



RANGER ACTIVITIES INFORMATION EXCHANGE



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Chief Ranger's Comments

It appears that there are some misunderstandings abroad concerning the directions and goals of the 025 comparability task group, and the time is at hand to summarize and clarify them for you. There are a number of specific products that have been generated by the task group or have come from OPM with input from the group. We think that good information and tools are being brought together to improve position management within the ranger series and other Service occupations.

The task group's purpose has evolved to a focus on providing the tools and knowledge necessary for supervisors and managers to effectively organize the work that they need to accomplish and to describe the ramifications (in grade) of organizing work in alternative ways. It is up to individual program managers to decide how they want to use the system. What has become very obvious is that, generally speaking, we rangers have a very limited working knowledge of the system that classifies the work within the position descriptions that we write.

The products that the task group have released so far are varied. In addition to naming the documents which you need to be aware of, I'll briefly describe the intended purpose of each of them. If you do not have some or all of these, see your personnel office:

Classification Handbook for Managers - This document describes classification principles and the effects of organizing work in different ways. Among the key points it makes is that the highest level duties occurring in a position in an amount between approximately 25 and 50 percent will control the grade of the position. It also states that work occurring over 51 percent of the time will likely control the grade and the series. The handbook also discusses cross-referencing of other standards and the use of specialist positions. If specialists in a field are needed, such work should be reflected in a position description and classified accordingly.

Supplemental Guideline for the 025 Standard - The intent of this document is to provide managers and classifiers with more specific information than is available in the 025 standards for describing levels of work in interpretation, resource management, search and rescue, emergency medical services, law enforcement, etc. It incorporates the principle of cross-referencing of other standards to establish grading criteria for 025, and can be defended because it is directly tied to approved OPM standards. This document has received field review and will soon be re-drafted.

1811 Position Paper - The field was asked to help in the development of this paper through a survey of 1811 criminal investigation work occurring in the parks. It's clear that this type of work occurs regularly within the system, and it should be recognized. The recommendation to the director, which has since been approved and disseminated to the field by memo, is that managers should have the option to deal with this type of work in the way they

determine to be best. It was recognized that a park which employs 20 rangers who each do criminal investigative work 5 percent of the time probably does not have a very efficient investigative program, and that such a distribution means that such work has no effect on the grades of any of those positions. By organizing such work into four ranger positions, each of whom would perform investigative duties 25 percent of the time, a more thorough investigative program would probably result and the positions involved would definitely be cross-referenced to the 1811 series for grading of their positions (probably to the GS-9 level). This ties back directly to the concepts in the Classification Handbook for Managers. The manager also has the option of organizing the work in ranger positions so that these duties take up more than 50 percent of each employee's time. These positions, while still organizationally called park rangers, would be classified as 1811's. We don't anticipate many of these actually occurring, but that is an approved option. It is very important in this particular discussion to know the differences in investigative work in the federal system, and you should review GS-083, 1810 and 1811 series descriptions for definitions. Not all criminal investigative actions are classifiable in the 1811 series. In describing work in position descriptions, you need to know the difference.

Demographic Study - This study took basic information on current grade levels, time in service, service computation dates, dates of birth and other information and projected the outlook for movement in 025 positions in the future. The study shows that very few people leave the Service for any reason, and that, if this trend continues, movement will continue to be slow in a system with limited expansion. The study bases its conclusion on the assumption that each employee will retire the day that he or she is eligible. This is the first time in my tenure with the Service that we have had a real picture of what was going on in this area. I think that a very useful purpose of this document is that it gives each ranger a real situation report from which to assess individual probabilities and potential opportunities over the years to come. This document is worth studying. While not a rosey picture in some respects, it is honest. It gives a realistic assessment from which individuals can make some career decisions on a more objective basis.

The task group plans other actions in the future. Recommendations will soon be made by the task group to establish curriculum material for a course dealing with position management and classification. This course will help supervisors and managers to learn their options for organizing work. Another prospective training approach would be more informal in nature. It would encourage park managers to look at positions within the organization that could be filled at the training level. If, for example, a park had a vacant GS-9 position in safety, concessions, personnel, procurement or other areas, that position could technically be filled at a GS-5 training level. After a year of experience, the incumbent could be promoted to a GS-7 training level and eventually to the GS-9 full performance level. If a GS-7 ranger, for example, checks his options and decides that the 025 road is going to be slower than acceptable, then staying in the Service in a different capacity may be good for both the individual and the Service. Pay levels would be protected in this training situation. We currently fill many positions in the NPS in other occupations from outside the Service.

One of the biggest problems we have had is in trying to communicate where all this is going. It's hard to get together with 3200 rangers on a one-to-one basis, and the word seems to be getting out very slowly. The first thing to

understand is that this group is bound to work within the guidelines and standards that exist. OPM will not rewrite the current 025 standards, but told us that we have the option to further refine those standards. That is being done with the supplemental guideline.

