

occupation &
organization
guides for park
operations.

Prepared by the FOST task force
June 1, 1968

INTRODUCTION

Our determined search for excellence in all of our management, which made our Service great during the last fifty years, remains the cornerstone for our success today. For that reason, our strength must stem from a sound park management philosophy and equally vigorous management programs for people.

This paper imparts the essence of a thorough study of operations in National Parks. It expresses ways for today's National Parks to best meet today's challenges of explosive change and growth. And it looks to the future.

Indeed, the FOST concepts spring from the finest of our traditions and are part and parcel of our Goals of Personnel Management, particularly to:

Encourage highly-motivated people of talent and high potential to seek employment with the National Park Service.

Encourage an attitude of constructive inquiry, a receptivity to change, and a determination to find better ways of doing the job.

Provide equal opportunity to all employees for individual growth.

Make fullest utilization of modern management methods and technology.

I know it is difficult to always look objectively at the way we operate parks--our personal involvement and commitment can obstruct the view. But for the FOST study we did it--we surmounted many mental barriers and came up with a useable product. For this I am deeply indebted to all of you who gave freely of your experiences, thoughts, counsel and advice.


Director

WHY THIS STUDY?

The Field Operations Study Team (FOST) was directed to study and recommend appropriate action, if needed, on ".....functional and organizational alignments in areas administered by the Service", including ".....the utilization of professional and technician occupation skills."

The paramount question is: Why?

Many reasons prompted this study. The most relevant were:

- New areas are added to the System yearly and we get more involved in activities outside park boundaries. How can we best assure ourselves a continuing supply of capable, skilled park managers? Is our recruitment base broad enough to meet these new activities?
- Continuity in park operations is essential. With rapid and frequent transfers these days, how can we keep a thread of continuity in the operating program?
- The skills and capabilities of many employees are not fully used. What does it take to challenge someone--to mine all the recesses of his talents? Can we define professional park work and the personal preparation needed to do that work? What are the ingredients for a "satisfying" career?
- We must continue to attract and hold talented people. The prospective employee wants to know: "What is it really like working for the National Park Service?" "What types of jobs can I look forward to in my career?" "How far up the ladder can I go?" What kinds of clear-cut, understandable answers do we have for these questions?

- Management programs within parks are changing. With our present way of organizing work can we put to use up-to-date resource management concepts, maintenance techniques and interpretive tools? Will we be able to give increasing numbers of visitors the opportunity for a "park experience" without getting all the money and personnel we think we need?
- The organization that communicates freely, produces effectively. Are the lines of communication too long and too narrow in some of our parks? How do we let people down the line know what is expected of them? How well are we geared for getting the word up the line?
- Any organization that does not size up itself once in a while might be headed for trouble. Do we have the self-discipline for a candid look at how we are doing? Do we have the determination to adjust our way of doing our job when conditions show us a change is needed?

These were the issues at hand for the Study Team. And the guiding framework of the study was rooted in the best of the past, conditions of the present and predictions for the future.

THE NPS MANAGEMENT UNIT

WHAT IT IS

The NPS management unit is: (1) A total small park; (2) a segment of a large or complex park; or possibly, (3) two or more small parks under one manager.

The management unit is also people--a team which is organized along the functional lines of management (●), administrative services (■), area services (◆), and visitor services (▲). A manager directs the overall activities of the unit. In most units, supervisors direct the execution of the specific jobs assigned to their functions.

WHY HAVE ONE

The management unit serves to: (1) Give management experience to first level managers; (2) bring together all parts of the park program into a rational whole at the field operations level; and, (3) open the door wider to upward communication of employees' needs, desires, and understandings of their jobs and to downward communication of what management expects from employees.

HOW ONE EVOLVES

The evolution of a management unit is a real-life drama--like a stage play in three acts without intermissions; without a final curtain. The stage is the park; the sets are the facilities, services and resources of the park; the "actors"? We assign employees with particular talents to perform the roles in the park--some are principals, others are in directing roles.

