



RANGER ACTIVITIES INFORMATION EXCHANGE

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Chief Ranger's Comments

The November 30, 1990 deadline for retiring with "lump sum" benefits will apparently result in a number of different types of positions opening in a variety of NPS jobs. As of this writing, it's unclear what the full effects of these retirements will be on the Service, but it's already evident that some good friends with lots of park experience will soon be moving on to do other things. This will obviously lead to some opportunities for advancement and mobility, and the next six months to a year should therefore be interesting.

At the same time, however, there seems to be a phenomena going on which may complicate matters. Although it has been evident for the last couple of years, I'm still not sure how to read it, nor am I sure whether it will be intensified by the vacancies which will open in November. This phenomena has to do with the lack of applicants for good jobs throughout the Service.

Even before coming to Washington, I felt and heard that any good job or promotion would have so many applicants that a panel would have to pare down the large number of candidates to a manageable number of "promotion eligibles" and "lateral reassignments". Since my arrival here, I've continued to hear of the difficulties of being competitive because of the volume of applicants for every good job. No doubt this is many times the case, but I'm receiving more frequent complaints from selecting officials of certs with so few names on them that the job didn't even have to be paneled.

Many of these seem to have been very good jobs, too. They have included GS-7 through GS-13 jobs in every region. They have included chiefs of interpretation, chief rangers, resource management specialists, criminal investigators, and district rangers. I was shocked the other day when I heard that the cert for the Valley district ranger job in Yosemite had only four persons on it. This is as a graphic example of the problem, but there are many more. We are now drawing up a list of such instances which have occurred over the last couple of years. Maybe publishing the list will help some people in their future career planning.

Although it's technically true that "all you need is one good candidate per position", it's also true that this trend tends to refute claims that we have a "mobility crisis". If there's a "crisis", it may be partly because we are putting so many personal limitations on ourselves that we are becoming our own problem.

There are many legitimate reasons for not applying for a position, including fiscal, medical, geographical, educational, family, and dual career concerns. If the certs are any indication, it appears that we are placing more weight on

these matters in our career decisions than previously. The number of positions being advertised which have many applicants seems to be shrinking. We may be entering a period of increased mobility and promotional opportunities for those who are truly mobile. Those with the best KSA'S and the greatest geographic flexibility should have the widest variety of opportunities. I myself had no plans to ever come east, but eventually took assignments in the Everglades and here in Washington. They've turned out to be as exciting and rewarding as any that preceded them. Different, but fun.

A change of subject: I recently talked with representatives of the USFS and BLM. There is no news on their "enhanced annuity" efforts, as none of their packages for past coverage have yet been submitted to OPM for determination of coverage for past work. BLM has not submitted any benchmark position descriptions for "determination of coverage" for the future; the Forest Service has submitted such descriptions for those LEO's who have full-time law enforcement responsibilities, with few or no collateral duties. They have heard nothing from OPM in over a year.

The Service's review of the nearly 700 submissions is proceeding at the regional level. The first national review of the packages submitted to the regions will be held in WASO in December and will be conducted by a panel comprised of regional panel members. The approved packages will then be forwarded to the Department. The Division of Personnel will coordinate the efforts of a task group which will meet this year and endeavor to prepare benchmark position descriptions for law enforcement positions. We will be participating in this effort and will keep you advised of developments.

It was exciting this past week to get the printout which shows that the Service has passed the 500 mark in the number of new GS-7 positions created in the 025 series since 1985, and reduced the number of 025's in grades below GS-6 from 1,345 to 838 during the same period. The GS-7's are virtually all upgrades which were arrived at by using the new standards and the supplement to the 025 standards prepared as a product of the Park Ranger Workforce Task Group. There will be more such upgrades in the future, especially as interpretation works on more of its positions.

We look forward to another productive year. It has mostly been a kick. Happy Holidays and best wishes for a great 1991.

