



Draft Revised Issues and Recommendations from the 75th Anniversary Symposium

National Park Service
Vail, Colorado
October 10, 1991





Printed on Recycled Paper

ORGANIZATIONAL RENEWAL: SUMMARY LISTING OF ISSUES AND PRELIMINARY RECOMMENDATIONS

Issue 1. How can the human resource systems for recruitment, orientation, training, and development enhance the organization's base of knowledge, professional skills, cohesion, and sense of shared commitment?

Revised Recommendations:

In order to address this issue, the National Park Service must develop a comprehensive, service-wide human resource policy and strategy which will:

1-A Establish a standardized process for recruiting and hiring Park Service personnel in key career fields.

- Where not already in place, establish positive educational requirements for professional career fields in order to maintain the strong base of technical, cultural and administrative knowledge required in these jobs.
- Work with the Office of Personnel Management to establish an agency-specific park ranger register.
- Develop a strategy to provide for the transition of current Park Service employees who do not meet newly established educational requirements.
- Assure that the process gives full consideration to high quality seasonals and current Park Service employees.

1-B Strengthen recruitment of under-represented groups.

- Take full advantage of special hiring authorities such as student co-op programs.
- Encourage students to engage in seasonal or part-time work with the Park Service during their undergraduate years, so as to be well positioned to compete for permanent, professional positions upon graduation.
- Reach out to school children and visitors in under-represented groups to familiarize them with the National Park Service and its career opportunities.

1-C Establish typical career paths within each key career field that define opportunities and establish realistic expectations for their achievement.

1-D Strengthen policy and supporting programs to encourage career development, which demonstrate a comprehensive understanding of changing work force

demographics. This- policy should address issues such as mobility, housing assistance, job-sharing, flexible work schedules, spouse employment assistance, locality pay differentials and special consideration for the problems of two-career couples.

1-E Initiate and implement a comprehensive program for employee training and development based on the preparation of a plan, for each career field, which addresses the knowledge and skill enhancement required at key points in each career cycle.

1-F Develop a top-quality orientation and initial training program for all Park Service employees.

- Prior to starting work, employees should complete a brief Park Service orientation program.
- All employees should receive training upon reporting to the initial job site, as well as orientation to their specific tasks and responsibilities.
- For those identified key career fields, new hires should complete a more substantial initial training program that focuses on skills and traditions. During the second half of their initial year, those persons should complete more specialized professional training in their chosen field.

1-G Review the existing Park Service grade structure and, working with OPM, initiate actions to correct inequities.

Issue 2. How should the process of identifying, testing, training, and developing the managers and leaders of the National Park Service be improved?

2-A The Park Service should develop a new mid-level program to identify, select, and train promising employees as prospective managers and future leaders. These employees could come from any of the job series.

2-B The Park Service should establish career paths for managerial employees.

2-C The Park Service should establish a senior-level executive development program (primarily GM 14/15 and above).

2-D The Park Service should establish a human resources management board, that would serve three functions:

- Manage the assignment, training, and development of the top 10% of Park Service managers (say 50 to 70 positions).
- Review and approve all proposed assignments of the 750 GM employees in senior management positions.
- Develop the comprehensive, service-wide human resource policy described under Issue #1.

2-E The Park Service should have such an effective development program that senior positions are primarily filled from within. However, all senior jobs should generally be competed nationwide.

Issue 3. How can the structure, procedures, and culture of the organization be enhanced in ways that more effectively focus resources on the operation of the system's parks and sites?

3-A The Park Service should introduce internal market incentives into the provision of support services for the park system.

3-B There should be a thorough strategic audit of functions performed in regions, headquarters, service centers and the parks. It should have three purposes:

- Ensure the functions add value to the mission of the Service.
- Determine at which levels the functions can best be performed.
- Evaluate the number of regions needed to carry out the Park Service mission effectively.

3-C Key superintendencies and selected regional management jobs should be established as career-reserved SES positions.

3-D We recommend that, henceforth, all SES positions within the Park Service have, as a prerequisite, park managerial experience or comparable field experience in other organizations.

3-E Senior managers should shift assignments every five or six years.

Issue 4. How can the National Park Service enhance its ability to acquire and manage responsibly the large-scale financial resources essential to its mission? How can it stimulate and exploit the evident interests of private institutions in contributing to the goals of the organization?

4-A The Park Service should re-evaluate its fees to ensure that they are fair and market competitive. Current legislative authority that permits 50 percent of all entrance fees paid at a park to remain in that park should be reaffirmed.

4-B The National Park Service should give financial management greater priority.

- The Service should develop a set of pilot budgets for several parks that reflect the actual relationships between costs, service levels and performance standards.
- The Service must strengthen financial management training for all managerial personnel and for those directly involved in budget administration, development, and concession management.
- The Service should evaluate the Accounting Operations Division to determine whether decentralization would make it more efficient.

