

GULF ISLANDS NATIONAL SEASHORE
Annual Narrative Report
October 1, 1999 through September 30, 2000

MANAGEMENT:

The continuing development of the park's resources management division has resulted in significant improvements in compliance and project review procedures. A project review form has been developed and is being utilized by all divisions to ensure appropriate management reviews and to assess need for cultural/natural compliance activities. Relationships with FWS and the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission and other environmental agencies have improved due to increased involvement with park activities. Cultural resource positions have been staffed, improving the park's ability to deal with collections and historical structures.

The Visitor Survey ratings for fiscal year 2000 were maintained at the 1999 level of an overall 97% GPRA reporting measure for goal IIa1.

The Hanley Road entrance to the MS District of the Seashore was successfully closed and a new turn-around completed resulting in a safer and more natural environment for park visitors.

Planning for the Santa Rosa multi-use trail was completed and approval received from the DAB for construction to begin in FY 2001.

A Management Analysis was held in June, 2000 to review identified park activities/operations.

The park completed formal consultation with the FWS for the endangered Perdido Key Beach Mouse, met the requirements of the Recovery Plan, completed EA and FONSI, implemented full public review process, found areas of agreement with dissenting public, designed public access system and began implementation of recovery of habitat.

An active sea turtle hatching protection program was conducted and the first nesting in the park of the endangered Leatherback Turtle was reported.

The park's wilderness plan working group defined issues and needs of the wilderness plan and the initial draft of the EA has been written.

The park entered into discussions with the State of Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission on management of hunting in the Florida District and submitted a draft General Agreement and EA.

The drawbridge at the Advanced Redoubt was replaced and new sally port doors at Fort Massachusetts were installed and gun embrasure shutters replaced.

The park has identified initial needs for staffing and long-term facilities and continues to fine-tune infrastructure planning. Contacts with the regional planning staff regarding planning efforts for Cat Island have been initiated. Information concerning personnel needs (5-year plan) is being collected to write and submit an OFS base funding request. Several research projects for Cat Island have been identified and entered into PMIS for funding. Internal meetings will be scheduled during FY 2001 and a basic project timelines developed.

Successful controlled burns were conducted in February 2000, in the Naval Live Oaks Area of the Seashore.

Over \$1.2 million was collected under the fee demo program. Fee demo projects during this fiscal year included an electrical upgrade and complete overlay of roads and pads in the MS District campground; rehab of the Star Pavilion at Perdido Key, replacement of the drawbridge at the Advanced Redoubt, planning for the Fort Pickens campground restroom and Davis Bayou boat ramp upgrade, purchase of supplies and materials for the completion of electrical upgrade at two additional loops of the Ft. Pickens campground, and purchase and installation of the Point of Sale system for the fee operation. With funds collected through the sale of Golden Eagle passes, the park utilized \$14,000 to install solar lighting and \$5,400 to install a solar operated gate at Opal Beach.

Congress moved closer to passage of legislation which will expand the park boundary to include Cat Island. This island, which lies west of Ship Island, was originally considered for inclusion in the Seashore. Although that did not occur in the early 1970's, the opportunity has again come up and will hopefully be accomplished during the upcoming year.

Partnerships

Partnership activities included funding for FY 2001 in the amount of \$162,000 for the planning and design of the Fort Pickens multi-use path which was obtained through cooperation and partnership with the Florida Department of Transportation. (Funding for construction in the amount of \$897,000 was also approved and will be available in FY 2002 for construction.) The park is partnering with the U. S. Forest Service on a wind research project for construction of a building within the Naval Live Oaks area to investigate the uplift forces at the roof-wall interface due to high winds such as experienced in hurricanes and typhoons. The Park will contribute the building site, with the building being designed for our future use and turned over to the park at the completion of the research project. New General Agreements with law enforcement agencies in the Mississippi District were established. The park maintained partnership with the Florida Scenic Trail Association receiving tools and equipment to maintain the trails and observing National Trails day in June with the unveiling of Florida National Scenic Trail trailhead at Fort Pickens. Other partnerships include the Friends of Gulf Islands, the Northwest Florida Public Relations Association, Gulf Breeze Chamber Education Committee, and the Gulf of Mexico Program Office. A cooperative agreement with the