Drug Enforcement and Prevention

The National Park Service had a very successful drug enforcement and prevention program during FY 90, and we have received increased funding for FY 91. There is every reason to believe that our successes will continue. As an agency, we made 1,459 drug-related arrests and eradicated 66,902 plants with a total value of over \$109 million through September of this year. We also trained several additional DARE instructors who are now presenting this highly-acclaimed program in local schools. We are now reviewing drug activity reports for last year from the parks and the regions, and will be allocating funds for this fiscal year according to these reports and park and regional priorities.

ecological Resource Protection

While smaller than the drug program, the Service's ARPA program is no less important. As we all know, once an archeological resource is gone it can't be replaced. Since they are being destroyed or plundered outside of parks at an increasing pace, the Service and other land management agencies are becoming the guardians of the few that remain. Prices have accordingly risen, which in turn means that there's more incentive to plunder. At present, we have very limited funding for ARPA enforcement. In FY 1990 we had \$500,000, and will have the same amount in FY 91. These funds will continue to be devoted mainly to ARPA training, targeted projects in parks or regions, special operations, and technical equipment.

National Incident Based Reporting System

Two years ago, Congress passed the Uniform Federal Crime Reporting Act of 1988 (P.L. 100-690), which requires all Federal agencies which routinely investigate complaints of criminal activity to report details about crime within their respective jurisdictions in a uniform manner and in a prescribed format. The FBI was charged with administering the act, and they subsequently developed the National Incident-Based Reporting System (NIBRS) as the vehicle for attaining these reporting objectives. The Service received \$1 million in funds for NIBRS in FY 1991, and has requested approximately \$2.4 million in FY 92 for full implementation of the system.

Plans for use of this year's funds are still in the formative stages, but certain objectives have already been identified. As currently planned, Ranger Activities and three of the regions will be heavily involved in the testing of the system this fiscal year. Testing/planning positions will be established in these offices for approximately half of the fiscal year. A few items of hardware will probably be purchased and distributed to regions and/or field areas who will participate in the tests. Funds are also available for any needed training which occurs at this stage. We may begin using new forms on a trial basis, and plan to send them to the regions for review and comment. The balance of this year's funds and time will be devoted to program design, documentation, support and maintenance. We hope to fully implement the system in 1992 if we receive adequate funding in that fiscal year.

Health and Fitness

NPS-57, the draft health and fitness guideline, was sent to all regions and many parks for review in early December. The guideline provides a blueprint for setting up a local health and fitness plan. Among other things, it provides all the legal and policy citations for acquiring equipment, funding physicals, paying for health clubs, and exercising on government time. The plan also establishes mandatory minimum fitness standards for employees who provide certain levels of emergency services. The present version of the draft contains a two-year phase-in period before any action may take place that would lead to the removal of an individual from a position with emergency services responsibilities. During that period, employees would have to take the plan's four tests twice a year, but would not have to pass them. At the end of the grace period, the program would be reevaluated.

The plan also delineates the medical and physical standards for law enforcement and structural firefighting that are called for in, respectively, NPS-9 and NPS-58. There are presently no pre-employment or medical standards for these two disciplines. Standards now exist only for wildland firefighters and divers.

While the review of the guideline is underway, parks in Rocky Mountain Region will be testing the health and fitness plan. The region volunteered to give it a trial implementation and recently sent it out to field areas.

The purpose of the mandatory health and fitness program is to ensure that the persons responsible for providing emergency services are at least minimally fit, thereby helping protect themselves, their co-workers, and the people who depend on them to for assistance in emergency situations. We also feel that it is important for the Service to support health and fitness for all employees.

Fire Management

The Branch of Fire Management conducted a week-long program planning session in mid-October. The objective of the session was to identify the basic elements of the fire program, define its mission statements, determine the objectives for each mission, and formulate long-range projects to implement those objectives. Branch members identified 16 basic program elements in fire management, including structural fire and aviation. The statements and objectives derived from these 16 elements will be employed in formulating budget requests, composing annual work plans for staff members, and determining performance evaluations.

