



INTERPRETIVE
WORKFORCE
ISSUES



Achieving Professional Excellence In The Interpretive Workforce

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The publication last summer of the Director's Action Plan for Management of the Park Ranger Work Force brought to a head a number of issues relating to NPS Interpreters and Interpretation that have been discussed and debated for many years. While the Action Plan seemed to threaten some very basic values and institutions that are at the heart of what we do, it also caused us to focus on some issues that need to be resolved. These issues, which are addressed in Challenge #1 of *The Interpretive Challenge*, include: **The need to "professionalize" Interpretation; better grade structure and career/advancement opportunities for interpreters, especially those who don't want to go "up and out" into management; and the pros and cons of the GS-025 series, as it relates to the interpretive function.**

We in the WASO Division of Interpretation have heard from a great number of you regarding these and other issues, as a result of the publication of the Action Plan, and rumors have been flying thick and fast. This is the perfect opportunity, while we have everyone's attention, to address these issues of concern to NPS Interpreters, and in this paper I will try to do just that.

Before we get into a discussion of the issues, though, I would like to give you a little history, or perhaps you might call it perspective, on how the profession of interpretation came to be what it is today in the NPS. Since most of the issues that you have brought to our attention have their roots in the personnel and classification arena, I will present this short history from that perspective. I also need to define one term, before we go any further. The law, in 5 USC 3308, defines the term "Professional" as a position in a series that has a positive academic requirement. What that means is that if the job you are in is in a series that requires a certain number of hours in a particular academic subject to qualify for that job, you are in a professional series and therefore a "professional". The law, in fact, prevents the establishment of minimum educational requirements where it cannot be demonstrated that a person will fail in the position without the appropriate academic background. If the series your job is in has no positive academic requirements, then you are not in a professional series and, therefore, not a professional. It has nothing to do with how well you do your work or how long you have been doing it. You may not agree with the law, but those are the rules that we and the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) are playing under, at this time. Now, lets go back a few years.

For purposes of this paper, we'll go back as far as 1959, when the GS-452 park naturalist series was established. The GS-452 Park

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Naturalist series was a complete revision of the original Park Naturalist series published in 1946 and was established as a "professional" series, with positive natural science academic requirements. The official definition of this series was; "positions, the duties of which are to advise on, administer, supervise, or perform professional and scientific work in the geological and biological sciences in national parks to conserve park features and interpret natural and other features to the public". The full performance level began at GS-7, preceded by a GS-5 trainee. Front line interpretation was performed by GS-5 Naturalist Trainees as well as by GS-7 and GS-9 Naturalists when grades were based on professional requirements and not on supervision or management.

This series was unique to the NPS, but paralleled the GS-170 Historian series that the Service, and many other agencies, used and still use today. The only difference is that the current Historian Series standard describes GS-7's as advanced trainees. So, we had "professional" park interpreters, naturalists and historians, with appropriate academic credentials, developing and presenting interpretive programs and services to the public.

In 1969, all that changed. At the recommendation of the Service's Field Operations Study Task Force (FOST) the GS-452 Park Naturalist series, along with the "non-professional" GS-453 Park Ranger series, was abolished. (The GS-170 Historian series was not affected because of its widespread use throughout the Government. However, its use for classifying interpreters is currently seldom used.) Replacing these two abolished series were two new series: the GS-025 Park Ranger (Management) series and the GS-026 Park Technician series. Neither of the two new series had positive academic requirements and were, therefore, not considered to be "professional", although the GS-025 Park Ranger series was written for park managers (including Chiefs of Interpretation) with training positions at the GS-5/7 level and the full performance levels beginning at GS-9. Many of you will remember the rationale, and the discussions, that accompanied this decision to separate management and technical duties into two separate series.

One result of this change was that most front-line interpretation fell into the GS-026 Park Technician series and was considered non-professional technical work that had no positive academic requirements. In fact, there never were **any** written classification standards for the GS-026 Park Technician series. Also, within the GS-025 Park Ranger (Management) series there were no positive academic/subject area requirements that could be applied to interpretive positions such as District or Chief Park Interpreter.