Federal Bureau of Prisons continues to facilitate hurricane recovery, resource damage mitigation (sand fencing and planting of sea oats), and numerous other resource and maintenance initiatives. The Friends of Gulf Islands National Seashore completed the construction of the new Ship Island lighthouse and held a dedication ceremony this year. The lighthouse is a replica of the tower that stood on the island from 1886 until 1972.

Safety

The park actively pursued increased employee involvement in the safety program. The Safety Committee has worked diligently to improve employee awareness - a safety slogan contest was held for DOI Safety Day with a \$50 award to the winner. Coffee mugs with the slogan were distributed to all employees. The Safety Committee developed and distributed a GUIS Safety Policy and Safety Suggestion/Unsafe Conditions Report to all employees. In addition, quarterly newsletters were developed and distributed. The Division of Interpretation has developed a safety card, "History Can Hurt" which includes a place for visitors to inform park safety officer of unsafe areas. The park has developed follow-up procedures for identified deficiencies to ensure action. The park has fully implemented the Safety Management Information System (SMIS) and DO-50A, Workers Compensation Case Management, and requires 100% participation from supervisors of injured employees. The Safety Officer participated in the annual housing inspections in both districts and has been an active member of the Southeast Region Safety Advisory Team as well as the Central Gulf Coast Federal Field Safety Council. In addition, the Safety Officer presented five sessions of Defensive Driving to park employees in February and conducted two sessions in May to Vicksburg NMP employees. The park had a total of one (1) lost time injury (down from seven last year) and twelve (12) non-lost time injuries (same number as last year).

Diversity

Of the park's 128 employees, approximately 46% are diverse (includes 8 native Americans, 11 African Americans, 1 Hispanic male, 5 Asian/Pacific Islanders, 5 employees with physical or mental disabilities, 33 white females). Some of the actions engaged in to support diversity during the fiscal year include the use of the student employment programs (STEP and SCEP), a junior lifeguard program, targeted recruitment by the lead lifeguard for park seasonal positions, recruitment for a handicapped student summer position (candidates declined position offer), participation by the Personnel Management Specialist on the regional diversity recruitment task force, career information disseminated through educational outreach programs, participation in career day activities, and conflict resolution (CORE) training was offered and 34 park employees attended. A new Accessibility Coordinator for the park was selected and trained. This position was instrumental in projects such as replacement of an accessible boardwalk at Langdon Beach, purchase of a fourth beach wheelchair, construction of an accessible ramp to the exhibit at the Naval Live Oaks visitor center, and installation of an accessible port-a-let at Fort Pickens until construction of accessible bathrooms was accomplished.

INTERPRETATION:

Special Events

From Mardi Gras parades to the 30th anniversary of Earth Day, special events at Gulf Islands attracted thousands of visitors. Girl Scouts and members of the 4-H Environmental Club marched in the Ocean Springs Mardi Gras parade representing "Kids for Parks", a new program designed to get children involved in park special events. Florida volunteers and rangers promoted beach habitat protection to save the Perdido Key Beach Mouse in the Pensacola Beach Mardi Gras. Partnerships with the Western Gate Chapter of the Florida Scenic Trail and Native Plant provided out-of-the-ordinary programs including a millennium trail party and hike on the western end of the expanding Florida Scenic Trail plus native plant enthusiasts joined rangers for a hike around the Naval Live Oaks trail. The Friends of Gulf Islands National Seashore topped the Ship Island lighthouse with the Lantern Room in February and celebrated the completion of the replica tower with a sunset party in June. The Friends group was nominated by Gulf Islands National Seashore for a National Park Foundation partnership award. In conjunction with the lighthouse reconstruction, interpreters provided historical background, interviews on tape and technical assistance to the documentary being produced by the audio-visual unit of Mississippi Power. Interpreters participated in community special events throughout the year such as "Celebrate the Gulf."

