



United States Department of the Interior

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20240

IN REPLY REFER TO:

OCT 25 1979

Memorandum

To: WASO and Field Directorate, and All Park Superintendents

From: Director

Subject: Environmental Education in the National Park Service

This is to share with you my profound concern for, and perception of, the role of environmental education in the National Park Service; and to inform you of the processes now being undertaken by the Division of Interpretation and Visitor Services, by which substantially increased attention to environmental education action will be guided and supported by this office.

Although personnel and funds specifically identified as being devoted to this program have decreased since the Service's pioneering efforts were initiated in the late 60's, internalization and integration into all related activities have, in fact, strengthened our environmental education efforts. Many extraordinarily effective individual programs have emerged, evolved, and remained prominent. However, the majority of the work has been so well integrated as to be given less prominence than it should receive.

It is the responsibility of park managers, with Washington and Regional Office support, to develop, operate, and focus significant public attention on environmental education programs. Increased support of such efforts by the Division of Interpretation and Visitor Services will be forthcoming by accomplishment of at least the following steps, within the next six months:

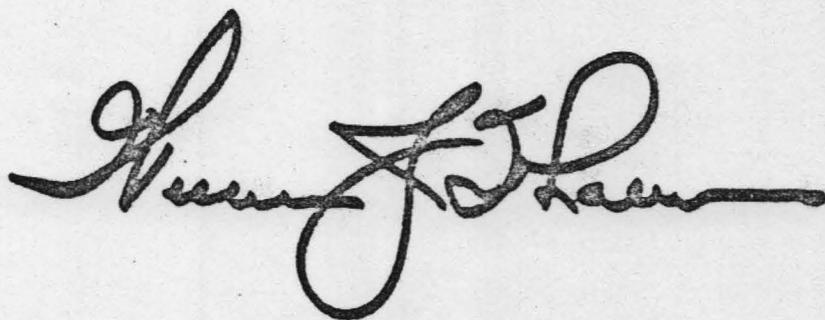
1. Compile a complete inventory of all currently active NPS environmental education programs.
2. Prepare draft general guidelines and program components.
3. Assemble a work group including a superintendent, a regional office representative, and several field interpreters, to develop a model program, and to review and refine an environmental education training package, the general guidelines and components, and a brochure.



4. Print and distribute the environmental education informational brochure for public information.

Print and distribute the environmental education self-training package and model program materials to the field.

Some of you will be hearing from Dave Dame soon, regarding participation in the work group. Please give him--and the work group--your full support. You can count on mine, as we move quickly toward renewed focus on this exceedingly high priority concern of the Service.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Henry F. Hall". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Environmental Education
Draft Guidelines & Components

General Guidelines

1. Scope and Content of Environmental Education Programs:

Environmental education deals with the total relationship of people and their environment. It is not just a natural science program based on ecology.

It is rather the process of learning and teaching, at the conscious level, that people--in addition to influencing and being influenced by cultural systems--are fully participating and interacting parts of the earth's natural and human built systems, and are as subject to all the laws of systems dynamics and their endless interactions as any other organisms.

A basic understanding of "natural processes" will continue to be an important component in our environmental education programs. Ultimately we are all dependent on a healthy, functioning, natural environment for our life support system. But a vital part of the whole story are the "human processes," the cultural experiences of mankind which have led to the perceptions, attitudes and evaluations of the environment and their role in it. Those "cultural perceptions" determine the action taken, the commitments made. The environmental problems of today are those which we culturally perceive. An increased awareness of the cultural processes, the heritage that led to the present state of existence is as important in responding to our environmental concerns as those of the natural system. This is the relevant arena for our environmental education efforts in our historical and cultural areas.

Finally, a common denominator in all our environmental education efforts is energy. This is the force that drives both the natural and human built systems we are dealing with. The production and wise use of energy in all forms and the environmental impact, resulting from its flow through systems, will undoubtedly be the major focus and root cause of our environmental concerns for the rest of this century. Public awareness in this area is critical and should be a major thrust in our environmental education efforts.

Because of the emotional nature of this subject, we must be especially careful to keep our information both current and factual.

Let's keep our programs relevant to our park's resources and themes and concentrate on helping our visitors understand the nature of energy, its pathways and impacts, as it drives our systems and the results of its misuse. Our best message here is to let our visitors know what we are doing in our parks to maximize our own use of fossil fuels and to diversify our supply by utilizing as many alternate sources as possible.

