



RANGER ACTIVITIES INFORMATION EXCHANGE

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Chief Ranger's Comments

I had the opportunity the other day to spend the afternoon with members of the position management training cadre from the various regions. They were back at Mather Training Center after completing their first years' efforts, which included presenting training to approximately 800 NPS employees. The purpose of this first anniversary reunion was to critique themselves and to make any needed changes to the curriculum. As a result of their efforts, the course has been significantly amended, and all agree that the revisions have improved it.

The difference in the level of confidence and commitment to the subject among group members from a year ago was striking. One of the regional team leaders told me that she knew of ten significant organizational changes which had occurred in parks or headquarters in her region which came about as a direct result of the training course. All had been made to improve the quality of organizational operations. There was a general feeling among the participants that there would be further improvements on employee-related issues as more managers begin to use the principles of good position management to organize their resources and increase accountability in their operations.

While pay is a very real issue, we are bound by Federal pay scales with the exception of special pay available to employees in areas which can demonstrate problems of recruitment and retention. Such pay rates now include over 750 rangers and 2,500 employees overall throughout the System. There is much that can also be done, however, through quality position management efforts and honest classification of jobs. We need to classify positions that do not specifically involve ranger duties into other, more appropriate series. If you read the last "pink sheet", you saw the announcement for a GS-025-3 park ranger (usher). Ushers, fee collectors, dispatchers, information station interpreters, and guards are all important jobs that are critical to the service. But they aren't all appropriate to the ranger series, and there are series designed to classify such work.

Several problems arise by classifying many of these positions in the 025 series, which requires park experience. This practice seriously reduces local recruitment options and exacerbates recruitment and retention problems. It's also hard to make a case for professionalization (i.e., establishment of minimum education requirements) when a series contains so many positions for which we cannot make the case for a degree requirement.

The same is true in positions up and down the line. A position that I feel is seriously misclassified in the ranger series in Ranger Activities is that of our fire ecologist at the Branch of Fire in Boise. I cannot believe that the position will not classify appropriately as a research forester. Why we ever insisted that it be classified as a park ranger position I'll never know. If

we were to advertise it now, we could not even require a degree of any type for the position, which has Servicewide fire research responsibilities. It has recently been redescribed and is now in for reclassification.

If you need employees with specific backgrounds in biology, geology, wildlife sciences, history or related fields for specific jobs, you will find that some of those jobs are going to classify more appropriately outside the 025 series. There is nothing wrong with that. There's no reason, for example, why a GS-401 biologist can't be in uniform, have a commission and be qualified as an EMT if it makes sense from a position management stand point. These non-biological responsibilities in this case would not be the primary purpose of the job.

This rule can also apply to non-supervisory/management interpretive positions. If you need/want a strong depth of knowledge in a given discipline or disciplines to enhance the quality of your program, you should consider employing a specialist. Example: If you are in a park with a significant geological theme, you could hire a geologist (GS-1350) as one of your interpretive staff. This would give your program depth; it would make it possible for your geologist to present programs to virtually any group and to increase the quality of geologic interpretation in the rest of your staff. This position could be non-supervisory, and would probably grade out at GS-9. In this same park, 025 interpreters would be GS-5's or 7's. They would not be expected to have the same depth of knowledge in geology, and would present geology programs based on information gained on the job.

To continue our example, let's presume that the park in questions has significant themes in both geology and wildlife biology. You might then want to hire a GS-487-9 non-supervisory wildlife biologist in interpretation. Since an interpreter in the 025 series classifies as a GS-7 if he or she has more than one significant theme to interpret, you could then have GS-025-7 interpretive rangers for the balance of your staff. Both the geologist and wildlife biologist would be non-supervisory and in the higher grades because of the higher level of knowledge they are required to have in their programs and to provide assistance on other employees' programs. The supervisor (district or chief interpreter) would probably be a GS-025 at the 9/11/12 level in this park, but could also be either a geologist or wildlife biologist.

This discussion is hypothetical and doesn't focus on monetary concerns, but the concepts are valid. Each of the individuals in the example can be in uniform. They can be members of the structural fire brigade or the park's rescue team if such participation is dictated by park needs. They can even have some enforcement responsibilities if necessary. We can still call any person in a uniform a park ranger. Unless your SF-52 is pinned to your chest, no one is going to know your actual series. I can assure you that most folks I've known don't care what series you're in; they just care about what you can do.

I have never known or heard of any selecting official hiring someone because he or she was in the 025 series and not some other series. You select a person because, all things considered, he or she has the best overall qualifications for a given job and because past supervisors attest to the caliber of his or her work. In many top management positions, it's felt that some variety in past experience is beneficial.

My interest is not in dismantling the 025 series. It is in professionalizing and properly managing ranger work in resources management, interpretation and protection. In order to do this successfully, we are going to have to use other series where appropriate.