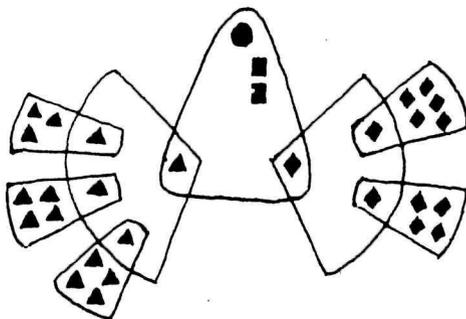
Sometimes specialists (realtors, designers, planners, researchers, etc.) play their parts (the manager keeps a keen eye out for scene-stealers.) These specialists know a lot about the stage sets to follow (facilities, services and resources management.)

Act Two - Build-up

Act Two appears chaotic--but it's all part of this getting-ready-for-visitors act. Facilities are under construction (roads, trails, parking lots, overlooks, visitor centers, administrative buildings, marinas, camp and picnic grounds--you name it!); new equipment arrives daily; and even the scenery may need some touching up (resources management programs.) Visitors are already here--threading their way through the inconvenience of construction.

But the superintendent has planned for this build-up of facilities and visitors. To his team he adds more Rangers (professional, technician and seasonals) to serve visitors; additional hands come on stage to operate

and maintain the physical facilities; and just think of all the paper work this means--administrative assistant to the rescue!



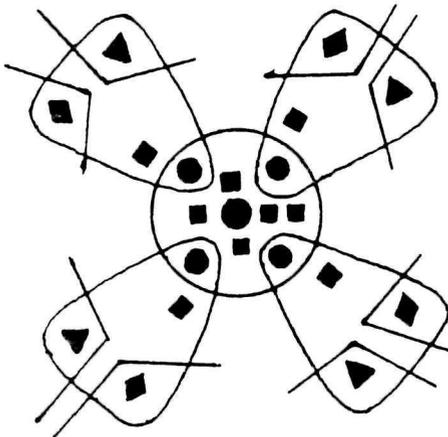
Now the superintendent has his hands full: The team is spread out across the park; communications and personal interactions are more complicated; it's difficult to tie together all the daily on-going activities in every section of the park; some full-time specialists are needed; the public relations job gets bigger every day; the pressure on management mounts.

The time has come for delegating some of the management load closer to where the action is. The situation is ripe for more management units in the park.

Act Three - And the Show Goes On

Now lets climb into the overhead above the stage (park) to see what the original management unit team looks like--how it has adjusted for Act Three.

Back in Act One we recall one close-knit team on stage. Now we see four teams (it could be more or less in number, depending on the park) in four different locations on stage. At center stage (park headquarters) we see the superintendent (now called "general superintendent") surrounded by a staff of specialists (■) (they help answer questions like, "what now?", or "how to?", or "is that good enough?".) Lines of authority extend outward from the general superintendent to each unit manager (they are also members of the headquarters team.) Each unit manager (district superintendent?) directs the overall operations of



his unit; and he seeks the advice, counsel, and assistance of the staff specialists (they don't have to wait to be asked.)

As with the original team, these teams are made up of working groups who are assigned tasks along the functional lines of management (●), visitor services (▲), area services (◆), and administrative services (■).

This final act is the long-run engagement--as we say in the Service "for the benefit of generations yet unborn." The "actors" change and move on, the sets and scenery get repaired, and the audience (visitors) comes and goes. But the show goes on.

Human
Resources

How many permanent employees are on the work force?

How many seasonal employees are there?

What is the geographical distribution of permanent employees? Seasonals? During the travel season? During the off-season?

What competences and occupations are required in the operating program?

Capital
Investments

What is the monetary value of the resources managed?

What is the intrinsic value of the resources managed?

What are the accountable facilities and properties? Where are they located?

What capital investments are planned?

Geography

Does the geography of the park spell a need for districting?

Is there some form of districting at present?

Do any natural features or elements determine logical districts?

Do distances permit reasonable, meaningful face-to-face contact between superior and subordinates?

What is the geographical shape of the park?

Political

What are the political facts of life that affect management of the park?

How desirable is it to have a management representative close to local population centers?

Is there more than one state or more than one county to be considered?

Do politically hot issues put the Service in a fish bowl?