The line that FOST tried to draw between technical and management activities may have looked good on paper, but it did not transfer into every-day field operations very well. By the mid 80's, the line had all but disappeared at the field level. In 1985, the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) made a thorough examination of the way we were operating at the field level, in regards to the FOST plan. As a result of that examination, and as a reflection of how we were doing business at the time, the GS-026 and GS-025 series which, because of the way they were used were by then largely indistinguishable from each other at the GS-5

through GS-9 level, were combined into a new GS-025 series. Under this new series, which is where we are now, management positions still begin at GS-9, but full performance level work is recognizable at any grade above GS-2.

Now that you have some idea of how we got to where we are, let's look at the current situation for NPS Interpreters. Presently, almost all interpreters in the Service are in the GS-025 series. As mentioned earlier, this is a "non-professional" series with no positive academic requirements, and is so amorphous that you can classify just about any position in it. It is a one-grade-interval series up through GS-5 and two-grade-interval through GS-11. (2/3/4/5/7/9/11/12/13 etc.) One-grade-interval work is considered technical, as in the old GS-026 Park Technician series, and the full performance level for a front line park interpreter is GS-5.

What all this means is that even though NPS Interpreters are trained as professionals, present professional programs, and perceive themselves as professionals, they are not recognized or compensated as professionals under the current classification system presently used across the System. Under the current system, a GS-025-05 park interpreter who "develops interpretive programs, conducts independent research of topics; selects and organizes material to fit the purposes of a program and the type of group for which it is intended; presents a variety of formal and interpretive programs including orientation talks, environmental education programs, conducted walks, demonstration and campfire programs; initiates or assists with creation or revision of interpretive materials such as guidebooks, handouts and exhibits; and operates a variety of audiovisual and other equipment used in connection with interpretive material" is performing non-professional, technical work for which only a high school education and general experience is required. In most cases, GS-5 is the highest grade that a park interpreter could achieve in performing the above work. Interpretive positions at GS-025-09 and above are considered management positions and require program management and supervisory responsibilities, such as a District or Chief Park Interpreter, but are still considered non-professional with no positive academic requirements.

As many of you have noted, the lack of positive academic requirements for both front line interpreters and interpretive program managers often results in interpretation that is less than accurate or professional. In some cases, as has been pointed out, no one on the entire interpretive staff has subject matter expertise appropriate to the park themes or resources. Also, because a front line interpreter is usually at the full performance level at GS-05, and cannot go any higher without going "up-and-out" into management and/or supervision, many of our best interpreters are feeling frustrated or unappreciated and some are leaving the Service.

Now that you have had a chance to review our current situation and how we got here, I would like to address some of the issues that you have raised, beginning with the need to professionalize interpretation. It is pretty obvious that a significant number of the problems discussed above regarding professionalism are related to the GS-025 Park Ranger series. Over the years we seem to have come to associate the green and gray "Park Ranger" uniform with

the GS-025 Park Ranger series and to believe that one cannot be a "Park Ranger" or wear the uniform unless one is in that series. And, even though it is a non-professional series with no positive academic requirements and poor career opportunities for those who want to stay in interpretation, we still seem to embrace it as the only series for NPS interpreters. It appears to me that our vice-like grip on the GS-025 Park Ranger series is the root of our problems regarding the lack of "professionalism" in interpretation. Let me explain.

As I mentioned earlier, OPM will not consider a series as professional unless it has positive academic requirements. This means a minimum number of course hours in a specific academic subject. The law (5 USC 3308) prevents the establishment of minimum educational requirements where it cannot be established that a person could not successfully accomplish the duties of a position without a certain number of specific courses or a specific degree(s) in a field or fields of study. So, as discussed above, the GS-025 Park Ranger series is not a professional series. We have heard from a number of you who have suggested that we make the GS-025 a professional series, or that we establish our own professional series for interpreters. If we were to do either, what degree requirement(s) would we chose. What would we exclude? Would we require a certain level of communication skills? If so, how would we define, measure or classify communication skills?

