



May 28, 2004 (Report on the April 13-15, 2004 Meeting of the National Leadership Council)

NLCJournal

The National Leadership Council (NLC) met in Washington, D.C. on April 13-15 to act on issues relating to the FY 2004 budget, external communications, and workforce development. Current administrative and program issues were also considered, with directions provided to shape follow-up actions and decisions in these areas. Budget concerns dominated the meeting, and discussions focused on shortfalls in park operating budgets. Acknowledging that many parks were requiring assistance to pay salaries and fixed costs, options for providing relief centered on reducing the impacts of increased project funding on operations, particularly on small and medium size parks lacking the flexibility to deal with growing workloads. To tackle the problem, it was proposed that a limited amount of maintenance and fee project funds be used to help offset the operational workload of executing projects. The NLC tasked Comptroller Bruce Sheaffer to consult with regional staffs and devise a mechanism to address the problem without imposing administrative burdens on the parks.

Sharpening NPS Communications

Director Fran Mainella drew special attention to recent media coverage of reported park budget shortages and service reductions. She observed that, while the NPS generally receives favorable media treatment, some recent reporting has tended to stress controversy. She asked that the Service be more proactive in its communications and that it highlight accomplishments. A key theme of outreach should be that “the parks are open and the welcome mat is out.” The Director proposed that the media also be reminded of how well the NPS manages park resources. For example, the Service should highlight its successful efforts to reestablish the condor at

Grand Canyon National Park and protect Kemp’s Ridley sea turtles at Padre Island National Seashore. Partner organizations were identified as playing an important role in telling positive park stories. Chief of Public Affairs David Barna requested that his office be notified whenever a park or program area is aware of national media interest.

The Director welcomed to the NLC Steve Griles, Deputy Secretary, Department of the Interior, saying that he was a great NPS friend who had a special understanding of parks. Deputy Secretary Griles commented on recent media coverage of the parks, stating that he and Secretary Norton were proud to have increased NPS budgets across the board, and he emphasized the priority placed on reducing the maintenance backlog and strengthening law enforcement and security capabilities. He said there is never enough money to go around, particularly when the nation is at war, and he urged priority setting in this time of limited budgets.

Strengthening Our Law Enforcement and Security Capabilities

Associate Director Karen Taylor-Goodrich spoke to law enforcement and security issues, reviewing law enforcement program reform actions, NPS staffing levels associated with reforms, strategies to consolidate training at the Federal Law Enforcement Training Center, and security issues at the border parks. She distributed an organizational chart that identified the functions in the Visitor and Resource Protection Associate Directorship, announcing that the Regulations Program, recently transferred to her office from the Office of Policy, is also responsible for special park use permits, the rights of way process and the Federal Register public notification process.

National Leadership Council

- **Fran Mainella**
• Director
- **Randy Jones**
• Deputy Director
- **Donald W. (Don) Murphy**
• Deputy Director
- **Lisa Mendelson**
• Associate to the Director
- **Sue Masica**
• Associate Director
• Park Planning, Facilities,
• and Lands
- **Bruce Sheaffer**
• Comptroller
- **Dwight Pettiford**
• Acting Chief
• United States Park Police
- **Michael (Mike) Soukup**
• Associate Director
• Natural Resources
• Stewardship and Science
- **Richard (Dick) Ring**
• Associate Director
• Administration, Business
• Practices, and Workforce
• Development
- **Chris Jarvi**
• Associate Director
• Partnerships, Interpretation
• and Education, Volunteers,
• and Outdoor Recreation
- **Karen Taylor-Goodrich**
• Associate Director
• Visitor and Resource
• Protection
- **Dr. Janet Snyder Matthews**
• Associate Director
• Cultural Resources
- **Steve Martin**
• Regional Director
• Intermountain
- **Ernie Quintana**
• Regional Director
• Midwest
- **Terry R. Carlstrom**
• Regional Director
• National Capital
- **Marie Rust**
• Regional Director
• Northeast
- **Jon Jarvis**
• Regional Director
• Pacific West
- **Pat Hooks**
• Acting Regional Director
• Southeast
- **Marcia Blaszak**
• Acting Regional Director,
• Alaska

Workforce Development – Enhancing Diversity

The NLC reviewed issues associated with diversity recruitment, expressing concern that: (1) there is still under-representation in the 025 Series; (2) there is no uniform recruitment process; (3) there is no comprehensive understanding of barriers to recruitment; (4) from FY98 to FY03, there was no real change in minority numbers; and (5) at present, the Park Service is still below the civilian workforce. The NLC considered a draft diversity recruitment plan, the result of a 3-year effort begun by Associate Director Dick Ring, which proposed to cover the entire workforce, both permanent and seasonal employees. Ring said that the plan would work with recruiters taking jobs to recruiting events. He observed that one of the plan's strengths is that it creates a pool of potential hires, available 24/7. He stated that the cost of the plan in its entirety would be \$344K per year. Initially, it would be funded from recreation fee demonstration monies. At the end of each year, a report assessing the plan that analyzes its strengths and weaknesses would be issued. The Director expressed initial approval of the draft plan, saying it addressed a critical need and would help the Service reach out to new constituencies. It was agreed the NLC would provide additional comments, and the plan would be returned for final review and approval at the next NLC meeting.

National Park System Advisory Board Activities

WASO Policy Chief Loran Fraser identified the current membership of the National Park System Advisory Board (<http://www.nps.gov/policy/advisory/advisoryboardmembers.pdf>), and said the Board is actively pursuing projects requested by the Director. He highlighted the work of the Education Committee, headed by University of Denver Chancellor Dan Ritchie, which is exploring the idea that the NPS has an explicit civic mission – to encourage citizen engagement in public life and awareness of and support for the principles and practice of democracy.

Associate Director Mike Soukup distributed to NLC members the Board's Science Committee Report, transmitted to the Director by Board Chairman Doug Wheeler on March 10. Requested by the Director in May 2003, the report evaluates positively the Natural Resource Challenge and commends the Administration for supporting the program. He said the report declares that the Organic Act mandate to preserve parks unimpaired puts the NPS in a leadership role in nature preservation, and that this unique charge leaves the Service no choice but to master science to ensure the ecological integrity of the parks. The report offers advice regarding future directions in science-based resource management, emphasizing the need to expand biodiversity preservation, marine systems protection, and habitat linkages (connecting national parks physically to prevent the isolation of species). The report urges the NPS to consider ways to pursue "representativeness," the vision that resources in the national park system should reflect the full diversity of America's natural heritage.

National Park Foundation Planning

The NLC was briefed by National Park Foundation (NPF) leadership on its recently completed comprehensive strategic plan, which places increased emphasis on the NPF grants program to accomplish that organization's mission of supporting the parks. New grant program areas include: Visitor Experience, Volunteerism, Education, and Community Engagement. An additional grant program area was identified, (Programs of National Significance), to support other types of projects important to the long-term preservation of the park system. Director Mainella and NLC members expressed support for the Foundation's new direction, and enthusiasm about the NPS/NPF partnership.

Upcoming NLC Meetings:

September 15 and 16, 2004, in Washington, D.C.
November 9 and 10, 2004, in Washington, D.C.