What other political considerations affect park management or developments?

Logistics

What are the local supply points, transportation accesses, arteries of commerce, etc?

Are there natural barriers that impede logistic support activities?

What communications tools are used and what is their reliability?

Public Relations

How intense are the public relations activities?

What is the radius of public relations activities?

How much are Service representatives expected to participate in community affairs?

Is the park affected by special interest groups? In what ways and at what levels?

How many off-site programs are called for?

Park Programs

In what ways do the administrative policies apply to the operation of the park?

How diverse and complex are the interpretive activities?

What jurisdictions affect law enforcement and protection?

What special land management problems are there?

Are there special problems in the functions of management, visitor services, area services, and administration?

What special development projects and research projects must be coordinated?

How do concession services and facilities fit into the operations?

What population centers does the park serve?

What differences are there between travel-season and off-season operations?

Step 2 - Analyze the Facts

Now is the time for the weigh-in. At this point we come to some sort of consensus on what facts or conditions are most important. Which take on the most relevance--here and now? Which can be set on the shelf for a while? What key factors are controlling in this situation?

Step 3 - Select Management Units

A standard profile for all management units is unrealistic--we see too many variables in the far-flung parks of the System. So we return to the broad, basic reasons for management units in the first place--"WHY HAVE ONE" above. And we probe some pertinent questions as possible management units begin to take shape:

- Is the operation big enough to challenge a first-level manager? To give him the experience he needs to grow in his profession? To test his capability as manager material? To predict his potential for advancement?
- Are the activities of the unit brought together into a manageable whole? Is it physically possible for a unit manager and his functional supervisors to know what is going on at all times in the unit? To make timely decisions based on thorough knowledge of the operations? Can the manager see often enough how things are going in the unit?

- Will size, distance, geography, etc., help a manager to know his employees well enough? How they feel? What they understand about their jobs? What performance is expected of them? Will there be enough opportunity for the depth of personal understanding that makes work relationships meaningful and productive? To help the manager recognize--and use--the work group leadership roles assumed by his employees? For a manager to build understanding of Service policies, changes in methods, performance standards, etc.? For a manager to make training and development pay off on the basis of organization needs and individual potentials?

Step 4 - Activate Management Units

Comes the moment of truth! We decide to divide the park into management units.

Some parks will find this an easy step to take. The incumbent staff is willing, able and anxious to assign tasks a little differently than in the past. They are motivated toward a change--willing to face squarely a new way of organizing to get the job done. They understand the implications of the change and their responsibilities in it. Productive tension is in the air--anxiety and fear grounded.

But what about the other park organizations (people) which resist change--sometimes even adamantly? This gets us into

nitty gritty management work--the park manager as an agent of change. "Does my organization indeed face genuine problems in this change?" "Or are the barriers mostly emotional in nature?" "How can we best overcome this resistance--grease the skids to give the new look a reasonable chance?" Several approaches, or combinations of them, are available to us: Interim compromises, staff changes, problem-solving training sessions and action plans.

Step 5 - Evaluate, Adjust, Revise

Organizations are pulsating in nature. They must keep pace with changing conditions--grow with increased workload--adjust to new park programs.

Sure, maybe everything won't work out "just right" the first time around. This is no cause for despair. Perhaps we can shift the load a little--revise the original plan to meet previously unpredicted conditions and situations. The point is, let's recognize that adjustments may be needed and do something about them when they arise.

THE ROLE OF THE MANAGER IN THE NPS MANAGEMENT UNIT

The NPS management program springs from the park operations level--the management unit. This is the interface--where people experience parks; where the man on the ground gives the NPS its strength, vitality, purpose, consistency, and integrity. And it is the point where the first level manager brings together into a rational whole all the specialized parts of the park operating program.

PERSONAL QUALITIES

The personal qualities of a capable first level manager include:

1. Consistent curiosity and awareness.
2. Exceptional memory and recall of experiences.
3. Mental flexibility.
4. Tactful domination.
5. Creative, constructive skepticism.
6. Perceptivity of the needs of parks and people.