The results of this planning effort will be shared with the attendees at the fire management officers' workshop which is to be held in Seattle this December. Comments on the plan from workshop participants will help the branch to establish the highest field priority needs for the coming year.

Among those attending the session was James Farrel, the Service's new structural fire coordinator. Jim recently retired from a career with the Orange County (California) Fire Department, where he was a highly-qualified battalion chief. During his tenure in Orange County, Jim also developed state fire laws and developed and interpreted fire codes. He officially entered on duty in the Boise office on November 19th, and will be working hard with the regions to implement a very aggressive agenda for building the framework of a structural fire protection program.

Retirement Eligibility

According to a recent survey conducted by the Division of Personnel in WASO, about 13% of the permanent employees now in the work force are now eligible for retirement. The numbers by major occupation group include 27 facility managers, 231 administrative personeel, 641 maintenance employees, 159 professionals, and 286 GS-025 rangers - 200 of them in grades GS-9 and above.

Follow-up on Shooting of Ranger McGhee

The trials of John Woolard and Dempsey Bruner, the two escaped convicts who've been charged with the murder of Gulf Islands Ranger Robert McGhee, have been postponed until next year. There will be a hearing on January 14th to set definite trial dates for each of them. Woolard will likely be tried in Pascagoula, Mississippi; Bruner's attorneys have asked for a change of venue to Hinds County, so he will probably be tried at the county courthouse in Jackson, Mississippi. Both have been charged with capital murder, kidnapping and aggravated assault on a police officer; Bruner was also charged with two counts of rape and four counts of sexual battery. They remain locked up in the Jackson County Adult Detention Center in Pascagoula, Mississippi.

Servicewide Reservation System

A work group representing parks, regions and the Washington Office (both Ranger Activities and Accounting Operations) met in Main Interior between October 29th and November 2nd to develop a new RFP (request for proposal) for the Servicewide reservation system. Ticketron will begin its fifth and final year of operation on the current contract on December 17th.

The RFP schedule calls for the announcement of the RFP in January or sooner, award of the new contract no later than next June, and commencement of the contract on December 17, 1991. The period between award and implementation will allow sufficient time for the new contractor to put the required equipment in place, for NPS and contractor staff training, and for publicization of changes in system operation.

Ranger Intake Program

Efforts to reinstitute an intake program for park rangers and other Service employees are well underway. Although specifics regarding the program's administration are not yet available, we can provide you with some general information on its overall goals.

The intake program will identify at least 20 candidates annually who will take part in an extensive, three-year program of training and development assignments, culminating in non-competitive placement of those who successfully complete all aspects of the program in GS-9 positions. Twelve of the candidates will be selected to fill park ranger positions, and at least half of those will come from the current ranger work force.

Some rangers have expressed the concern that external ranger intake candidates will have a significant adverse affect on their chances for career advancement, but current employment figures show that this is highly unlikely. At present, the Service fills from 60 to 90 ranger positions at the GS-9 level each year. Between 30 and 40 of those vacancies are created by employees who leave the Service because of retirements, resignations, transfers or other reasons; the remaining vacancies are created by promotions or transfers to other disciplines within the Service. If a maximum of six external intake candidates are selected for such positions, that will still leave from 50 to 80 available for internal candidate selection through the merit promotion process.

GS-025 Grades

The following table provides a break down of the grades of the 3,246 permanent GS-025's in the Service as of November 28th. The table also shows the change in the number at each grade since the implementation of the new standards and classification guidelines for the series in 1985:

<u>Grade</u>	<u>1990</u>	<u>1985</u>	<u>Grade</u>	<u>1990</u>	<u>1985</u>
GS-1	0	4	GS-9	631	618
GS-3	34	49	GS-11	386	421
GS-4	133	244	GS-12	295	265
GS-5	647	781	GS-13	162	161
GS-6	24	267	GS-14	75	72
GS-7	792	292	GS-15	51	46
GS-8	16	3			

The average grade for the 3,223 GS-025's in 1985 was 8.03; the average in 1990 is 8.34.