A lot of things that we perceive as needing to be fixed we can't fix ourselves, such as pay and housing quality, quantity and costs. They are real, but different from position management and classification problems, which we can deal with ourselves. We'd be much better able to identify just where our problems are if we had our work force better planned. The issues of housing and pay are currently getting attention as well.

If you haven't taken the position management course, you should do so. If you took it early and didn't get all you wanted, you've got enough to teach yourself more. Work closely with personnel, especially your classifier, in planning the composition of your own work force. Explore options for doing things better. Look at the various classification series for options and the qualification standards to determine the background education and experience required.

Seasonal Rehire

We've been apprised of changes that have gone into effect regarding noncompetitive rehire eligibility requirements for seasonal park rangers. Although they've been in effect for awhile, it appears that some parks are still unaware of them, so we are passing them along to you in case you missed the formal issuance (PML No. 89-04, June 7, 1989). The following was extracted from a memo implementing the changes.

The two primary changes in noncompetitive eligibility are that parks can now rehire rangers back into any option provided they meet the other conditions of noncompetitive eligibility and seasonal qualifications, and that they can rehire rangers back even if they have had a break of more than one year between appointments at the same park.

The noncompetitive eligibility requirements now include the following:

- Employment during any previous season under either a Schedule A, 213.3112(f)(1) or (f)(2) appointment authority in the same park, even if there was a break of more than one year between appointments at the same park.
- Service of at least 60 calendar days in the rehire park during that last period of employment.
- Receipt of a fully satisfactory or better performance rating. If the performance rating the applicant submits is on an old evaluation, you must simply determine if the rating is comparable to a fully satisfactory rating.

Applicants meeting these criteria may be rehired at the same, higher or lower grades at the same park in any one of the three options - general, interpretation or law enforcement - as long as they meet the basic seasonal qualification requirements. The use of the noncompetitive rehire authority is an option for management, however, not a right of previous seasonal employees.

Here's an example of how the system might work: Stephanie Mather was hired in 1984 as a seasonal park tech under 213.3112(f)(2) authority. Her appointment was as a GS-026-4 interpretive park tech at Zion. She didn't return to Zion the next year, but competed and was selected for a seasonal park ranger job at Bryce Canyon in 1987. She then worked at Canyonlands in 1988. Stephanie was not employed by the NPS in 1989. In all three jobs, she served on an appointment that lasted more than 60 calendar days and received a fully satisfactory or better than satisfactory performance rating. In 1990, Stephanie will be eligible for a non-competitive reappointment at all three parks. Each of the parks may rehire her at the same, lower or higher grade in any option for which she meets the basic qualifications. Stephanie can also apply to two other parks of her choice through the normal seasonal hiring process.

The burden of proof of eligibility is placed on the applicant and not the Service. Seasonal park rangers who are interested in noncompetitive reappointments must submit at a minimum the following documents: an NPS 10-141 (Reappointment Application for Seasonal Employment Positions), a copy of their last seasonal performance evaluation, and a copy of their appointment and termination SF-50 from their last seasonal job at the rehire park.

Illegal Patch Sales

Ranger Activities continues to be interested in any instances in which rangers hear of patch dealers or others selling real or counterfeit NPS arrowhead patches. We have been advised that the traffic in the illegal reproduction and sale of patches is increasing, and would like to work with field areas in stopping this activity. This past fall, the Park Service successfully concluded a joint investigation - along with the US Fish and Wildlife Service and Secret Service - of a dealer who was found to be selling agency patches and other items protected by Federal law.

In 1988, a Secret Service agent apprised the NPS and FWS that their patches were being sold by Dover Army and Navy, a company operating out of Dover, Delaware, and that ads to this effect were appearing in Police Collectors News. The agent had informed the store's owner of the illegality of these sales and confiscated over 150 patches. The assistant U.S. attorney declined to prosecute him, however, asking instead that the involved agencies first attempt to get the owners' willing compliance with regulations.

Accordingly, Director Mott sent the owner of the store a letter advising him that the NPS arrowhead was protected by 18 U.S.C., Section 701, and by regulations codified in 36 C.F.R. Part 11. A similar letter was sent by USFWS. In his response, the owner of the store stated that he would desist from all future sales of Federal patches.

Both FWS and NPS subsequently received reports, however, which indicated that Dover Army and Navy was continuing to sell patches. A special agent from FWS began an undercover investigation of the company shortly thereafter. In January of 1989, the agent purchased patches from the store by mail. In June, a Delaware game warden working with FWS entered the store and saw and/or purchased FWS, NPS, White House guard (Secret Service), Customs inspector and other patches. Based on this evidence, a Federal search warrant was obtained from a U.S. magistrate. On June 14th, the special agent, accompanied by a second agent, a refuge officer and a park ranger from Assateague Island, executed the warrant. In the process of the search, they seized over 1,700 patches from a variety of Federal agencies (including over 300 NPS arrowheads) and 15 Presidential seal badges. The owner was charged with possession of Federal insignia (18 U.S.C. 701) and purchase for resale of a likeness of the seal of the President (18 U.S.C. 713[b]).