RESPONSIBILITY

The effective first level manager accepts the responsibility to:

1. Strive to know the unit better than anyone else.
2. Be completely informed about all that's going on in the unit.
3. Know all the employees in the unit.
4. Know all other people connected with the unit.
5. Know the people in the area surrounding the unit.
6. Know what outside forces affect the unit operating program.
7. Know what is expected of the unit manager.

8. Plan and program unit operations.

9. Recognize needs of the unit and follow through on them.

ACCOUNTABILITY

two unit manager jobs are exactly alike. A manager can be directly involved in the activities of a small operating program--perform interpretive services, supervise maintenance, enforce regulations, etc. A highly complex operation means that the unit manager has a need for subordinate supervisors and maybe highly trained technicians--supervisors of area services and visitor services, perhaps specialized equipment operators, law enforcement officers, interpretive technicians, etc. The point here is that the specific duties of a unit manager depend on the scope and complexity of the unit's operating program.

But there is a thread of sameness for all unit manager positions. In varying degrees all unit managers are involved in: Planning, organizing, staffing, directing, coordinating, reporting and budgeting. The unit manager is the principal accountable NPS representative in a management unit.

THE NPS FIELD MANAGEMENT GROUP OR CLUSTER

WHAT IT IS

The clustering of several small parks into a management group is not new for the Service. The Southwest National Monuments is the classic example and now we have the New York City Group, the Flagstaff Group and others. The grouping idea fits into the conceptual framework of FOST and will be used throughout the Service where it fits.

The NPS field management group is a cluster of separately established national parks. Its essential ingredients are:

1. A middle manager who directs the overall operation of the group.
2. Two or more management units.
3. First level managers who direct the overall operation of each management unit.
4. Staff services specialists who serve all parks in the group.

WHY HAVE ONE

There are numerous benefits in a park cluster, among which are to:

1. Decrease the number of park managers reporting directly to executive level managers (regional directors under our present regional set up.)
2. Give the small parks better high level management representation.
3. Provide a more economical, efficient base for purchasing, budgeting, programming and reporting.
4. Provide staff specialists closer to small park operations.
5. Give beginning first level managers the benefit of closer advice, counsel, and assistance from higher management.

6. Improve and enhance public and professional relations when a group headquarters can be located in a nearby city or town.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

In addition to the above listed benefits we achieve when setting up a group, must also keep in mind the:

1. Geographical relationship of the parks and group headquarters.
2. Inter-park communications nets.
3. Political boundaries and influences and local community concerns.

THE ROLE OF THE FIELD STAFF SPECIALIST

WHAT IS STAFF

Just what do we mean when we say, "staff?" Some give it the all-encompassing connotation that includes everyone in the organization. ("On behalf of the superintendent and his staff, I welcome you to so-and-so national park.") Others think of some ivory-tower thinker who grinds out lots of impractical ideas but couldn't possibly cut the mustard on the firing line. Is it just those who attend the superintendent's staff meeting? Or how about our vision of staff being the division heads catering to the superintendent at headquarters--the chiefs. And if we look into the matter even deeper we find that the management "experts" do not agree on a definition of staff.

So the question for us is: What does staff mean to the National Park Service? What sort of line-staff philosophy do we have in going about our daily business of running parks?

The intent here is to define staff in a way that fits our framework of understanding and the way in which we manage parks.

IN GENERAL

FOST concepts depict park staff as specialists with a depth of knowledge in specific park programs. They are members of the headquarters team in a large park or a cluster of parks who usually report directly to a middle manager.

Staff specialists assume the responsibility to:

1. Influence the decisions of managers. They furnish information, advice and counsel on the WHAT, WHEN, WHO AND WHY of their speciality.
2. Supervise the technical aspects of their speciality in the sense of HOW a job is to be accomplished and the QUALITY of its performance. The scope of such supervisory authority is spelled out by park management.
3. Provide area-wide services.