You should also be aware that, because of several legal implications, OPM is very reluctant to establish new professional series. Due to the constraints in the law mentioned above, they and the user agencies are subject to law suits and complaints of discrimination when the academic and performance link-ups are not fully supportable. In a recent exercise involving a request by eight land management agencies from three Cabinet level Departments for a new professional series for Natural Resource Recreation Management, OPM flatly refused to pursue the establishment of a new series. Instead, they encouraged the use of a new specialization within an existing series. Even with this much "clout" behind the proposal, OPM did not want to take on the legal implications of a new series.

I know that many interpreters feel that the law and OPM, are inflexible, that the regulations do not fairly address the complexity and variety inherent in the profession of interpretation, and that we ought to put pressure on OPM to modify their system to fit our situation. Maybe we should, and we will be addressing that question when we bring together a task force later this year. But, I would like to suggest that in the meantime, it is not necessary to continue to fight the system and try to fit a square peg into a round hole. There are other options that are currently available that can improve things dramatically right now.

It is important at this point that you know that there are several classification series currently available to us that we can utilize to professionalize interpretation. These series include the GS-401 General Biology series, the GS-170 History series, the GS-193 Archeology series, the GS-486 Wildlife Biology series, and the GS-430 Botanist series, just to name a few. These are all professional series with specific academic subject requirements, and they can be

non-supervisory positions.

But, its also important for you to know that the minimum full performance grade for most professional series is GS-09. That means that you cannot create a job in a professional series below the GS-09 level. (You can create a GS-5/7 trainee position, but you must have a GS-09 or higher full performance level position targeted for the trainee.) Also, even though an employee is in a professional series that requires a certain amount of subject matter related work, that does not preclude the employee from presenting interpretive programs and performing other interpretive activities just like any other park interpreter. It all depends on what the "primary duties" of the job are, as defined in the position description, and the percentage mix of higher and lower level duties assigned to the position.

Generally, higher graded work must occupy a majority (51 percent or more) of the positions work time in order to control the grade. In other words, a position that contains 51 percent or more GS-9 professional work and 49 percent or less GS-7 or lower work, may be graded at the GS-9 level.

Even in situations where the higher level work is performed less than a majority of the time, the grade of the position may be based on the higher level of work if all of the following conditions are met:

- The work is officially assigned to the position on a regular and continuing basis;
- It is a significant and substantial part of the overall position (i.e., occupying at least 25 percent of the employees time); and
- The higher level knowledge and skills needed to perform the work would be required in recruiting for the position if it became vacant.

Let's examine a hypothetical example of how use of these other series can professionalize the interpretive program in a park. Avalanche Peaks NP has a significant biological theme and a permanent interpretive staff of seven, all in the GS-025 series, consisting of the GS-11 Chief of Interpretation, two GS-9 district interpreters and four GS-5 interpreters. Since all staff members are in the GS-025 series, it is entirely possible that none of them have a biological background. However, as the Chief of Interpretation, you decide to re-classify one of the GS-5 interpreter positions to a GS-401 Biologist. You then recruit for, and get, a Biologist. The job can be a GS-9 Biologist or it can be a GS-5/7/9 Biologist position, and it can be non-supervisory. The person can still wear the Park Ranger uniform, be called a Park Ranger (as an organizational title, the official title would be "Biologist") and can still give interpretive programs, but also serve as your subject matter specialist. He or she would give your interpretive programs more depth, be able to present accurate, professional programs to virtually any group, and increase the accuracy and quality of both written and verbal biological interpretation in the rest of your staff. If a certain level of communication skills are important to the job, qualification requirements for those skills can be built into the KSAs to ensure that the person selected will have the necessary mix of knowledge and skills. The park now has the subject matter expertise to conduct a professional interpretive program; a **Master Interpreter**, if you will. You have also created a new GS-

9 interpretive position within the System. And, depending on the complexity of the resource, and other factors, the Master Interpreter position might even classify at a grade that is higher than GS-9.