4-C The Park Service should experiment with partnerships with a wide range of public and private organizations to fund projects in specific parks as well as meet service-wide needs.

4-D The Park Service should establish a more coherent concession policy, improve the ways it accounts for and represents concession income and contractual relationships, and introduce greater competition into the process.

4-E We recommend immediate approval of the proposed America the Beautiful pass and the increase of park-specific annual pass fees where appropriate.

The work group accepts the recommendation offered by many commentators, that the text of the report should be reviewed and strengthened in the following areas:

- State more strongly and clearly how deep and broad the need for change in the Park Service human resource management policy and practice is.
- Reflect Park Service responsibilities external to the parks, including partnership, technical assistance and financial assistance efforts.
- Cover all occupations in the Park Service and not emphasize the park ranger so strongly.

Additional points may be added after a more thorough review of all the comments and input that have been received.

RESOURCE STEWARDSHIP: SUMMARY LISTING OF ISSUES AND PRELIMINARY RECOMMENDATIONS

Issue 1. What steps can parks take to more effectively protect their resources from external threats and to positively influence compatible land use and resource protection within their regional ecosystem and historical context.

Preliminary Recommendations:

- 1-A** Parks should more effectively and positively exercise all existing authorities to deal with concerns and activities that transcend park boundaries.
- 1-B** The Secretary should clarify the existing authorities, ensure their appropriate and consistent use, and seek additional legislation necessary to protect park resources from external threats.

Issue 2. What mechanisms are available to strengthen the ability of parks to identify, evaluate and protect their resources.

Preliminary Recommendations:

- 2-A** Substantially increase the number of NPS resource professionals, emphasizing subject matter specialists currently lacking in the agency and the placement of individuals in parks currently lacking sufficient resource management expertise.
- 2-B** Enhance ability to use resource professionals outside NPS.
- 2-C** Standardize and base fund programs that identify, evaluate, monitor, maintain and protect.
- 2-D** Initiate and implement programs to identify and prioritize internal threats to park resources.
- 2-E** Revise the NPS management planning process to emphasize resource protection.

Issue 3. How can the National Park Service improve the quality of research and resource management programs and promote their integration with park management?

Preliminary Recommendations:

- 3-A** The NPS should develop a comprehensive, natural, cultural and social sciences research program and propose legislation that would strengthen and expand the Congressional sanction for this program.
- 3-B** Base resource management and planning decisions on full consideration of the best available research, and promote further research as needed.
- 3-C** Promote closer ties between cultural and natural resource professionals.
- 3-D** The NPS should make research an integral part of the organization's culture and raise the level of professionalism among resource professionals as managers.

Issue 4. How can the NPS generate greater public support for resource stewardship?

Preliminary Recommendations:

- 4-A** Greatly expand the local, state, regional, national and international and regional outreach programs of the National Park Service.
- 4-B** Strengthen the constituency for resources stewardship by developing new partnerships and by utilizing the educational, interpretive, and research capabilities of the NPS and its partners.
- 4-C** Greatly expand the role of the public in resource stewardship activities and eliminate the barriers to public participation.
- 4-D** Create forums to educate NPS, concessions and cooperating association staffs in resource stewardship issues.

Issue 5. What processes should govern the addition of new areas or the expansion of existing areas to the park system?

- 5-A** Base the criteria for the selection of new areas on the resources and themes lacking representation in the national park system. Ensure public involvement.
- 5-B** Provide for the professional evaluation of new areas to assure that they meet criteria for national or international significance, resource integrity, suitability and feasibility.

- 5-C Work with constituent groups and with federal, state and local agencies to develop suitable strategies for determining how best to protect areas outside the national park system that have significant resources.
- 5-D Establish a new area study program and aggressively seek adequate funding for the state-side Land and Water Conservation Fund and the Historic Preservation Fund to protect resources of less than national significance.
- 5-E Develop an NPS legislative program to deal with new areas.

PARK USE AND ENJOYMENT: SUMMARY LISTING OF ISSUES AND PRELIMINARY RECOMMENDATIONS

Issue 1. What should be the role of the National Park Service, both in American society and globally?

Preliminary Recommendations:

- 1-A** We recommend that the National Park Service consider the preservation and interpretation of cultural diversity to be significant criteria in the acquisition of new historic and cultural sites and the management of existing sites.
- 1-B** We recommend that the National Park Service strengthen and expand its program of technical assistance to meet visitor needs for natural, scenic, recreational, cultural, and historical experiences outside the boundaries of the national park system.
- 1-C** We recommend the National Park Service embrace the concept of "partnership parks."
- 1-D** We recommend that the National Park Service fully implement existing legislative mandates under PL89-29; the Land and Water Conservation Fund Act; the Urban Parks and Recreation Resources Act and related statutes or propose that these responsibilities be transferred to another entity.
- 1-E** The National Park Service should reinforce its role as a world leader in national park systems through inter and multi national agreements to facilitate the exchange of information, development of environmental strategies; and to protect critical world resources.

