Don't Bury Resource Management!

Gary Vequist, Brad Cella, Susan Mills and Ross Kavanagh

A recent article in Ranger (ANPR Journal) entitled "Rangers in Resources - Absolutely" advocated returning to the past by placing resource management under the Park's Chief Ranger. In Olympic National Park's organization, the Branch of Natural Resource Management is one of seven branches, three layers below the Park Superintendent. This organization impedes science-based park management, while most other parks have embraced change and created separate park divisions for resource management.

In the 1970s several parks, including Sequioa/Kings Canyon, Yosemite, and Everglades, organized independent resource management programs. Management review reports over the past decade, from the "State of the Parks" report (1980) to the Vail Agenda, stated an urgent need for more and better trained NPS natural resource managers and better program focus. The Natural Resource Management Trainee Program was begun in 1983 in response to the identified need to increase the number of professional natural resource managers and to enhance the effectiveness of the National Park Service resource management program.

Professional Parity - Perhaps the real issue is a perceived fear of the disintegration of the traditional ranger role. Yet, protection/emergency services have become so complex, it has become an arduous task for rangers just to sustain full performance level skills and maintain quality standards. Rather than pursue the futile attempt to require rangers to do everything, it is time to embrace the concept of professional parity between rangers and resource managers.

Certainly more individuals are needed who possess the knowledge and who are provided the time to contribute significantly to resource management activities. However, it is imperative that a core of individuals are dedicated full time to resource management functions to provide program direction, development, operation and evaluation. Just as technical requirements for ranger proficiency have increased, the need for educated, technically proficient and experienced resource managers to accomplish scientifically valid resource management has also increased.

Scientific Credibility - High-quality data are important for many management decisions and are critical to support controversial ones. Since the park ranger series has no science educational requirements, it lacks basic scientific credibility. Scientific credibility is necessary to effectively represent the National Park Service in complex resource management conflicts, especially when dealing with resource managers and scientists from other agencies, institutions and private industry. Yet, some managers do not consult with natural resource professionals before taking management actions. The Vail Agenda stated "Managers have little training and experience to learn the uses and needs of research

outputs."

Partners in Park Management - It seems unconscionable to separate professional resource management disciplines from decision making, as park natural resources are degraded further from any semblance of ecological soundness. The integration of natural resource information into park management decisions often depends on the manner it is communicated to park managers, and the level at which such input occurs. Managerial acceptance of the value of research results can promote manager-scientist cooperation, not distrust. Science information is often too technical for managers to interpret alone and management implications may be unclear. So, natural resource professionals, as science advisors, provide the necessary knowledge for science-based park management.

Communication of Ecological Implications - The days of the Chief Ranger and Superintendent meeting independently to make decisions are long since past. Complex social, political, environmental, and ecological considerations warrant interdisciplinary consultation. The natural resource management component deserves Divisional status and presence at Division Chief meetings to communicate specific ecological implications of management actions. It is time to accept and recognize the ascendence of natural resource professionals as science and resource management advisors to the superintendent. The depth of subject matter knowledge and expertise that professionally trained specialists bring is essential to accomplish the NPS's resource stewardship mission.

Summary - Resource management requires full-time attention; we cannot allow it to return to a collateral responsibility. We are woefully behind in our understanding of the resources that exist within many of our park units. In many instances we lack the basic knowledge of what resources occur within parks and in many instances existing resource data is lacking or insufficient to accurately determine if resource degradation is occurring. The need for this information increases as the number and extent of threats increase both internal and external to park units. Everyone who works in a national park unit either directly or indirectly contributes to resource management and rangers who are better educated in science will be able to contribute more; but program development, guidance and evaluation must be provided by individuals dedicated full time to those tasks and who are educated and experienced in science and resource management. Resource management is a science.

Point – Counterpoint: Rangers and Resource Management Specialists

One of the more interesting debates that has been common from our Rendezvous to the halls of the George Wright Society conference is the organizational structure of rangers and resource management specialists in parks and regions. Traditionally, resource management has been a collateral duty of rangers, but with the creation of the resource management trainee program, the specialists have in some parks remained in the ranger division and in others been separated out. There are arguments on both sides and the following is an open forum to air the issue. This section is a point-counterpoint on two approaches to the question. We encourage readers with additional comments or experiences to write *Ranger*.

Rangers in Resources — Absolutely!

Roger Rudolph and Bill Pierce
Olympic

"Back to the Future" has real meaning in the National Park Service today. With the budget cuts and the deficit staring us in the face, the rangers of the past are on their way back. But, as with the movie, they are coming back better educated and prepared to manage the resources of the parks.