Let's look at some other ways that this concept might be applied. A Park Superintendent who has a vacant Chief of Interpretation position decides that, because of the importance of the wildlife resources in the park and the need to interpret those resources, the position should be filled by a professional Wildlife Biologist. He or she works with a classification specialist and, if appropriate, the job is reclassified from the GS-025 Park Ranger series into the GS-486 Wildlife Biologist series. The Wildlife Biologist selected to fill that position still functions as the Chief of Interpretation, manages the park interpretive program, supervises the interpretive staff and wears the Park Ranger uniform. But, there now is a "professional" Wildlife Biologist managing the interpretive program in a park with unique wildlife resources, and, in the future, the position will continue to be filled with wildlife biologists. Also, it is quite possible that the position will classify out at a higher grade in the professional series than in the Park Ranger series.

The process of re-classifying a position into a different series is normally done when the position is vacant, although, if the incumbent can qualify for the new series, it can, and has been done to an encumbered position, at times resulting in an immediate increase in grade. This same concept can apply to any area where the professional quality of the interpretive program will be enhanced by using the available classification series to obtain individuals with the appropriate academic backgrounds for the resources.

This is just a quick example of one way we can professionalize interpretation, but it demonstrates the point that, under current circumstances, we will have to go outside the GS-025 series to do it. In practice, it is often more complicated than the examples I used, and requires working closely with your personnel specialist, but it is not difficult to accomplish, and, in fact, has been done in several parks. And, if this concept is applied, where appropriate, across the System, it will have a significant impact on the quality of interpretation, not to mention the grade structure of Interpreters, Servicewide.

This concept of going outside the GS-025 Park Ranger series is not new; the GS-170 Historian series has been used by Historian/Interpreters since long before the GS-025 series was created, and is still in use today. But, the recent discussion of this concept in the Director's Action Plan has caused considerable concern among NPS Interpreters. Some of you are concerned that interpretation will be fragmented as a discipline into a bunch of unrelated job series with no clear connection to one another and no obvious paths to management. Others are worried that by emphasizing academic specialization, we are ignoring the essential communications skills that every interpreter must have to do his or her job effectively. And, a number of you are concerned that utilizing these professional series, with their academic requirements, will result in the elimination of career opportunities for many current Interpreters, leaving them academically unqualified for their present positions or those to which they might aspire. Most of you would rather see

Interpreters have their own professional series which would allow those that wished to stay in front line interpretation to do so and still advance to a reasonable grade, while providing a clear career ladder to park management for those who chose to go that route.

One of the objectives of the task force that we will be assembling later this year is to look at the possibilities of a new series for Interpreters; perhaps even resurrecting the abolished GS-452 Park Naturalist standards in a format that can be applied to current conditions and needs, or developing something based on an "Education" series. But again, before we can approach OPM with our ideas, we, as interpreters, will have to address the question of what degree requirement(s) would we choose for the series and what would we exclude. And, if we want to require a certain level of communication skills, we will have to reach agreement on how we will define, measure and classify communication skills. We will also have to explain to OPM why the current group of professional series available to us, and used extensively by other agencies, won't work for NPS Interpreters. Also, in regard to the concern that utilizing the professional series, with their academic requirements, will result in the elimination of career opportunities for many interpreters, we are going to have to make up our mind as to what we really want, before we approach OPM. Do we want to increase the professional level of NPS Interpretation by requiring subject matter expertise in the critical positions in interpretation, or do we want wide open career ladders? I'm not sure we can have both, although the career ladders do seem to be better with some professional positions. Take some time to think about these questions. You may be asked for your thoughts.

We do not know how successful we will be in convincing OPM to establish a new series for interpreters, but we do know that it will be a long process, perhaps several years. It seems to me that in the meantime we can resolve some of our problems with the tools at hand. We can certainly make an immediate impact on the professional level in NPS Interpretation Servicewide by converting current GS-025 interpretive positions into other professional subject matter series where appropriate. Of course, that type of action will result in higher grades in many cases, which will impact park budgets, but it should not be too difficult if we can demonstrate that the benefits are worth the increased cost.