In April, volunteers representing the 13th Coastal Artillery set up over two tons of WWII equipment and installed telephone lines from Battery Worth to Battery Cooper at the Fort Pickens Area so visitors could learn more about the military role during 1940s on Santa Rosa Island.

Programs

Park interpreters scheduled new programs including the first power point program to inform visitors of the benefits of saving the night sky, and brought back old favorites such as the "Ghost of Fort Pickens" and jon boat tours of the Davis Bayou salt marsh. No rain cancelled summer programs during the drought of 2000 and over 1,800 interpretive programs were presented.

Projects

Park rangers scripted, cast, filmed, edited, reproduced and produced a 20-minute park video, "Discovery by the Seashore" for 4th grade students and teachers who were planning a park visit. A slide/video program was produced on the history of Fort Barrancas for public viewing in the Fort Barrancas Visitor Center. The CD-ROM interactive computer program, "EcoVentures: Focus on the Gulf" was completed for biology students in high schools around the Gulf of Mexico.

A Mississippi interpreter continued in his research for the Ship Island Oral History project, making contact and collecting primary information concerning the Japanese-American military unit on Ship Island during WWII.

Interpretive staff members attended the currently popular career days in middle and high schools—meeting the interest by the National Park Service to pass on the NPS “message” while encouraging diversity in the pool of future volunteer and employee applications. Interpretive staff members attended and made presentations at environmental fairs/kids days which drew several thousand attendees—encouraging wise use of resources when visiting the national seashore.

To encourage diversity in park attendance and appreciation, park staff loaned materials and provided technical support for Black History Day at Keesler AFB (81st Supply Squadron), a tour by African-American tourism operators, and for a Louisiana Native Guard re-enactment group being started in south Louisiana (Jean Lafitte NHS). A Mississippi interpreter also attended the Conference on African-American Influence on American Military History in Tuskegee, Alabama.

In the Mississippi District over thirty press releases and faxes were sent to media in a three-state area promoting understanding by the public of park mission and resources. Releases encouraged visitation of park facilities, interpretive programs and guest speakers. Topics included wilderness values as addressed by author and NPS writer, Ed Zahniser, and John Anderson, early proponent of Gulf Island Wilderness area.

Publications

Junior Ranger handbooks for the Florida and Mississippi Districts were developed and printed for children visiting the park so they can become Junior Rangers year-round. In addition, a park brochure on safety, “History can Hurt” promoting safety in the park was developed and printed and a birding brochure and information on the Seashore’s different forts were reprinted. A new Eastern publication on Fort Massachusetts was completed and is scheduled for publication in 2001.

Resource Management

Park interpreters focused on resource management issues for visitor education. Several hikes were led in areas where prescribed fires had been set in previous years to inform visitors of the need for fires and the results in plant diversity. Summer fishing programs on the Florida fishing pier were launched to promote fishing ethics.

The Florida District focused on Perdido Key Beach Mouse education. The Seashore requested and received assistance from the Florida Association of Public Affairs Association. The new 2001 president of the association learned of an environmental

education grant through the state of Florida and wrote a \$100,000 request for Perdido Key Beach Mouse education and was awarded the grant for 2001.

Interpreters were involved in a series of wilderness management planning meetings. Initial plans were developed and presented for a wilderness education initiative. A series of wilderness educational programs were presented in the Mississippi District and a press trip to Horn Island was led in November. Articles and television news stories concerning the Gulf Islands Wilderness area (Horn Island) appeared in media including across the Mississippi coast, New Orleans, Louisiana and the length of Mississippi (state educational television). Several articles were written as a result of the trip plus commercial television news segments and a lengthy public television presentation on Mississippi's wilderness islands.