Issue 2. How will the national park system be used and enjoyed?

Preliminary Recommendations:

- 2-A** We recommend the National Park Service broadly communicate the breadth and value of the national park system.
- 2-B** We recommend that the National Park Service embark on an innovative program of facility planning, design and maintenance to prepare the "front country" of each park for future visitor needs.
- 2-C** We recommend that the National Park Service minimize development of park facilities within park boundaries while striving for excellence in visitor services.
- 2-D** We recommend that the National Park Service develop a technical assistance program aimed specifically at gateway communities and regions linked to national park system areas.

- 2-E** We recommend that the National Park Service take prompt action to develop visitor transportation systems in parks where resource protection and enhancement of the visitor experience can be achieved.

Issue 3. How should the National Park Service interpret the national park system and educate the public, and for what purpose?

- 3-A** We recommend that the National Park Service commit its resources to offering all visitors basic interpretation including a general orientation to the site and insight into its unique features and significance.
- 3-B** We recommend that the National Park Service embark on an innovative program of educational and informational outreach, serving existing and potential visitors, as well as citizens that do not visit the parks.
- 3-C** We recommend that the National Park Service encourage managers and interpreters to examine the issue of how to interpret controversial events and sites, and to interpret events and sites from multiple points of view.

Issue 4. How will park use and enjoyment impact natural and cultural resources, and what should be done about these impacts?

- 4-A** We recommend that the National Park Service undertake a systemwide analysis of visitor use impacts upon park resources, including a careful documentation of crowding conditions in the parks.
- 4-B** We recommend that the National Park Service undertake a program of trials, whereby different techniques for minimizing visitor impacts are applied, evaluated and communicated in a fortified technology transfer efforts.
- 4-C** We recommend that the National Park Service, its concessioners, and its other partners develop an educational program that encourages visitors to minimize resource demands.

Issue 5. How can the National Park Service make wise decisions regarding park use and enjoyment in the future?

- 5-A** We recommend that the National Park Service establish a task force to improve the public involvement process within the agency.
- 5-B** We recommend that the National Park Service develop an expanded social science program.
- 5-C** We recommend that the National Park Service and its partners act to increase the financial and human resources available, in order to better serve park users.

ENVIRONMENTAL LEADERSHIP: SUMMARY LISTING OF ISSUES AND PRELIMINARY RECOMMENDATIONS

Issue 1. What steps should the National Park Service take to embrace a leadership role in ecologically and culturally sound management?

Preliminary Recommendations:

- 1-A** The National Park Service should promote the sound ecological management of its natural and cultural resources and develop visitor use policies consistent with such management, as the two primary goals in the coming century. Where appropriate, policies and programs to implement such a management strategy should be undertaken cooperatively with both public and private land managers located outside park boundaries. Partnerships should be a basic part of the NPS management strategy.
- 1-B** The National Park Service should develop and clearly articulate a research program and provide it with consistent and substantial budgetary support. The Park Service should strive to be recognized by the year 2000 as the major focus of scientific, educational, and leadership expertise about the ecological health and management of park systems to the global community.

INTENDED MODIFICATIONS

- We will be more sensitive to the unique problems inherent in effective management of cultural resources, which include the human dimensions of such resources.
- Effective ecological management does not stop at the park boundary. It requires a focus on environmental threats which may originate locally, regionally, nationally, and internationally.
- Partnerships are a two-way street and require cooperation on the part of the NPS as well as its proposed partners.
- 1-B will be amended to indicate that parks are an integral part of an ecological system.
- An NPS research program should build on, rather than duplicate, existing research efforts.
- The term "ecologically sound management" will be defined in more specific terms.

Issue 2. How can the National Park Service lead in environmental and cultural education?

Preliminary Recommendations:

- 2-A** Create a professional career path for interpretive personnel.
- 2-B** Reward creativity and innovation in interpretive programs.
- 2-C** Develop heritage education programs with local schools.
- 2-D** Rely to a greater degree on films and television programs to interpret park resources in order to reach audiences beyond park boundaries.
- 2-E** Establish relationships with cooperative park education units. Such CPEUs provide professional interpreters with links to researchers in their fields of expertise; they also expand the Park Service's role as a provider of "classrooms" for college students.
- 2-F** Seek base increases to budgets to carry out these recommendations and to increase overall interpretive staff.

