

ADVISORY GROUPS

The NPS has been "confronted" with advisory groups of one kind or another since its inception. In the early days, it took the form of newspaper editors, influential citizens and organized groups such as the Sierra Club and others.

Then in 1935, Congress created the Advisory Board on National Parks, Historic Sites, Buildings and Monuments (the Secretary's Advisory Board) in conjunction with the Historic Sites Act. The Board was created to advise the Secretary of the Interior on matters relating to National Parks and to the administration of the Historic Sites Act.

Since 1935, the Board has undergone a number of changes, both in the way and degree of use and in its statutory authority. For example, the Board was terminated in 1974 by the general provisions of the Federal Advisory Committee Act; reestablished in 1975 and continued administratively by the Secretary of the Interior and again given statutory existence by the 1976 Authorities Act until 1989. The new legislation also changed the name of the Board to the National Park System Advisory Board. This group is the only one of the 30 that pertain to the NPS that is national in scope.

The National Park System Advisory Board meets semi-annually and makes recommendations on all proposals for established units of the NP system, historic and natural landmarks, and upon broad policy concerning the management, development, use and preservation of values in the NPS.

Regional Advisory Committees were established by the Director under authority of PL-91-383 passed in 1973 which gave the Secretary of the Interior authority to seek advice from any number of people. Each region now has such a committee to advise the Regional Director in much the same way as the Secretary's Advisory Board advises the Secretary of the Interior.

In the past 10 years, the legislation establishing new NPS areas often has included a section providing for the creation of an advisory commission. The legislation also outlines such things as:

- number of members
- appointment time
- composition and how members will be selected
- the length of time the group will remain in existence - usually 10 years
- that the group will serve without compensation

There are presently sixteen of these committees that are site-specific in function such as the Golden Gate NRA Citizens' Advisory Committee.

There has never been universal agreement about the usefulness of all these committees and boards and perhaps as a result, President Carter recently asked the Secretary of the Interior to review each advisory committee to determine:

1. Whether each is carrying out its purpose.
2. Whether still consistent with the provisions of applicable statutes.
3. Whether it should be merged with other advisory committees.
4. Whether it should be abolished.

The study is continuing but so far, most committees will probably remain.