The generalists of the past and the specialists of today are being combined into a ranger team of the future. They will be able to manage research, monitoring and implementation programs in the cultural and natural resources of our parks while orienting the visitors and neighbors about our mission.

Here at Olympic National Park, we are organizing to meet the resource needs of the future with a vision toward managing the cultural resources for preservation, interpretation and ethnographic cooperation while maintaining the principles of ecosystem processes in the natural resources. We are working with our neighbors and visitors to provide exceptional opportunities to them to experience and protect these resources.

We see our approach fitting perfectly with the Vail Agenda and specifically the Ranger Futures program that is part of the agenda. We are developing a strategic plan based on our vision and the Vail agenda and are linking our annual goals and our organization to this strategic plan.

We are taking an Olympic Peninsula-wide approach to our management and see each employee and neighbor as key parts in the future of the resources of the park. Our boundaries, like many parks, were not established on ecosystem borders and therefore we feel it is essential to work with our neighbors to protect these systems. But along with the emphasis by the superintendent that all employees are responsible for resource management, we have identified a specific segment of the organization to most efficiently manage these programs.

Division of Resource Management and Visitor Services – The division been established to coordinate all the cultural and natural resource management programs in the park and with our neighbors. The division has six branches to accomplish this mission and has kept overhead to a minimum while relying on cooperative efforts. The six branches are: Cultural Resource Management; East District Operations; West District Operations; Resource and Visitor Protection; Fire Management, Emergency Operations and Aviation; and Natural Resource Management. The goals for these branches are jointly established annually to meet the park's strategic plan. The budget is allocated according to the priorities set by all the branches.

Branch of Resource and Visitor Protection – This branch is managed by a criminal investigator (1811 series) with a staff of specialists to provide the expertise in investigations, undercover assignments, legal issues and coordination with the solicitor, U.S. attorney, FBI, the courts and local law enforcement agencies. Workload is determined by the joint goals and priorities established by all the branches and by events that occur.

Branch of Fire Management, Emergency Operations and Aviation – This branch is headed by the fire management officer (401 series). He and his staff provide the specialized knowledge needed to manage a complex natural prescribed fire program, an extensive aviation program with research, monitoring, maintenance and emergencies balanced against the wilderness mandates and an emergency operations program involved in oil spill responses, SAR, EMS, hazardous materials spills, and natural and manmade events.

Branch of Cultural Resource Management – This branch is managed by an archeologist (193 series) and includes a historian and an ethnographer. They provide the expertise to develop and coordinate a program to preserve and protect the ethnographic, historical and archeological resources of the park and the peninsula. They work closely with the Operations Branches and the Maintenance Division to assist in the protection, restoration and rehabilitation of these resources while allowing for visitor services and development.

Branch of Natural Resource Management – This branch is supervised by a natural resource manager (401 series) who has a staff of specialists in wildlife, vegetation, fisheries and wilderness. They are responsible for developing the resource management plan and providing the expertise to operations to implement the resource management plan. They also coordinate the research in the park and are involved in implementing many of the goals with Operations.

Branches of Operations, East and West – These two branches each are managed by district rangers (025 series) and staffed by subdistrict and area rangers along with seasonal rangers, SCAs and VIPs. These two branches are integral to the success of the resource management plan and goals, and often provide the resources to implement the necessary actions to manage the cultural and natural resources properly. They also are key contacts for all concession, inholdings, adjacent property issues and practices. They develop and implement action plans with input from the other branches to accomplish the annual goals and priorities in the resource management plan.

These are the people in the field who are the daily observers of the resource and can speak out about its status. They provide geographical focus on the resources while assimilating the many functions and specialties that are in the other branches and divisions. They assure that threats and concerns from outside the park are identified and handled with the neighbors.

The division is coordinated by a chief who is the resource management and visitor services manager (025 series). His primary function is to act as the team facilitator of all the members and branches so that they have a joint mission and the proper tools to accomplish the goals.

The key to success is one of commitment by all the team members to the park vision, strategic plan, and resource management plan and to one another to work together to accomplish them. The facilitator is there to assist in issue analysis, communications, decisions, delegation, facilitation and evaluation. The basic ingredients for success in our effort are people, communications and an atmosphere where issues and concerns are discussed openly and mutual respect provides a level of trust where each member's concerns are important to the team.

As with anything worthwhile, it will take commitment from all of us to make it work, but the cultural, natural and human resources demand this commitment. The generalist ranger is a key to this team, as is the specialist in history, air quality or wildlife. The development of productive, effective employees who have tolerance, creativity and flexibility to face the future in the NPS is essential to the resource and our own survival.