Those of you that fear that interpretation will be fragmented as a discipline by utilizing the available subject matter professional series, need to examine the current situation, where interpretation is not even considered a professional discipline. Wouldn't it be to our advantage to increase the professional standing of Interpretation in the NPS if we have the opportunity? The fragmentation will only be on paper, and, unless you wear your SF-52 pinned to the front of your Park Ranger uniform, no one will know your actual series. And, the fact that you are outside of the GS-025 series will not affect your chances of going on up in park management because you can always get back into the GS-025 series, if and when you decide that you want to. There are virtually no specific requirements, outside of experience, for the GS-025 Park Ranger/Manager series after you get above the entry grades.

So far, this discussion has focused on "professionalizing" interpreta-

tion by increasing the subject matter expertise in NPS interpretive programs through the utilization of professional classification series. But, as we have seen, this process generally operates at GS-9 and above. Obviously, we can not have an entire interpretive staff of GS-9's and above. Virtually all professional occupations have a technical and/or assistant series. In NPS Interpretation it is our GS-5 and GS-7 front line interpreters. I would like to shift gears a little, now, and address the subject of improving the subject-matter expertise of our technical staff.

Go back and review the italicized classification description for a GS-025-05 Park Interpreter that I quoted earlier in this paper. I think that you will agree that it pretty much sums up what a front line interpreter does in the NPS. According to OPM classification standards it is non-professional, technical work and the full performance level of those duties grades out at GS-5. The grade is controlled by the subject matter, knowledge requirement, responsibility and scope of the work. Full performance means that the employee can perform the duties, as described, with normal supervision. The quality of the performed work has no influence on the grade.

We have received a number of comments from the field relating to this segment of the interpretive workforce. The two concerns that were voiced the most were the lack of appropriate subject matter expertise, and frustration over an apparent lack of promotion/career advancement potential for employees who want to stay in straight front line interpretation.

The first concern relates to the problem, expressed by a number of interpretive managers, that many of our GS-5 interpreters do not have the academic background to be able to adequately deal with the subject matter in the park in which they work. Apparently the feeling is, when an interpreter cannot discuss in at least reasonable depth a particular subject relating to the park's major theme, it is a reflection on the competency of that park's interpretive program. Many of you have asked why we can't establish academic requirements at the entrance level so that this situation would not occur.

Once again, we need to look at our use of the GS-025 Park Ranger series for our answers. Because we have chosen to classify our front line interpreter positions in that series, we are limited to its very general qualification standards, as described earlier in this paper. We actually require higher academic standards for our Excepted Service seasonal interpretive positions than we do for our permanent interpretive positions at this level!

Part of the cause of the above problem is that, in many cases, we are not doing a careful enough job of preparing the paper work for recruitment. Even within the GS-025 series, you **can** write KSA's and Selective factors that target in on skills and experience in such a way that a person would have to have the academic or experience background you are looking for, to make the register. It may take more time and effort, but if we are really committed to building a more competent interpretive workforce, it will be time well invested.

If we are willing to go outside of the GS-025 series, we have several

options for addressing the subject matter expertise problem described above. Most of the professional series, such as those discussed earlier in this paper, have a technical or assistant series under them. (Forestry Technician, Biological Technician, etc.) We need to take the time to familiarize ourselves with these technical series and registers. Most require subject matter education or experience in the field, are one-grade-interval (5/6/7/8/9/10/11), and can go as high as GS-11. We can hire off of these registers just like we do off of the GS-025 register, but if utilized properly, the technical registers will provide a much better opportunity for obtaining the subject matter expertise we are seeking. Get together with your personnel specialist and explore these options to see how they can work for you.

