

CLEAR TEXT:
WASO Ranger Activities'
Electronic Newsletter

September 10, 1993

SECRETARY BABBITT'S LETTER SUPPORTING 6(C)

On August 22nd, Secretary of the Interior Bruce Babbitt sent the following letter to OPM Director James B. King:

"Last year, in response to changing organizational and employee needs, the National Park Service (NPS) initiated a broad-based career management reform program called Ranger Futures. The goal of this program is to professionalize the educational, pay and related career management aspects of the park ranger work force. OPM Associate Director Len Klein assembled an OPM team and has been working with the NPS in the development of an agency proposal and a detailed work plan.

"Enhanced annuity retirement for our park rangers with primary law enforcement duties is a key ingredient of the Ranger Futures program. We believe this will enable the NPS to provide legitimate benefits to its law enforcement ranger work force, and will strengthen and increase the cost effectiveness of ranger recruitment and retention efforts.

"The NPS has taken the position that the enhanced annuity program will be beneficial for the Service for both past claims and future designation of covered positions. The Department supports that position. We are now requesting your support and assistance by communicating your support to your key staff.

"A meeting is planned in the near future with your key staff and Interior's Director of Personnel and NPS officials to discuss in depth any clarifications or information needed to obtain enhanced annuity retirement coverage for the NPS ranger work force who have primary duties in the law enforcement area."

UPDATING 6(C) REQUESTS

The following memo was issued by the Service's chief personnel officer on August 30th:

"It will again be necessary for employees who filed timely requests for individual service credit under 8336(c), as well as yearly updates, to file an update by September 30, 1993, to cover the additional year.

"It will also be necessary for any employees who have not already filed a claim or have entered new positions, but who wish to have the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) consider coverage for their present positions, to file within one year of the date for which they wish coverage. OPM will no longer grant coverage for 'a period greater than one year prior to the date that the request from an individual is received by the employing agency.'

"Questions may be referred to Marsha Lee of the Branch of Labor and Employee Relations on 202-208-4434."

Several pages of specific instructions are attached to the memo. Please see your servicing personnel office for particulars.

LAW ENFORCEMENT PAY

In the December 18, 1992 CLEAR TEXT, we reported that OPM, in accord with the requirements of the Federal Law Enforcement Pay Reform Act of 1990 (FLEPRA), had concluded its study of law enforcement pay and forwarded its recommendations to Congress. We were in error. Although the report was completed last December, it was held up for internal review by the new administration and wasn't sent to Congress until last week. The recommendations are similar to those we reported last December, and will undoubtedly undergo further changes in Congress. We'll keep you posted on developments.

RANGER FUTURES CLARIFICATION

One of the statements in the August 13th CLEAR TEXT regarding preliminary testing of Ranger Futures in field areas has caused a good deal of unintended confusion. The sentence said, in part, that "the restructured ranger personnel subsystem will be pilot tested in a select sample of park settings..." The grapevine has it that positions in some parks are accordingly being reclassified and upgraded, and that is not true. What we are doing is employing Ranger Futures to establish a model structure at several demonstration parks. No positions are actually being reclassified and will not be reclassified until we've worked all the bugs out of the system. Please pass the word on to others, as we've heard that there's something of a scramble on to get applications in to parks where the alleged upgrades are occurring.

WILDFIRE FATALITY INVESTIGATION

Last May, several firefighters deployed fire shelters on a 15,000-acre prescribed fire on the Santa Fe National Forest in New Mexico. One of the firefighters was killed when the fire subsequently overran them. The overrun was a very localized, unforecasted, high wind event which lasted less than ten minutes but blew the fire across the line and pushed it over 20 acres before dying out.

Subsequent investigations by both the Forest Service and OSHA arrived at differing conclusions regarding application of safety management programs. OSHA cited the Forest Service for 13 separate violations, all of which were refuted by the Forest Service. OSHA has not yet responded to the Forest Service's rebuttals.

This case may be significant to prescribed fire programs if OSHA prevails, particularly if they require air sampling and respiratory protection before the National Wildfire Coordinating Group (NWCG) completes its ongoing research on the health hazards of smoke.

The NPS is currently working with NWCG's safety and health working team on a proposal for a wildland fire management orientation to key Washington and regional OSHA compliance officers. The intent is to better inform OSHA staff about wildland fire management safety, tactics, operations, fire behavior, and command practices and procedures. This orientation would help greatly in improving mutual understanding of our respective roles and responsibilities in future investigations.

We'll keep you informed of further developments in this case.

[Report by Paul Broyles, Branch of Fire and Aviation Management, Boise]

FIELD NOTES

Everglades

The park has completely revised its hurricane plan, which will now employ the incident command system to pre-plan for storms. The plan, which was developed by district ranger Bob Panko, contains outline I-204 forms at each step-up level for an approaching hurricane. The park has been divided into geographic branches and functional groupings and the affected personnel have been heavily involved in identifying the actions necessary to secure each area. Individual responsibilities, including incident commander and deputy, command and general staff and branch chiefs, have already been assigned. The park staff, assisted by Rick Gale as coach and evaluator, spent a full day in August going through an in-basket exercise preparing for the theoretical seventh storm of the year - Hurricane Gale. The dry run revealed some problems, led to the identification some omissions, and demonstrated that the ICS system can very effectively be adapted to pre-plan for an emergency situation.