The resource future and the ranger's future are linked and the survival of both requires all of us to attain an attitude of unity and teamwork, one of seeking resource and team success, not individual success. That is our goal at Olympic and we will let you know how well we achieve it as we move toward the future. ❖

Resource Management as Separate Division: A Must

Jon Jarvis
Craters of the Moon

In my 17 years in the NPS I have worked as a protection ranger with resource management collateral duties, as a district ranger supervising resource management, as a resource management specialist working for a chief ranger, as a resource management division chief on the same level as the ranger division, and now as a superintendent.

One of my first official acts as superintendent was to give resource management divisional status separate from the ranger division. Having worked both sides of this question, I am convinced that resource management deserves, in fact requires, equal footing with all other park or regional divisions. These are my reasons:

The Lorax – The resource management specialist is the park "lorax" and speaks for the trees. This isn't always a popular position. It is the resource management specialist who often says to wait, slow down and consider endangered species, hazardous materials, revegetation, fish spawning, archeology, erosion or any number of resource concerns before a park project plows ahead. Those projects often are the pet of another division and delays can create resentment and even hostilities that must be managed by the superintendent. The resource management specialist must feel free to speak as a peer within the group of division chiefs.

Dividing the Pie – At periodic points in the park year, the proverbial "pie" is divided by the division chiefs and the superintendent. Sometimes it is a money pie and sometimes it is a priority pie. Those at the table will each get a piece: maintenance, rangers, interpretation and administration. There will be discussion and give/take and the size of each piece will vary accordingly. But what if resource management is represented by the chief ranger? Then they must share the piece that is obtained for the rangers and even if they get one half of that piece, it always is less than the other divisions. That equates to less funding and less influence in the priorities.

Access is Influence – The ultimate decision maker at the park level is the superintendent and those with access to him/her have the greatest influence over the decisions. As a former resource management specialist, direct and unfiltered access to the superintendent was my most valuable tool in ensuring the resource was considered in park decisions. As a superintendent, it is imperative that the resource management specialist has equal and free access to me at all times, to question park projects of any other division and remind me of resource concerns that may have ecological, political or public opinion consequences. In this day of increasing scrutiny, to layer that access is to my own and the resources' peril.

Too Many Hats – Today's chief ranger has a complex job of visitor and resource protection, EMS, SAR, structural fire, fee collection, campground operations, interagency agreements, aircraft operations, drug enforcement and wildland fire. Often included are collateral duties of safety, boat operations, commercial vehicles, ICS, radios and special use permits.

Every one of these functions has a body of regulations, policies and guidelines that require professional attention. To add the entire body issues of resource management on top of this is to create too many hats for one division chief to handle effectively.

Complexity and the Long Term – The issues facing parks today are resource issues: visitor impacts on front and backcountry resources, boundary encroachments, loss of biodiversity, threatened and endangered species, air quality, water pollution, hazardous materials, global warming and more. The future of park integrity hinges on an aggressive resource management, monitoring and research program and the incorporation of the best available scientific information into park planning, decision making and boundary relations. The acquisition of this information is a high park priority. It must be continuous over the long term and not subservient to day-to-day priorities that frequently dominate ranger operations.

It is time to rethink our organization, as many parks are doing, and determine what is best for the park and the resource rather than what is best for preserving tradition. The generalist ranger can retain a strong role in resource management and protection without direct line responsibility over the function. In fact, the job, career and even grade can be enhanced by the presence of a separate resource management division that can devote full attention to a comprehensive program and feed the information back to the rangers for their own goals and objectives.

While generalist rangers have served the NPS well for the last 75 years and still are an integral part of the NPS organization, they are not enough to meet today's demands. What we need are professional resource managers, scientists and specialists with the education, access, clout and funding to tackle the issues. We must give them the organizational standing to help lead the NPS into the next century. ❖

PEER
PUBLIC EMPLOYEES FOR ENVIRONMENTAL RESPONSIBILITY

Public Employees for Enviromental Responsibility (PEER) is sponsoring the second annual Protecting Integrity and Ethics Conference Nov. 5-6 in Washington, D.C. Highlights will include:

- Workshops to inform environmental and land management agency employees on the basics of organizing, free speech rights and issues of scientific integrity.
- Keynote speakers from the Clinton administration to show commonality of interests between PEER's goals and the administration's goals of "reinventing government" and protecting the environment.
- Informal networking among environmental activists, employees, federal and state agencies, and Clinton administration officials.

PEER is a new association of government resource managers, scientists, biologists and others committed to upholding the public trust through responsible management of the nation's environment and natural resources. It addresses the essential need for a well-spring of integrity and ideas for reform from within government.

PEER Headquarters: P.O. Box 428, Eugene, OR 97440 • (503) 484-7158 • FAX (505) 484-3004
Washington Office: 810 First St., NE, Suite 630, Washington, D.C. 20002 • (202) 408-0041 • (202) 408-9855