Chief Rangers' Directory Corrections

A revised and updated version of the directory of park and regional chief rangers was sent to each of you in late October. If you haven't yet received a copy, please let us know and we'll send you one.

As we noted in the accompanying cover memo, pen and ink changes to the directory will be listed each month in this newsletter, followed by periodic typed page changes. If you have any corrections, please send them to us for the January/February Exchange. Here are the changes received to date:

- * Page 1 - Add the following to the regional office ranger division staff:
Fire Management Officer Charisse Sydoriak, FTS 223-5067; Fire Assistant Beth Kessler, FTS 223-5067; LE Specialist Robert Ditolla, FTS 223-5070.
- * Page 2 - The commercial number for the chief ranger at the Statue of Liberty is 212-363-3260.
- * Page 3 - Add the following to the regional office ranger division staff:
Fire Management Officer Doug Wallner, FTS 597-7140.
- * Page 5 - The telefax number for the ranger division in the regional office is 202-401-1242 (commercial) and 441-1242 (FTS).
- * Page 8 - The correct spelling of the chief ranger's name at Vicksburg is Lanford. The telefax number there is 601-636-9497.
- * Page 21 - The correct spelling of the chief ranger's name at Yukon-Charley Rivers is Karraker. The telefax number there is 907-547-2247.

Ranger Recognition

In the last issue of Exchange, we began a section entitled "Ranger Recognition" to record instances in which rangers have been recognized for various accomplishments. We'd like to keep that going and ask that you send submissions to us for printing.

- * Ron Kerbo, a cave specialist at Carlsbad Caverns, was recognized for his life-long and tireless contributions to caving at the 1990 annual convention of the National Speleological Society. Ron received the Honorary Member Award, which is the society's highest honor.
- * Although not a ranger, we think it appropriate to here recognize Officer Katherine Heller of the United States Park Police, who received the 1990 Police Officer of the Year award, which is given by Parade Magazine and the International Association of Chiefs of Police. Katherine received the award for an incident in which she "boldly stepped into the open to shoot dead an assailant as he in turn was about to shoot down her fellow police officer (Scott Dahl)."

Briefly...

- One staff change has been made in the Branch of Resource and Visitor Protection, and a second is imminent. Major Jack Schamp will be coming in as the WASO law enforcement specialist, assuming the position vacated in July when Major Mike Healy retired for the Park Police (Mike's now the AO at Acadia). And a vacancy announcement has been issued for the GS-025-12/13 position vacated by Jim Loach. The person in this position deals primarily with Servicewide regulations, but also has other duties. This is a challenging position with responsibilities involving all levels of park management and significant opportunities to influence the Service's direction on a wide variety of issues. We hope that we will receive a number of highly qualified and motivated applicants with park experience for this position.
- A foundation has been established to foster improved understanding of critical incident stress and to promote further advances in the prevention and treatment of such stress. Membership costs \$25. For further information, write: American Critical Incident Stress Foundation, P.O. Box 204, Ellicott City, MD 21403 (301-750-0856).
- Looking for a place to get your old stetson cleaned and restored? Warth Walden, a company in Dallas, Texas, will do a complete rehabilitation of your hat for \$41.25, a price which includes shipping it back to you via UPS (add another \$5.00 for shipment via U.S. mail). Their address and phone number: Warth Walden, 913 West Jefferson, Dallas, TX 75208 (214-946-1847). If you know of any other companies that offer the same service, please let advise us so we can list them in the newsletter.

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The Ranger Activities Information Exchange is produced by the Washington Division of Ranger Activities. Walt Dabney, Chief Ranger. Address letters, comments and inquiries to: Ranger Activities (650), Stop 3310, National Park Service, Box 37127, Washington, D.C. 20013-7127; FTS 268-4874 or (202) 208-4874. Attn: Bill Halainen, Editor.