MORE SPECIFICALLY

Staff specialists are assigned to parks to:

1. Produce and revise, as needed, written guidelines, standards, and operating procedures for specialized areas of responsibility.
2. Review action programs to assure consistency with objectives and goals.
3. Consult with area manager and unit managers when requested or needed.
4. Prepare correspondence in technical specialties.
5. Consult with managers in the preparation and review of preliminary and final estimates for all programs.
6. Regularly inspect and audit operations to insure that work performance conforms to standards and procedures.
7. Prepare and conduct technical training programs related to assigned specialties.
8. Prepare, review, and revise appropriate planning documents affecting the park or cluster.

9. Contribute specialized knowledge in negotiations of cooperative agreements.
10. Participate in broad public relations program.
11. Participate in planned career development programs for permanent personnel.
12. Assimilate research and other technical data and translate into useable form for management and operational use.
13. Service operating units in such specialized activities as skilled crafts, central purchasing, heavy equipment, consolidated reporting, etc.

FOR INSTANCE

Most parks have, or need, a resource management plan that sets benchmarks, goals, and procedures for manipulating the park's physical resources. A resource management specialist (or team of specialists) would produce and keep current such a plan. At times, they would have technical supervision over activities within this plan--a fire control specialist directing a project fire; a biologist directing an animal control program; a curator directing a massive museum cataloging project; an archeologist supervising a dig.

Staff specialists are also deeply involved in on-going operating programs. An interpretive specialist influences management decisions with written standards of performance for interpretation and by providing background material and equipment for interpretation. This specialist also supervises aspects of the interpretive activities when he audits performance of interpreters, spells out needed improvements, or praises good performance.

He is responsible for the quality, content and appropriateness of the overall interpretive program.

Other staff specialists provide services. This might include such things as processing personnel papers, coordinating the schedule of a paint striping crew, consolidating area-wide reports, centralized purchase of supplies, etc.

OCCUPATIONS FOR PARK WORK

PROPOSED PARK OCCUPATIONS

The NPS has proposed two new Federal Service occupation series: (1) Park Aid and Technician, and (2) Park Ranger and Management. This is a conscious effort to up-date and redescribe several important park management, visitor service and resource management occupations presently used by the NPS.

The standards for these occupations are personnel management tools for the manager and supervisor. Within the limits of these standards, managers and supervisors can identify and describe individual park jobs and decide what these jobs are worth in dollars and cents.

The following is a brief overview of some of the opportunities and alternatives the proposed occupations will give us. For detailed descriptions see the qualification and classification standards.

PROFESSIONAL AND NON-PROFESSIONAL WORK

First of all, we distinguish between two main types of "Ranger" work--professional (Park Ranger and Management) and non-professional (Park Aid and Technician.) We base this distinction on the nature of work assignments and the education and experience required to perform that work.

Many present park rangers, park naturalists, park historians, park archeologists and even some superintendents do a lot of work for which they do not need the college education most of them have. This important work must be done but Park

Aids and Technicians can qualify to do the bulk of it. Park Rangers will then give more attention to the professional aspects of the job--planning, programming, training, supervising, problem solving--which require the background of a college degree or its full equivalent. Park Managers will direct overall park programs and activities in identified units of management.

The line between professional and non-professional work will never be clear-cut. Park Rangers at the trainee level will perform many technician duties; some highly skilled Park Technicians may have some duties that are professional in nature.

SIMILARITIES IN "RANGER" WORK

When we look across the board at "Ranger" jobs we see many more similarities than differences. Those of us who don the Ranger uniform assume the responsibility to serve park visitors and to manage park resources to the best of our ability. These similar responsibilities are the foundation on which the proposed standards are built.

Sure, some of us are more talented and interested in particular phases of park programs--resources management, interpretation, recreation, visitor use, and so on. These "speciality" opportunities are spelled out in the new standards for both occupations. But they are still within the framework of PARK Ranger and PARK Technician work.

What we gain is more flexibility to combine duties to suit more situations. Example: The major duties of a skilled technician could involve fire control, soil conservation and traffic control. In another instance, we might

bring together supervisory authority in one professional position for resource management, visitor activities and interpretation.

POSITIVE EDUCATION FOR PARK RANGER

Our occupation proposal to the Civil Service Commission calls for a positive education requirement to qualify as a professional Park Ranger. An applicant must meet one of the following minimum education requirements:

- a. A bachelors degree in any field oriented natural science, history, anthropology, or park and recreation management.
- b. A bachelors degree in any curriculum along with at least 18 semester hours in one or two of the above disciplines.
- c. A combination of at least 18 semester hours in one or two of the above disciplines plus professional experience.