Two interpreters assisted either in operations or onsite during the western fires. Staff members filled in behind them during their summer absences.

Cultural resource management provided artifacts to be used in the first 13th Coastal Artillery demonstration during an April weekend. Volunteers from Virginia and Georgia dressed in WWII period uniforms set up camp in Battery Cooper and provided communications to Battery Worth. Park visitors were exposed to in-depth information and a step back in time.

Staffing

New district interpreters were selected after lapses of over four months and a new interpretive assistant was hired. An intern from Pensacola Junior College was selected for the Florida District during the summer. Volunteers assisted in endless duties including repainting cannons in Florida, working the visitor center desks in both districts, leading birding hikes, and presenting children's programs. Returning seasonal staff and new college students working information areas provided professional visitor contacts. Interpreters were selected to attend National Association of Interpreters Meeting, Webfest 2000, training for accessibility, supervisory skills for managers, and wilderness education.

Accessibility

An interpreter was named the Seashore's accessibility coordinator and completed onsite visits to highly used visitor areas. Coordination with the maintenance staff resulted in the completion of Langdon Beach accessibility ramp, placement of a temporary port-a-let at the Fort Pickens restrooms, and permanent modifications in the restrooms. An additional beach wheelchair was purchased.

ADMINISTRATION:

The park experienced a change in Administrative Officers during 2000. The new Administrative Officer was on staff in time to participate in the Management Analysis (June, 2000). Significant issues addressed were realigning permanent duty stations, issuing the 5-year plan review for human resources and developing plans for base-funding park operations.

Procurement and Contracting

Completed 12 Solicitations for supply, construction and or non-personal services.

Completed one (1) formal contract for construction upgrade of the Mississippi campground electrical system for \$120,625.00

Completed over 112 purchase order documents for assorted park needs totaling over \$1,370,055.00.

Issued, amended and administered 56 Cooperative Agreements, General Agreements, and or Memorandums of Understandings.

Information Technology

Designed and customized a Point of Sale computerized system that will electronically collect all sales data from entrance stations and save them at a central point. This will speed up the remit process and remove any human errors that may occur. The system also generates detailed reports on statistics and usage.

Installed and developed a system that allows remote administration of three networks. This will allow the Computer Specialist the ability to dial up using a laptop from offsite and access and administer any of the servers on any of the networks.

Developed an Intranet within the park that will allow users to view regulations, download forms, storehouse reference materials. This will allow the park to share resources and let employees access information from one central point. This will also allow the Computer Specialist a method of changing a link in one-place verses traveling to each computer to update.

Renegotiated Cellular and beeper service for park that will provide better service and value. Total annual cost savings to the park is estimated to be \$8,000.00. Service also included additional communications functionality in the form of a radio incorporated into the cellular phone.

Installed and configured 40+ new computers to replace non-Y2K systems. This includes installing all software, external hardware, and network access.

Installed wiring in auditoriums at NLO, Fort Pickens Bldg. 5, and Davis Bayou that allows multimedia video projection and audio presentations from front of room. Can also be used as a training aid.

Installed backup systems that allow campground registration and entrance stations to operate without power for extended periods of time. Campground registration will operate for up to 8 to 10 hours including Biospherics connectivity, and entrance stations for 4 to 6 hours without power.

Property and Housing

Completed and coordinated the following property reports:

- a. Annual Property Report
- b. Weapons Inventory
- c. Federal Motor Vehicle Fleet Report
- d. Personal Property Furnished to a Recipient other than Federal Agency

Completed and coordinated the following property transactions:

- | | |
|--|----|
| a. Report of Survey | 11 |
| b. Certificate of Unserviceable Property | 30 |
| c. Transfer of Property | 5 |

Total of 46

Completed and coordinated six Reports of Excess Property for Sale through GSA.