Timpanogos Cave

The park implemented a system for paying cave tour fees with credit cards in July. Within 28 days, over \$15,000 in fees were paid by credit card - about \$550 per day and about 20% of the fees collected during the period. Credit card sales on-site have posed no problems. Authorizations, which are done automatically by sliding the card through a reader that calls a toll free number, take about 15 seconds. Visitors are given orientation information while this is being done, so waiting time has not increased at all. The daily closing report takes about five minutes. The park sends AOD one copy of the daily closing report, which is the deposit procedure on their end. There's less cash to be counted and fewer personal checks to worry about, thereby making normal deposits smaller as well. Bank reports go straight to AOD and they enter income in FFS accounts. The start-up cost for the park was about \$900, with an additional \$25 per month for phone service on a new, dedicated line. The park reports that the system is working well, and credits Pam Mera and Steve Tisinger of AOD for their excellent support.
[Carolyn Barker, AO, TICA]

Olympic

The park's seasonal council is now in its third year of operation. The purpose of the council is to foster communication between seasonals and park management and to serve as a forum for seasonal staff to discuss and work on issues of common concern. The council was not designed to circumvent the supervisory process, but rather to provide an opportunity for seasonals to speak about the future of the park and their own futures. The minutes from meetings are made available to all park staff via park cc:Mail. The council has been instrumental in making park and national policy changes. Council members have also finished several projects, including a SAR skills inventory that would otherwise would have gone uncompleted. Assistant superintendent Roger Rudolph attends all meetings and has provided full support to the council. Council members are seasonal employees who are elected from each of the park's nine subdistricts, including maintenance and administration. They'd like to hear from other parks with seasonal councils, and would be happy to help any areas that would like to set up such groups. For more

information, contact Roger Rudolph at Olympic.

Coulee Dam

David Stiegelmeier, a ranger at Coulee Dam, is in need of leave donations under the leave transfer program. Dave has been diagnosed as suffering from delayed onset of post traumatic stress disorder; he has an OWCP claim pending, but OWCP has not yet decided on his case. Dave has only a week's leave remaining after having taken extensive medical leave. If you'd like to make a donation, contact your servicing personnel or administrative office to obtain donor forms. These should be forwarded to Charlotte Munson in PNRO (206-553-1862). Incidentally, the above information was furnished to us by Dave's wife.

PARK EXCHANGE

Acadia

The park will begin a visitor management planning effort this fall to develop alternatives for managing rapidly growing bicycle use on the 50 miles of carriage roads in the park and the associated conflicts with horseback riding, carriage driving, walking and jogging (no motorized uses are permitted). The park would like to hear from other areas that have developed management responses to conflicting bicycle, pedestrian and horse uses. Please send responses to Bob Reynolds or Bruce Jacobson. [Bob Reynolds, Superintendent, ACAD]

Cuyahoga Valley

The International Police Mountain Bike Association (IPMBA) offers information on bike patrol training throughout the nation, organizes the annual "Police on Bikes" conference, and publishes a bi-monthly newsletter with articles and research specifically geared toward bicycle-mounted law enforcement officers. For more information, contact IPMBA at 190 W. Ostend Street, Suite 120, Baltimore, MD 21230 (410-539-3399). [Greg Cravatas, CUVA]

Redwoods

The park has 2100 feet of one and a half inch linen hose and 600 feet of one inch linen hose - both from 10 to 20 years old - that it is making available to interested parks. If you'd like all or part of these hoses, contact Bill Donati at Redwoods (707-464-6101). [Bill Donati, REDW]

Jefferson National Expansion

The park has 13 black vinyl law enforcement equipment/gear bags as surplus items. The bags are medium size with zipper tops. All are in good condition. The bags can be used for equipment storage in vehicles or for issuance to law enforcement personnel as personal equipment. If you're interested, contact John Weddle or Donna Pfoutz at Jefferson (314-425-6156).

The park also has four hand-held and two walk-through type magnetometers which they'd be willing to loan out to other parks on an as-needed basis. They also have personnel trained in the set-up and monitoring of the walk-through systems. For further information, contact chief ranger Deryl Stone (314-279-4468).

PARK VACANCIES AND OPM REGISTER OPENINGS

Position	Closes	Number	Description
GS-025-07	9/10/93	-	Law enforcement ranger at Tumacacori. Applicants must be able to read, write and speak Spanish. For more info, call Sarah Vega at 602-640-5254.
GS-025-05	9/17/93	NCR-93-216	Ranger at Rock Creek Park. Contact NCR Personnel at 202-619-7256.

CLEAR TEXT is the bi-weekly electronic newsletter of the Ranger Activities Division in WASO. It is distributed via cc:Mail to all ranger training and operations centers (FLETC, HOAL, STMA, NIFC), regional office ranger divisions, park chief rangers, and other interested parties.

Short submissions for the last three sections of the report are welcome and encouraged. Next issue deadline: September 22, 1993.

If you would like to get CLEAR TEXT but don't currently receive it, please advise Ranger Activities via a short cc:Mail message. Any office may receive it, including districts and subdistricts within a park. PLEASE pass it along to others in your division and park.

Prepared by WASO Division of Ranger Activities

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