We have responded to OPM with comments on the proposed changes in the 083 and 085 police and guard standards. It appears that because of high turnover rates with GS-5 level federal police in all agencies, the base level may go up. We as an agency have given full support to this possibility. If this occurs, these standards would be cross-referenced for grading purposes where similar work occurs 25 percent of the time or more in a ranger position. This would have the most effect on GS-5 positions. This change is currently only a proposal, but seems to have general support.

Since the elimination of the 026 technician series, positions classified within the 025 series now range from GS-1 to GS-15. Positions at GS-9 and above generally have program responsibility. The incumbent in a GS-9 position is responsible for planning, coordinating, directing and probably programming and supervising one or more park functions. Examples include program responsibility for resource management, back country operations, interpretation, law enforcement, EMS, SAR and so forth. Positions below GS-9 generally have responsibility for implementing various programs and do not have program management responsibilities. The GS-9 and above may well perform some of the duties necessary to implement the program area for which they have responsibility, but the grade in such a situation is based on the program management aspects of the job.

The task group, in addition to the products that have been mentioned above, will make recommendations for needed training and cross-training into other career opportunities for anyone interested. All of this will be tied together eventually into a formal "Career Management Concept" paper. The basic information, however, is available in the documents previously listed. It is up to each of you with or without position management responsibilities to study and understand this system. The 025 position management group will hopefully keep working together and will continue to gather material and provide it to the field.

Position management, organization of work and a strong working knowledge of classification are critical "ranger" skills. If you don't understand the system, you can't use it effectively. The supervisor and the employee will continue to be frustrated if they look at personnel issues as being someone else's responsibility. It is a manager's responsibility to determine what is needed and the personnelist's (classifier's) position to determine the grade that fits the work described. The most effective way to accomplish successful position management is to develop a knowledge-based working relationship with personnel that solves position management challenges.

If you have comments on any aspect of this endeavor, feel free to send them in to me. I'll make sure they are reviewed. We hope that this project continues and that we do continue to see progress. Management of ranger positions is our problem. Rangers work for rangers. We have to actively and knowledgeably get involved in dealing with our own problems. I haven't found any effortless, painless, quick fixes yet.

Fee Program Update

The review and revision process for NPS-22, the guideline on fee collection, was accelerated following the completion of the first draft as a result of the Director's desire to have it implemented before the summer season gets underway. About 70 copies of the draft guideline were sent out to select fee areas (as suggested by regional fee coordinators) on March 6th, and comments were to be submitted by phone to the regional coordinators by March 13th. Current plans are to have the final version at the printers by April 1st and out to the field as quickly after that as is possible.

It's likely that not all of the proposed changes will be included in that revised version, as several of them have to be cleared by Treasury. Those will be added later on. Among the anticipated changes are the following:

- The minimum amount for a mandatory deposit has been increased from \$1,000 to \$5,000.
- Provisions will be included for handling foreign currency.
- There will be new standards for overages and shortages, and the latter will eliminate (in most cases) the old requirement that the fee collectors make up for any short falls out of their own pockets.
- Procedures will be developed which will make it easier to locate other depositing Federal agencies so that joint deposits can be made which will exceed the minimum required.

Hearings were held on March 12th on fee legislation before the House Subcommittee on National Parks. At present, there are four bills being considered. The Service's would raise some fees, include other areas in the system, and generate about \$75 million in revenues. Rep. Vento's bill (HR 1320) would bring in about \$54 million, eliminate fees from "urbanized parks" which were not charging them as of October 1, 1986, and would extend the Land and Water Conservation Fund through the year 2015. Rep. Foglietta (HR 773) has proposed that all national historical parks be eliminated from consideration; revenues under his bill would amount to just over \$71 million. And Rep. Cheney has introduced legislation (HR 1089) which is very similar to the Service's.

Briefly...

The cert for the emergency services coordinator's position was received on March 12th, and a selection should be made shortly....There are some preliminary indications that money may be available this year for ARPA enforcement; you should be prepared for a questionnaire asking you to assess your problems and monetary needs....The structural fire guideline goes into its final draft early next month with a projected mid-May distribution.... A memo increasing uniform replacement allowances (\$35 for permanents, \$8.75 per quarter for seasonals) went out of here last week and will be effective on April 1st....36 CFR Part 4 has just cleared the solicitor's office and with luck will be out to you before the summer season gets rolling....Thanks to all of you who put together information in response to the grazing questionnaire which was sent out this winter; the material submitted has made it possible to prepare a detailed information base which will be used in future efforts to provide policy and management direction to parks with grazing....The regional chief rangers will be in Washington for a conference from March 30th to April 3rd....