Completed two Reports of Excess for donation to non-federal agency.

Completed and coordinated the Annual Housing Inspection.

Issued and mailed a total of 517 Third Party Draft Checks to Vendors.

Attended QMIS (Housing) and the Fundamentals of Administration Training.

Human Resources

The year 2000 was an extremely busy year in Human Resources with increased technological advances, RM/DO-57 and Resources Careers implementation, and the high level of staffing occurring.

Streamlining of processes and procedures has been a paramount consideration throughout the year. Access databases (classification, background investigation, physical exam, training, past/present employee, etc.) have been converted/established/updated to

maximize the accuracy and accessibility of human resources related information. These databases have proven to be a great timesaving and accountability management tool.

The former Personnel Assistant received a position offer in January in another division. The position was filled in March, through merit promotion procedures, by a minority applicant from the Department of Defense.

During the year, the Personnel Officer was able to assist the Southeast Regional Office with several projects including classification backlogs, serving as a Management Analysis Team Member at the Southeast Archeological Center, and as employee relations advisor for the course "Supervision: The Next Step" held at Jean Lafitte NHP and Preserve.

The Seashore's Personnel Management Specialist was made an active member of the SER Recruitment Task Force and has conducted an internal Delegated Examining audit of Mammoth Cave Personnel Office.

Staffing, Recruitment & Diversity

The Office of Personnel Management conducted a Delegated Examining audit of the Seashore in August. NO deficiencies were found. The Branch (overall) also participated in a Management Analysis conducted by SERO. Again, NO deficiencies were noted by the analysis team.

Recruitment continues to be a focus for the Seashore and is geared towards increasing the quality and diversity of applicants in both the seasonal and permanent workforce. More direct involvement by supervisors is taking place through off-site interviews, contacting sources of potential employees, and accompanying the human resources staff on on-site recruitment trips. The Seashore's Equal Employment Opportunity Committee is also working diligently in support of recruitment efforts by searching out and referring recruitment source information and contacts to the human resources staff.

In the seasonal workforce, thirteen (13) new hires and nine (9) rehires were made and included five (5) females (3 minority), and one (1) minority male. The STEP authority was utilized Seashore-wide and represented five (5) of the thirteen (13) total seasonal hires made.

The SCEP appointing authority has enabled the park to hire two employees with high potential this year - one (1) female in the trades and crafts and one (1) male who provides year-around continuity to the coordination of and recruitment and hiring for the seasonal lifeguard program.

A total of six (6) new hires were made this past fiscal year - two (2) were from outside federal service, two (2) from other parks, and two (2) from other agencies. Of those hires, four (4) were females and one (1) was a minority male. Other actions were: Competitive

(12); accretion of duties (1); and temporary (1) promotion totaling 14 for the year. Ten (10) were in-house (4 female, 2 minority). Three (3) were from other parks and the one (1) temporary promotion was an in-house minority male.

The park saw the retirement of three (3) staff members this year: (1) minority male, one (1) female, and one (1) with a targeted disability.

Employee Development

Gulf Islands sponsored several training sessions during the past fiscal year. Many were open Region-wide and to local, state and other federal agency participation. Included were:

Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA) training which was conducted November 15-19, 1999 by Troy Lissimore and Michael Brown; twenty-seven (27) NPS employees attended.

40 Hour Annual LE Refresher, January 24-28, 2000; daily total attendance ranged from thirty-five (35) to eighty (80) with officers from the Escambia County Florida Sheriff's Office, Florida Marine Patrol, University of West Florida and the City of Gulf Breeze Florida Police Department in attendance for special sessions.

Pre-Retirement Planning Seminar for Law Enforcement Officers (6(c)), January 24-28, 2000; attended by twenty-four (24) NPS employees and six (6) employees of the Naval Criminal Investigative Service.