The second concern, one that we heard from many of you out there, addresses career issues and expectations for GS-5 interpreters. It seems to break down into two major parts. One part deals with the problems of recruiting and retaining properly qualified interpreters in GS-5 front line positions without much promise for advancement. The other part deals with the problems faced by interpreters who want to stay in straight interpretation and still be able to advance in grade.

Of the 1400+ permanent interpretive positions in the NPS, almost 900 are below GS-9 and almost 600 are below GS-7. Simple math will tell you that there are several hundred GS-5 interpreter positions in the System that do not offer much, if anything, in the way of career advancement potential. Of course, individuals in those positions, if qualified, have the opportunity to compete within the ranks for higher grade jobs. But, the turnover rate at GS-9 is low, and a significant number of GS-025-05 interpreters find themselves stuck at that level for a long period of time. At the same time, we want to enhance the competency of our front line interpretive force, and are looking for ways to increase the subject matter expertise of our front line interpretive staff. It's easy to see what happens when we bring young, academically qualified, career directed employees into GS-5 interpreter positions with little opportunity for advancement. We are building in almost guaranteed frustration and high turnover.

"How can we build, and maintain, a front line interpretive force in the National Park System that has the necessary subject matter expertise to provide high level services to the public, but is satisfied to work at the GS-5 or GS-7 level and is not looking to move rapidly up through the ranger ranks?" This is a subject that will receive particular attention by the task force. Among the concepts that the task force will be examining in this subject area will be the increased utilization of the various technical and/or assistant series at the GS-5/6/7/8/9/ levels, and utilizing the GS-090 Park Guide series to hire local individuals who will be satisfied with the job, grade and location over an extended period of time. I know that the mere mention of the GS-090 Park Guide series causes immediate and intense concern in many NPS Interpreters, and that the use of that particular series and/or title in the first Action Plan memo was counter-productive. But, it is one of the many "tools" we Interpreters have at our disposal and there are situations where the Park Guide series would help address local recruiting/retention problems. For those of you that are worried that all or most front

line Interpreters will be converted to Park Guides, the answer is up to we Interpreters, and from what I am hearing, that's not the way we want to go.

The task force will also be putting special emphasis on the task of finding avenues for interpreters to advance in grade, at least to the GS-11 level, without having to go "up-and-out" into management or supervision. We are fully aware of the feeling in the Field that a "good" interpreter should not have to leave what he or she does best, in order to advance in grade; that individuals with outstanding interpretive skills should be recognized for their value to the Service and utilized in a more effective manner than is currently done; and that such recognition should include higher graded, non-management positions within interpretive operations. The task force will be examining the possibility of establishing non-supervisory GS-9/11 interpreter positions at the full-performance and journeyman levels, requiring specific academic credentials related to the resources being interpreted; a position that we are referring to as "**Master Interpreter**".

There is something that some of you can do right now, without waiting for the task force to get to work, that could raise a significant number of GS-025-5 interpreters to the GS-7 level, Servicewide. The classification description of work for the GS-025-5 interpreter, described earlier in this paper, is based on interpreting a single major theme, usually the major theme of the area. It may be the story of the Civil War battles fought at Manassas, the thermal features of Yellowstone, the ancient civilizations who lived in the Mesa Verde area, etc. However, if the job requires knowledge and interpretation of two separate and unrelated themes, the same position probably can be classified at the GS-7 level. Let me give you an example. A GS-5 interpreter at Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania gives guided walks and talks on the Civil War battles that were fought in the general area and how they related to one another and to the overall progress of the War. Even though there were several battles, the knowledge base required for that job is the Civil War and that is considered as one major theme. Another GS-5 interpreter, this time at Gettysburg, also gives walks and talks on the Civil War Battles fought in the area, and relates them to the overall War progression. But, she also gives a guided walk around the Eisenhower Farm, and explains the role that the farm played in the life of President Eisenhower. She is required to utilize two distinct and separate knowledge bases and interprets two different and unrelated themes. Her position may qualify to be upgraded to a GS-7, based on the "dual-theme interpretation" concept. Other examples could be geology/wildlife at Zion, Archeology/botany at Bandelier, Chalmette/French Quarter at Jean Lafitte, rain forest ecology/tide pool ecology at Olympic, etc. The rule is: the two or more themes have to require separate and distinct bodies of knowledge, and the interpreter must be required to master and utilize both bodies of knowledge in his or her job.