On September 15th, the owner of the store was found guilty of these charges. He was sentenced to six months incarceration, suspended for one year's probation, and fined \$2,500.

Subsequent efforts to track the patches to their source have been only partially successful. A wholesale patch dealer in East Hampton, Connecticut, who was identified by the owner of Dover Army and Navy as his primary source, was interviewed by agents last December. The dealer said that he did not know the source of the Federal patches that had been seized. He said that he believed the patches were counterfeits, and said that "once a certain patch gets out into the public mainstream, it is either copied and duplicated overseas and subsequently imported into the U.S. or duplicated in 'Mom and Pop' embroidery shops. Once copied, the market is flooded with patches."

If you are aware of any illegal sales of either NPS arrowhead patches or any other Federal patches, please advise Bill Halainen in this office.

Ticketron 900 Numbers

The following information has been provided by Ticketron concerning the necessity for changing the "900" telephone numbers for making reservations at parks on the Servicewide reservation system and the procedures to be employed to resolve any related visitor complaints. Please insure that all campground rangers and fee supervisors have this information as soon as possible.

AT&T has informed Ticketron that the "900" numbers previously assigned to Ticketron Phone Charge do not coincide with AT&T's computerized billing software requirements. AT&T can not therefore charge the fees that Ticketron had properly applied for (\$.75 for the first minute, plus \$.50 for each additional minute). AT&T admits full responsibility for this mistake. As a result of their error, every person who called the old "900" numbers was automatically overcharged. AT&T has notified its billing offices nationwide to issue credits to those persons. In the event that customers complain of having not received the proper credit, advise them to notify the AT&T billing officer. That number is 1-800-222-0300.

Effective immediately, AT&T has assigned new "900" numbers to Ticketron for NPS campground reservations. These numbers are 1-900-370-5566 (all parks except Yosemite) and 1-900-454-2100 (Yosemite). Persons calling the old "900" numbers will be referred to one of these two numbers, and will also be informed that they are not being charged for calling the old number. This message will be in effect for at least six months.

New, brown color 1990 Ticketron camping reservation brochures are being printed and will be distributed as soon as possible. Please refrain from issuing the old, green color brochures, or note the above number changes in them before handing them out. Phone charge fees remain as noted above - \$.75 for the first minute, and \$.50 for every minute thereafter.

Customers who have not received complete satisfaction from AT&T should address their correspondence to Mr. Thomas A. Largi, Director of Park Reservation Services, Ticketron, 411 Hackensack Avenue, Hackensack, New Jersey 07601.

Fire Weather Outlook

The Boise Interagency Fire Weather's staff meteorologist has prepared a weather briefing for the month of March which includes an assessment of the coming fire season. Here are some highlights:

- A significant storm moved through the West during February, bringing precipitation and snowfall totals closer to normal levels in most areas. California, the Southwest and the intermountain region still have significant precipitation deficits, though.
- The Palmer Drought Index chart for the month of February shows that significant drought is gaining a strong foothold in the upper Midwest, the eastern intermountain region, and the western Rockies. Drought is also continuing in portions of California, the Pacific Northwest and southern Florida.
- The upper Midwest is in a prolonged drought cycle. With the weather pattern that has been in place and the pattern that is forecast for the spring, it is likely that fire activity will occur in the spring before greenup - and maybe after. Southern Florida will remain a problem until a tropical system moves into the area. The area which received rain from Hurricane Hugo has remained wet, but drying could occur rapidly and produce problems if the forecasted warmer than normal temperatures occurs this spring. Although some of the West has recovered from drought conditions, problems will occur in southern California and portions of Arizona, New Mexico and western Colorado.

Team Resources

The third workshop for Team Resources instructors was held in Williamsburg, Virginia, late in January. The instructors, who came from different divisions in a variety of parks, learned to teach the "Orientation to the Management of NPS Resources" course as part of a regional training team. There are now approximately 90 instructors on the regional Team Resource teams.

These teams are available for travel to parks within their home region to present the orientation course. The course is designed to introduce park employees to the basic resource management principles of the National Park Service. The course addresses the management of both natural and cultural resources; because the requesting park can choose from a variety of training modules, the course can be tailored to fit a park's specific needs.