Mid-Career and Pre-Retirement Planning (FERS & CSRS) held July 18-20, 2000; forty-nine (49) NPS employees and nineteen (19) spouses were in attendance.

Conflict Resolution (CORE) – An Introduction was presented by Sarah Rogers, Troy Lissimore, Mel Fripp and Carol Martinear to GUIS staff on September 26, 2000; 34 employees were able to attend.

Locally significant training was conducted for employees on topics covering fire, Bureau of Prisons, new employee and Ship Island orientations, Visitor Use Assistant Annual Refresher, Employee Assistance Program orientations for supervisors and employees, Incident Command modules, Merit Promotion Plan and completion of job application forms, and numerous other job-specific technical training courses.

Awards

Awards continue to be consistent with past years: Thirty-five (35) monetary, twelve (12) Time-Off and one (1) Quality Step Increase were given.

Budget and Finance

Planned and tracked park base ONPS funding and additional annual project funding in the amount of \$5,190,200.

Tracked Hurricane Georges projects which involved \$1,427,626 in expenditures. Participated in planning and reported status to Regional office. Estimated \$1,968,481 remains of the initial authorization of \$7.5 million. This year marked 5 years of continuous hurricane recovery from Opal, Erin, and Georges.

Received/Deposited \$6,100 in general donations.

Tracked approximately \$1,246,700 fee demo collections and applied 80% (\$997,336) of the collections to nine (9) projects and the cost of collections. The park covered all project expenditures using prior year carryover and current year income. Provided status of project reports to the Regional office. Estimated carryover to FY 2001 is \$70,000.

Tracked \$66,000 in Fire Program funds.

Completed six permanent change of station (PCS) moves totaling: \$72,600 Region funded (3), \$82,524 Park Funded (3).

There were four active reimbursable agreements. Tracked funds (\$577,000 total), processed payments and coordinated project establishment and status with AOC. Of major importance was coordination of the advance of funds on the DOT multi-use path - \$520,000.

Processed modifications and payments for Interagency Agreements (\$909,500 total) and for Cooperative Agreements (\$25,000 total).

Participated in the Point of Sales Program development and installation.

Participated in the Management Analysis and successfully produced all documentation and provided information to all questions/concerns.

Credit Card expenditures with 50+ cardholders totaled \$410,000. Transferred funds from default accounts to appropriate project accounts (more than 65%). Assisted divisions to understand the accounting of the line entries and project costs.

Trained Contracting/Procurement staff on making payments using FFS. With the new IDEAS program, Procurement took the role of interacting

MAINTENANCE:

Florida District

The new Opal Beach Day Use Facility located in the Santa Rosa Area of the seashore was completed and opened on Memorial Day 2000. The original facility was destroyed by Hurricane Opal in 1995. The new facility consists of an Entrance Station, Ranger Station/Maintenance building, six (6) public restrooms, six (6) large picnic shelters (six tables) and 18 smaller shelters (four tables). All restrooms are handicap accessible with diaper changing stations and outdoor shower towers.

At the Rosamond Johnson Beach Day Use Facility in the Perdido Key Area the Star Pavilion was rehabbed. The star shaped concrete structure supported by eight concrete columns was in poor shape with concrete spalling. Spalling was repaired and the entire structure was primed and painted.

An extensive sand restoration project was started at Perdido Key. Specific sections were cordoned off with sand fencing in an effort to rejuvenate dune growth. Beach access will be provided through the use of dune crossover boardwalks. These boardwalks are about 90% completed and total eleven.

The drawbridge at the Advanced Redoubt (brick fortification) located on NAS Pensacola was removed and rehabbed. Bridge was badly warped with many rotten boards and rusted iron hardware posing a serious visitor safety concern. Bridge was removed and rebuilt with new decking, iron hardware was repaired, and new handrails were installed.

At Naval Live Oaks Area the headquarters building was outfitted with hurricane shutters and a maintenance pole barn was constructed at the Compound area to house large quantities of lumber for various district projects.

