) the country may depend on it.

Imagine an NPS sufficiently comprised of cultural resource experts, crackerjack historians, and interpreters, all of them proficient in the art of cultural competency. Then imagine an agency dedicated to using its resources, both parks and people, to promote civics, education, and healing. This is one way – perhaps the way – to elevate the role of the National Park Service from being simply the steward of the nation's historic and cultural resources to serving as the north star that guides us out of the fractured wilderness we've wandered in for too long, into a better, promised land.

— Alan Spears
National Parks Conservation Association



"Accidental Ranger," by Lyndel Meikle, Mountain Press, ISBN 9780878427000 (paperback) 141 pages

OPINION

On being spiritually fit in a busy world

No matter your personal beliefs, the cathedral of the wilderness speaks to us all

MOVEMENT, MOVEMENT, MOVEMENT—WE’RE SURROUNDED by things on the move: Wildlife, vehicles and machinery we build, and digital media whose movement is measured in milliseconds and drowns out natural quiet and stillness. The world around us seems to be set at full throttle.

As busy humans, we’re always on the move. Most rangers I know are not just moving all the time, they’re moving in a hurry. They’re trying to get things done, meet deadlines, do the work of three people, do more with less — our agency’s favorite mantra — finish a project, run code to that emergency call, and barely keep our chins above the waterline while simultaneously trying to keep the many balls we’re juggling in the air, even if they do tend to collide with each other here and there.

All this busyness and artificial noise can lead to stress, necessitating a break. It’s then that I set out on a backcountry patrol in hopes to find stillness. Yet, even when I’m in the wilderness, I find myself surrounded by things in motion. The deer, bears, and visitors are the obvious movers. But when I slow down and immerse myself into the resource, I see the smaller critters moving about their day: the squirrels and salamanders; the birds, bugs, and the fish.

And then I notice that even the non-living moves.

Have you ever stopped to think about the scores of natural things that are animate despite not being alive? Lucky for rangers, the territory inside the boundaries of the parks we patrol and protect is prime country in which to witness such examples.

- The raging rivers of Canyonlands, Dinosaur, the Grand Canyon, the Buffalo, the Obed, the New and Gauley rivers, and the Big South Fork, all in a hurry to get to the ocean;

- The pounding surf of the Atlantic Ocean against Cape Hatteras and Assateague Island;

- The sharp report of two snags as they rub together in the forest;

- Gentle autumn breezes rustling fallen leaves;

- Calving glaciers at Kenai Fjords;

The majestic spewing of Yellowstone’s fabled geysers (who knew spewing could be majestic!?!);

- Ice cliffs at Pictured Rocks and Apostle Islands as they crash and shatter against the south shore of Lake Superior;

- Snowflakes tinkling through the trees blanketing a half million acres across the Great Smoky Mountains;

- The shifting sands of Sleeping Bear and the Great Sand Dunes;

- Spectacular sunsets over the Sonoran Desert of Organ Pipe Cactus and blinding hot lightning connecting earth and cloud (what an old ranger buddy of mine often called “drama in the sky”);



God moving at Upper Whiteoak Canyon Falls, Central District, Shenandoah National Park. Photo: Kevin Moses

- Thundering avalanches on the crevassed slopes of Mount Rainier;
- The breathing, consuming, growing (and yet not living) fires of Florida and the American West;

- Glowing hot lava flows at Hawaii Volcanoes;

- The soothing sound of a steady spring rain

- And of course, the glorious, cascading waterfalls of Shenandoah. None are living, yet all of them move.

Some probably view these phenomena simply as common, everyday, natural occurrences. I, however, see them as my God – my Creator – hard at work in His art studio, continuing with His work in progress, His...Creation.

The author of Psalm 46 references the mysterious moving of some of the very forces I’ve outlined above: “...the earth give way and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea, though its waters roar and foam and the mountains quake with their surging.” These words

“And though I cherish the fellowship I experience at my church, I know that my favorite places to worship are not human-made cathedrals, but God-made landscapes.”

– Kevin Moses, Shenandoah National Park, Va.

of scripture remind me of a great line from one of my all-time favorite short stories, “USFS 1919: The Ranger, the Cook, and the Hole In the Sky,” by the famed American author, Norman Maclean: *“I knew that, when needed, mountains would move for me.”*

All the manufactured moving and hurrying that fills most of our days can translate into that stress I mentioned earlier. We all get stressed – me included – and we all have our own methods of dealing with whatever it is that stresses us out. For me, I seek my God’s presence and counsel. For others, this may come from other spiritual connections. And though I cherish the fellowship I experience at my church, I know that my favorite places to worship are not human-made cathedrals, but God-made landscapes.

It’s on this hallowed ground that I lay my fears, stress, and worries at the feet of my Lord, who tells me I should stress over nothing, because, to paraphrase Him, “He’s got this.”

This is easier said than done, of course, when something is stressing me out. However, the stressful times are exactly the ones during which I must return to the woods — the resource that we as rangers are so blessed to protect every day of our careers — and seek my God’s presence. By doing so, not only do I reap the benefit of physical fitness through exercise, but spiritual fitness, as well, by marveling at one of my God’s best handiworks – His wild places.

I take breaks to rest muscle, heart, and lungs, but also to recharge mind, spirit, and soul. I discover that while I’m most still, perhaps dipping sore feet into a rushing mountain stream, I feel God moving around me more than ever.

Amidst all His movement – indeed because of it – I am reminded of that timeless offer of internal peace provided by the Psalmist, one that transcends all understanding:

“Be still and know that I am God.”

— Kevin Moses

Central District Ranger, Shenandoah National Park

Welcome to the ANPR family

Here are the newest members of the Association of National Park Rangers
(updated 2/9/2021)

Victor Ramirez	Hialeah, FL
Heather McDaniel	Bowie, MD
Mackenzie Desmarais	Mill Spring, NC
Bill Overby	Camano Island, WA
Sam Oliver	Portland, OR
John Morris	Eagle River, AK
Lyndel Meikle	Deer Lodge, MT
Sara Newman	Arlington, VA
Dana Pohedra	
Katie Hoffmaster	

Kudos List

These people have either given someone a gift membership to ANPR or recruited a new member. Thanks for your help and support!

(updated 2/9/21)

Rick Mossman
Jeanette Meleen
George Walsh
Deborah Gates



Custom Printed Junior Ranger Badge Stickers for Kids

Our custom printed badge stickers will bring a smile to a child’s face. Our junior park ranger badge stickers are ideal for community events, school classroom visits or when children visit your battlefield, national park, heritage corridor, historic site, lakeshore, national monument, recreation area, scenic riverway, scenic trail or seashore. Badge stickers are printed on either shiny gold or silver foil. Customized for your location at no extra charge. Fast and reliable delivery.

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