INTENDED MODIFICATIONS

- Support the inclusion of major environmental issues in interpretative programs to enhance the public's understanding of these issues. Information on these issues must be based on sound research.
- The NPS should embrace President Bush's six national education goals and use parks as "outdoor classrooms."
- Rewrite 2-D to recommend that NPS use multi-media resources to reach new audiences.

Issue 3. How can the National Park Service promote a leadership ethic practiced throughout the agency?

Preliminary Recommendations:

- 3-A** Refocus the NPS training programs.
- 3-B** Open up the lines of communication between the director and the regional directors, between the regional directors and superintendents, and between employees in Washington and the regional offices and those inside the parks.
- 3-C** Develop an effective, shared vision for the Park Service. The director should work with NPS people in the field and the headquarters office to develop an agenda for leadership.
- 3-D** Rewards and incentives should be structured so that efforts to carry out the agency's mission are rewarded. Managers taking risks and demonstrating creativity in ways that fulfill the shared vision of the Park Service should be recognized as leaders within the agency.

INTENDED MODIFICATIONS

- The NPS should demonstrate environmental leadership by "leading by example" at all levels of the Service.
- We received many specific recommendations on what should be included in training programs. In particular, training should enhance NPS employees' capabilities to manage in a political environment.
- Use new computer technologies to enhance internal communications.
- Many participants were concerned about our use of the term "risk-taking." We will clarify our meaning in the final report.
- Recommendation 3-C addresses the overall Park Service mission. In the preamble to the final report, we will offer a vision for the Service.

Issue 4. What management practices will ensure that NPS personnel are able to exert professionalism in a political environment?

Preliminary Recommendations:

- 4-A** The secretary of the interior should clearly delegate managerial and operational programs to the director of the Park Service, with appropriate policy direction from his office.
- 4-B** The secretary of the interior should meet at least once a month with the five principal land management agencies.
- 4-C** The director of the National Park Service should establish a planned rotation system between the field and key assignments in Washington to ensure that there is a continual interchange of ideas, as well as an understanding of current NPS programs and challenges.
- 4-D** The secretary of the interior and the director of the National Park Service should insist that NPS people at all levels establish constructive, cooperative working relationships with adjacent federal, state, and local organizations.
- 4-E** The regional offices of the Park Service should be given clearer authority and responsibility for the coordination and direction of NPS activities within the region, including ensuring that NPS programs and policies are effectively developed and executed.
- 4-F** The director of the Park Service should establish an interchange program with other federal and state cultural, historical, and natural resource organizations.
- 4-G** The secretary of the interior should review the organization levels between the secretary and the director of the National Park Service with an eye to shortening them as much as possible and to ensure that there is a mutual understanding of programs and policies.
- 4-H** The National Park Service should develop an annual legislative program. This program should be prepared by the director in cooperation with the regional offices.

INTENDED MODIFICATIONS

- The many recommendations addressing ways to enhance communication will be combined.
- Many of the recommendations overlap with those of the Organizational Renewal working group and will be combined with its report.
- In every instance in the report in which we mention working with State and local government, we will also include tribal governments.
- The NPS should enhance its capacity to develop and implement policy analysis and strategic planning.
- We will combine 4-A, 4-B and 4-G into a single recommendation.

Issue 5. How can the National Park Service take a leadership role in cooperative efforts to protect America's natural and cultural heritage?

Preliminary Recommendations:

- 5-A** A new grass roots planning process should be established to identify the pieces of America's heritage that the public wants to save.
- 5-B** An American heritage area (AHA) system should be established to accomplish preservation without long-term federal involvement.
- 5-C** The National Park Service should submit to Congress a new approach to funding, planning for, and carrying out heritage conservation activities at the state and federal level.

INTENDED MODIFICATIONS

- We will address how the American Heritage Areas proposal and grass roots planning process relate to existing NPS programs.
- The grass roots planning process should include participation by ethnic and minority groups.
- 5-C will be addressed under Issue 6.

Issue 6. How can the National Park Service take on these leadership responsibilities at a time when its Operations Budget is already stretched to the limit?

Preliminary Recommendations:

6-A Require backcountry campers to pay a fee.

6-B Require mountaineers and rock climbers to pay a fee.

INTENDED MODIFICATIONS

- The issue of funding underlies all aspects of the Symposium Working Group recommendations and should be addressed in a separate section of the final report.
- User fees are an effective vehicle for revenue enhancement, but further study of a broad array of user fee options is needed in order to assess the relative costs and benefits of specific individual proposals.
- The working group recognizes the need for the Park Service to receive incremental increases in its budget. One funding source which should be considered is a 1 cent per gallon fuel tax. The working group is also evaluating strategies for getting unappropriated funds from the Land and Water Conservation Fund released.