At the Fort Pickens Area the public restroom by the main entrance (sallyport) to the fort was remodeled and made handicap accessible. This is one of the park's busiest restrooms and adapting the building to handicap accessibility has improved visitor satisfaction immensely.

A kiosk was constructed designating the beginning of the western terminal of the Florida Scenic Trail. The kiosk contains basic trail information, some park regulations and area information.

Mississippi District

The Davis Bayou Campground electrical and water system rehab project was completed in the Mississippi District. In addition, a two-inch asphalt overlay and other additional paving was completed at the campground.

Horn Island pier, destroyed by hurricane Georges was completely rebuilt using concrete piles and treated timbers.

Hanley Road realignment was completed in the Davis Bayou Area. Realignment eliminated vehicular traffic through the park while also providing paved pedestrian and bike access to a nearby residential area.

State of the art, double walled, fuel distribution systems were completed on Ship Island and Horn Island to replace previous systems destroyed by hurricane Georges.

Fire safe flammable material storage building, meeting all applicable codes, was installed on Ship Island. The building has state of the art fire suppression system and secondary containment.

Contract was completed for construction and installation of magazine and sallyport doors at Fort Massachusetts on Ship Island.

RESOURCES MANAGEMENT:

Perdido Key Beach Mouse: This program completed the major requirements of the Species Recovery Plan for the endangered Perdido Key Beach Mouse. This year we installed a series of boardwalks over the dunes at Perdido Key. This program began with the initiation of the NEPA process beginning with a significant Environmental Assessment including a series of contentious public meetings and ending with a FONSI. A contract was let to construct eleven dune crossings and the contractor had completed six by years end. For all intents and purposes we completed a major environmental enhancement project for the protection of an endangered species, the Perdido Key Beach Mouse.

Opening the Santa Rosa Area to waterfowl hunting: This project was a successful endeavor between the state of Florida and the National Park Service. Once an understanding was met between the park and the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission that waterfowl hunting could be reasonably conducted in the Santa Rosa Area, a process of fulfillment was put in place to meet this goal. An Environmental Assessment was written and advertised to the public, parallel to that assessment was the drafting of two agreements. One agreement was to open the Santa Rosa Area to controlled hunting the other was to extend to our commissioned officers the authority of Florida game laws. Through a process of negotiation, documentation, and review we were able to open the Santa Rosa Area to waterfowl hunting for the 2000-2001 hunting season.

This year was a banner year for turtle hatchlings. Through the work of the resources management staff and volunteers over three thousand turtle hatchlings made successful entry into the Gulf of Mexico.

RESOURCE AND VISITOR PROTECTION:

Annual Law Enforcement/EMS Report

2000

Part I Offenses: 108
Part II Offenses: 4802
EMS Incidents: 1732
Fatalities: 7

1999

Part I Offenses: 91
Part II Offenses: 3484
EMS Incidents: 49
Fatalities: 5

There was a 37% increase in Part I and II offenses over the 1999 total. EMS incident increase is attributed to a new reporting system.

Two tropical storms approached the coast this year, activating the park's Hurricane/Storm plan, resulting in the shutdown and evacuation of the offshore islands. Fortunately, no serious impacts from the storms occurred.

This year has been very difficult for rangers in the district, due to the five have had significant findings with their physicals, and three of them have been temporarily removed from law enforcement duties due to a 'significant finding'. A second seasonal law enforcement position was not filled due to issues with the selectee's physical.

The severe drought this year only resulted in one wildland fire in the park, which was contained at less than one acre. Three prescribed burns were conducted in Florida involving wildland urban interface and disturbed resources. Approximately 25% of the park staff were dispatched to fires throughout the country, as well as to several local fires.