This mechanism for upgrading front line interpreters is something we should be actively investigating and utilizing right now. It is an opportunity to recognize the work that is currently being done. It also provides an opportunity to restructure GS-5 positions, where appropriate, to bring them to the GS-7 level. By the way,

this mechanism also applies to seasonal Interpreter positions. Again, consult with your personnel office to see what impact this can have on your staff or job.

There is one other way that a GS-5 interpreter position can be upgraded to a GS-7 that you ought to consider, as appropriate. Under current procedures, a GS-5 interpreter, doing straight one-theme interpretation has "hit the wall" gradewise. He or she can not go any higher in grade, not even to a GS-7. But, if a certain amount of administrative or resource management duties, for instance, were added to the position description, the position may then classify out as a GS-7. True, this requires the addition of non-interpretive duties and may not sit well with those who feel that they should be able to stay solely in interpretation. But, in some situations, it may be the only way, under current conditions, to establish a GS-7 interpreter position in a particular park. And, this type of position management is one good way to bridge the gap between the GS-5 interpreter and the GS-9 manager for those who are interested in pursuing a career in park management. The administrative duties performed by the interpreter at the GS-7 level better enable him or her to compete for a GS-9 management job, than would just straight interpretive duties, such as dual theme interpretation. But remember, the purpose of such an exercise is to fulfill a park need, not simply to upgrade positions. It is certainly worth examining, with your personnel office, to determine how it works and if and how it may apply to your situation.

The intent of this paper, which is the product of close cooperation with the WASO Personnel Division and comments received from many field interpreters, is to help you understand current conditions and options. We will keep you informed, normally through Interpretation, of the selection of the task group and developments as we go along. Your comments and thoughts on this subject are always welcome, and in fact necessary if we are to continue to represent the thinking and needs of all NPS Interpreters. Please direct your phone calls or written comments to the Chief, Division of Interpretation, WASO.

The Interpretive Workforce Task group, which will consist of current or former interpreters, will be formed this Summer and will be meeting soon after with NPS Personnel officials and with OPM to address a number of issues, as I have discussed in this paper. But, it will be a slow process and you should not expect instant gratification from OPM on the issues and concerns closest to your hearts. I don't expect to see any major changes, like a new series, if that is even possible, for at least a year and, realistically, the process will probably take much longer than that, if it occurs at all.

So, we have a choice. We can wait around for the Task group and OPM to "fix things" for us, which may or may not turn out to be to our liking. Or, we can take advantage of the variety of options currently available to us and start working on the problems ourselves. I suggest that we get going now. I think that OPM will be more sympathetic to our needs and concerns if they see that we are doing our best to work within the current system. Also, how will we be able to convince OPM that the current system doesn't work, if that is what we want to do, if we are not even trying to make it work?

In this paper I have provided a menu of options. There is not enough space to provide the full recipe for any of them. It is up to you to look over this menu, and to make choices according to your needs and situation. The full recipes are available from your personnel specialist and you will need to work closely with him or her all the way through the process. But it is up to us, in Interpretation, to get the process started. Personnel is willing and ready to help us, once we decide what we want to do. Let's get serious about helping ourselves and start focusing the creativity and innovation, that we interpreters are so well known for, into raising our own profession up to a professional level.

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"This paper and the Personnel and Position Management principles contained herein have been reviewed by my staff and myself, and we concur in the statements as being correct in terms of content and intent relative to the cited laws, regulations and applications of them to Service positions. We also stand ready to assist the Interpretive Division and the planned Task Group in any and all aspects of development and implementation of such plans and projects that are necessary to further the objectives of professionalization of the interpretive workforce of the Service."
Mario R. Fraire, NPS Chief Personnel Officer.