2. Goals of NPS Environmental Education Program:

The mission of the NPS is to provide for the preservation and non-destructive use of the national parks. To this end, the primary goal of our environmental education program is the educating of national park visitors to appreciate more fully the natural, historic and cultural values of the park system, and thereby, to change their attitudes toward the parklands, making their preservation and maintenance a cooperative effort of park management and park visitors. An additional and equally valuable, spin-off goal is the "exportable" nature of an increased environmental understanding and awareness. The concepts learned in and about the parks can be applied to our visitor's day-to-day life style and home environment.

3. Relevancy of Service's Environmental Education Programs:

With the exception of those attending organized educational programs, people visit national parks for a "vacation" or "holiday." They are not generally seeking nor highly interested in being "educated." They do, however, exhibit a desire to learn about and enjoy the park they are visiting. Your environmental education programs should, therefore, be based on the specific resources, themes and/or environmental factors that are present in your park. Keep your program relevant to your park and to those things your visitors can actually see or are affected by in the area. Larger generic themes like air and water quality or energy conservation should especially be dealt with within the framework of how they are affecting the resources of your park or what you are doing to deal with these problems.

4. Educate by Example:

The highest service the Park System can render at this time of environmental concern is to stand for exemplary stewardship and to use this standing as a showcase for demonstrating the underlying processes at work and how to maintain or enhance their working. Management practices operate as a forceful part of environmental education, serving as an on-going "exhibit" by which the public measures our internalization of the environmental messages we teach. The public, partly through our own efforts, has reached a level of sophistication capable of comparing our rhetoric with our performance. We must "practice what we preach" if we wish to maintain our credibility in this field.

5. Keep It Real:

Whenever possible, develop your environmental education programs based on your on-going resource management and/or park operating programs and policies. Studying or learning from a real live case history is more enjoyable and informative than working from an abstract set of facts or concepts. This approach has the additional benefit of helping our visitors better understand what we are doing and why we are doing it.

Since our programs and policies are, or should be, based on sound scientific information and designed to restore or maintain the dynamics of the systems we are managing, they should be excellent subjects for teaching sound environmental concepts. Also, the basic facts in information should already be available in our resources studies or research projects.

6. Cooperative Programs:

The National Park Service is only one of many organizations interested in and involved with environmental education. Wherever and whenever possible, we should join forces with our sister agencies and with our surrounding educational communities. Cooperative programs, especially with educational organizations and local school systems, should continue to be actively pursued. Special use permits allowing schools or other educational institutions to utilize park facilities and/or resources for on-site educational programs should be encouraged wherever the facilities or resources exist.

Within these guidelines the amounts and kinds of environmental education developed by each park must be determined by the Region's and Park's overall priorities and objectives with respect to available resources and the public served. Ordinarily, the highest priority would be for on-site programs as opposed to those which would occur off-site.

Environmental Education Program Components

Following are a listing of some environmental education program components. The list is not meant to be all inclusive. I'm sure many of you have or will create additional activities. Each area should continue to develop a program relevant to its resources and needs. However, I feel that the first two items can and should be active in all NPS areas.

1. Incorporation of environmental education concepts and information into our on-going interpretive and visitor services programs and activities. Not add-on messages, but messages that flow out of our programs as a natural result of using a systems dynamics approach in the interpretation of the resources and themes relevant to your park.
2. Making our parks exemplars of sound environmental stewardship and wise energy use and capitalizing on these efforts by instituting a strong and active information program to ensure that our "publics" are aware of what we are doing and why we are doing it.
3. Operation of formalized educational programs, (in cooperation with local school systems or educational institutions whenever possible):
 - A. Establishing and operating a NESAsite within your park where it is appropriate to park resources and to the educational needs of the surrounding communities.
 - B. Establishing and operating Environmental Living Programs (ELP) where the appropriate resources exist. Our Living History programs can also become powerful, if less formal, teaching tools along this line, functioning as they do as living links to the past that help us understand how we got to where we are today.

C. Conducting teacher workshops to assist teachers in better utilizing the resources of the park with their students. The development of pre-arrival, on-site and post-visit study materials will make your park a real asset for these teachers.

D. Develop special on-site programs for visiting educational groups, based on the unique subject matter of your area or utilizing the resource management approach discussed above.

E. Initiate cooperative education programs by encouraging educational institutions, colleges and universities, to use the park's resources for environmental education purposes.

The successful Yosemite Institute and Summer Seminar Programs and school system operated resident camps are examples of this type of program.

4. Utilize your park's outreach program efforts as channels for environmental education messages where appropriate.

In summary, environmental education activities should have a vital role in most park operations. Let us, together, revitalize our efforts in this program, insuring high quality, interesting and accurate presentations, and, above all, that the material is relevant to the major purpose and theme of the area and to the perceived needs of the visitor.