Parks wanting to host a course should contact the regional Team Resource coordinator. Some funding is available to cover the instructors' travel to the host park. Regional coordinators are:

Alaska	William B. Cella	907-257-2565
Mid-Atlantic	Kathy Jope	215-597-7057
Midwest	Ray Kimpel	616-326-5134
National Capital	Carrol Schell	202-472-7996
North Atlantic	David Griese	516-289-4810
Pacific Northwest	Paul Henders	206-772-7220 (FTS 399-7220)
Rocky Mountain	Michael Schene	FTS 327-2875
Southeast	Ellen Foppes	FTS 242-5988
Southwest	(Vacant)	-
Western	John Martini	415-556-3535

Valor Awards

On March 8th, the Secretary of Interior presented valor awards to park rangers Henry Anderson of Cape Hatteras and Bobby Holland and Dennis Brewer of Great Smokies. The awards are given to DOI employees "who have demonstrated unusual courage involving a high degree of personal risk in the face of danger." Here are the citations for the awards:

"On the afternoon of May 20, 1989, Ranger Anderson responded to a six-victim water emergency at Coquina Beach, Cape Hatteras National Seashore. Initially, two victims had been swept from the water's edge by a three to four knot rip current. Various attempts to rescue their friends added four additional victims to the rip current. No lifeguards were in the area and no assistance was readily available. Without a thought for his own safety, Ranger Anderson immediately entered the 64 degree water and swam through ten-foot waves into the rip current. One victim had already drowned and disappeared in the force of the rip. Other victims were panicked and grabbed Ranger Anderson, severely bruising and scratching him. Despite the tremendous difficulties and extreme risk to his life, Ranger Anderson was able to calm the five survivors and to support them on the rescue buoy that he had carried out and a small surf board which one of the victims had carried out. Although the rip current prevented him from returning to the beach with the victims, he still struggled to keep the group alive and intact until a jet ski was brought to the area a quarter of an hour later. Without Ranger Anderson's heroic efforts and willingness to risk his own life, the sea would surely have claimed the lives of five more people. For this heroic act of bravery resulting in the saving of five lives, Henry M. Anderson III, is granted the Valor Award of the Department of Interior."

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"On August 3, 1988, a rescue operation was in progress in the Charlie's Bunyon area of the Great Smoky Mountains National Park. The incident occurred when a fifteen-year-old boy fell from rocks near the Bunyon and rescuers required ropes to reach the victim some 600 feet below. As the boy had fallen in a remote area and would most likely require immediate medical attention, a military MAST helicopter was dispatched from Fort Campbell, Kentucky. Park Ranger Bobby Holland was selected to ride with the helicopter crew because of his extensive knowledge of the terrain in the rescue area. Just prior to the arrival of the helicopter over the rescue scene, the ground crew reached the boy and determined that he was dead. The incident commander then requested that the aircraft return to the airport. Upon arrival at the airport, the helicopter crashed into a fuel distribution system. Ranger Holland demonstrated a high level of professionalism and bravery by remaining in the overturned helicopter, which had begun to fill with smoke, and assisted tow other crew members, one who was seriously injured, to climb out an exit doorway. At this point, Park Ranger Dennis Brewer ran to the crashed aircraft, which he knew could erupt into a flaming inferno and engulf the victims and himself at any minute. As Ranger Brewer tried to lead Ranger Holland away from the danger, Ranger Holland felt the full intensity of his injuries and was overcome with waves of pain. Although seriously injured himself, Ranger Holland grabbed a park radio from Ranger Brewer and directed rescue units to the crash scene. Rangers Holland and Brewer again returned without hesitation to the crashed helicopter and extricated and carried away the unconscious pilot from the cockpit of the aircraft. Upon rescuing the aircraft crew, Ranger Holland provided emergency medical treatment for the more seriously injured members, disregarding his own serious injuries until relieved by other rescue personnel. Their ability, skill and dedication to duty at the risk of their own lives were in keeping with the highest traditions of the National Park Service, and reflect great credit upon themselves and the Park Ranger profession. For their courageous action and the great personal risk they took, Bobby W. Holland and Dennis R. Brewer are granted the Valor Award of the Department of Interior."

Fire Management Guideline Revision

NPS-18, the fire management guideline, is being entirely rewritten. The staff of the Branch of Fire Management, assisted by a team of 30 NPS superintendents, fire management officers, and support staff, met in Marana, Arizona, at the end of January and spent two weeks drafting the new guideline. The first draft was completed in March and is now being reviewed. Plans are to get the revised guideline out to the field this summer.

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The Ranger Activities Information Exchange is produced by the Washington Division of Ranger Activities. Walt Dabney, Chief Ranger. Address letters, comments and inquiries to: Ranger Activities (650), Stop 3310, National Park Service, Box 37127, Washington, D.C. 20013-7127; FTS 343-4874 or (202) 343-4874. Attn: Bill Halainen, Editor.