Let's remember that this positive education requirement sets a minimum educational base for Park Ranger candidates, who will do the work described for Park Rangers.

Park managers do not have to meet this education requirement. Employees qualify for management positions on the basis of managerial and specialized experience without having to qualify as a Park Ranger.

SELECTION OF APPLICANTS

The education and experience requirements are only a part of the screening process when we select applicants. We will continue to require a written examination, interview and to check work history records and personal references.

PARK MANAGEMENT RECOGNIZED AS A DISTINCT PROFESSION

Park management throughout the country is an emerging professional occupation. For years the NPS has classified park managers in the General Administrative Series (GS-301)--sometimes called the "Administrative Catchall Series." The new standards for this occupation are a step toward professional recognition for one of our most important park occupations.

Park Ranger and Management are in the same series because most managers will be selected from the professional ranger ranks. But the standards for Park Management are written so that other occupations are not excluded from consideration for management positions.

BROADENED RECRUITMENT BASE

Our Service is immersed in an ever-growing variety of activities--from the traditional campfire program to repertory theater; pristine mountains to man-made lakes; environmental education; Widening Horizons; Job Corps; history buffs; and hippies, to name just a few. We need to recruit people who want to tackle many of the new activities--for example, those who seek challenge and find satisfaction in urban parks. At the same time, however, we will continue to recruit the "big trees and mountains" ranger--we have needs there, too.

For the professional ranks, we continue to recognize the value of our traditional academic disciplines. But now we can also consider the drama major, the sociologist, the police science major, and others, who meet the qualification requirements.

The Park Aid and Technician qualification requirements will permit us to recruit from many untapped sources--primarily the junior colleges. Almost every day the Service turns away graduates of junior colleges--they could do many park jobs but cannot qualify under currently used standards.

In a nutshell, we seek applicants who are motivated to perform public service in the park environment--from urban to wilderness.

COMPREHENSIVE INTAKE TRAINING

The purpose of an intake training program is two-fold:

1. To develop awareness and commitment--to motivate recruits toward the mission of the NPS.
2. To teach basic skills for the work of the occupation.

The first part is most effectively imparted under group learning conditions away from the job--at a training center. This is where the trainee can best explore and assimilate the complexities of the NPS mission--why the Service is in the park and recreation business.

When he completes the above training, the intake employee is assigned to a selected park for skills training in working-learning assignments. Basic skills taught under these conditions include fire fighting, traffic control, public speaking, law enforcement, boat handling, scuba diving, campground operations, crowd control, first aid, use of firearms, basic supervision, use of AV equipment and many others. Each trainee has a training program tailored to his needs and the needs of the Service.

After he completes this trainee phase of his career he advances to a journeyman level. Then he is eligible for advanced training at a training center or outside the Service.

CAREER LADDERS

Compared with our present career ladders, more realistic and flexible ladders are inherent in the proposed occupation standards. Within these standards, the Service can offer careerists a wide range of opportunities for training and experience.

Park Aids and Technicians will have a new career opened to them which ranges up to GS-11, while having the chance to try for management positions when they show interest and capability.

Park Rangers will begin their career with a solid understanding of "Ranger" work. From this foundation they will have opportunities for supervising operating programs, managing parks or "specializing" in a particular park activity--interpretation, resource management, recreation, visitor activities, etc. And we have more flexibility for cross-training and experience within the same occupation.

Lest we forget, however, careers are not handed out on silver platters. The Service must make every effort to provide career opportunities and to urge each employee to progress to the peak of his ability. For the employee, it takes demonstrated ability and willingness to accept the challenge of self-development.

OTHER PARK OCCUPATIONS

None of the above implies that other occupations are less important than those described. Engineers, landscape architects, architects, maintenancemen, craftsmen, administrators, personnel specialists, accountants, and all the others are necessary to accomplish our mission. At this particular time, it so happens that the "Ranger" occupations needed a major overhaul.