The park had two significant law enforcement incidents that resulted in national media attention:

- In May, James Woolard the convicted murderer of ranger Bob McGhee escaped from the State of Mississippi resulting in a national manhunt involving the NPS, FBI and numerous state and local agencies. Woolard was recaptured after an extensive crime spree in the State of Indiana.
- In October, a 22-month old girl was kidnapped from the Davis Bayou campground. The investigation was managed jointly by the NPS, the Ocean Springs Police, and the FBI. Four days later, the suspects were arrested and the child safely recovered near Houston, Texas.

Fee Collection

Gross Revenues Collected: \$1,480,526
9% increase over 1999 revenues

A point of sale system, Advantage Software, was purchased and installed at all Florida fee collection locations including Headquarters and the Mississippi Campground. This hardware and software ensures true accountability and tracking of all income as well as passes. The fee collection operation now has the ability to produce electronic shift reports, deposits, and remits. Reporting capabilities are endless limited only by the imagination.

For the first time ever entrance fees were collected at the Santa Rosa Entrance Station from Memorial Day through Labor Day.

The Mississippi Campground Office was set-up with a change fund for visitors to pay campground fees not only via the self-registration process but also with a credit card or check when the office is staffed.

The new National Park Pass and Golden Eagle Upgrade stickers became available to the public in May at all fee locations.

Three seasonal Visitor Use Assistant positions were filled utilizing the student hiring authority.

Florida District

The year 2000 saw a change in personnel. John Bandurski was selected as District Ranger after Skip Prange retired. Ben Hansel transferred to Buffalo National River.

Law enforcement concerns continue to be speeding on Hwy. 98 and car clouts at the Santa Rosa area. Special details have been conducted to curtail speeders by establishing patrols in concert with the Gulf Breeze Police Department. The use of Gulf Breeze PD's laser radar and the airplane, has been beneficial but will have to continue. The district will be looking into purchasing our own laser radar.

The Seashore also conducted its first driving under the influence checkpoint near Langdon Beach. Over 400 vehicles were stopped, but only a few citations were issued for minor offenses. Additional checkpoints will be scheduled for the year 2001, with emphasis on the Opal Beach/Santa Rosa area, where a majority of the district's driving under the influence cases originated.

The Santa Rosa area also saw the return of duck hunting. Rangers conducted patrols and little or no problems were discovered during the shortened season. Parking Lot 1 at Santa Rosa was also the site of a suicide by a female around the Christmas holiday.

The USS Enterprise visited Pensacola NAS this past spring, which brought large crowds to the Ft. Pickens area to see its arrival and departure. Other large events, which occurred outside the district but indirectly effected visitation, included the Gay and Lesbian Gathering, Blue Angel Weekend, and Mobile Graduation. Cooperation from and communication with the Escambia County Sheriff's Office made these activities run smoothly.

John Hughes received a Quality Step Increase and Larry Edwards received the Law Enforcement Ranger of the Year Award from the Pensacola Beach Optimist Club.

Mississippi District

Major improvements this year in the Mississippi District include the following: a new pier was constructed at Horn Island to improve NPS operational interests, replacing the old pier damaged by Hurricane Georges; new boat hoist mechanisms were installed at both Horn and Ship Islands, replacing old, unsafe systems damaged by the hurricane.

In the Davis Bayou unit, major fee demo improvements made to the campground included new water, new electrical, and new paving. The park also modified the old road leading into the Davis Bayou unit by installing a turn-around where the road now is a dead-end.

A modern fire/intrusion alarm system was installed in the maintenance complex.

The Ranger Division worked with Coast Guard to remove 26 orphaned hazardous material containers, which washed up on the beaches of Ship Island. An abandoned 500-gallon diesel fuel tank was removed from Horn Island and a new fuel line was installed from the pier to the generator shed; new flammable storage lockers were provided for each ranger station. The shoreline cleanup contract necessitated by Hurricane Georges was completed this year, with the removal of several tons of debris, which washed up on the shorelines of Horn, Ship and Petit Bois Islands.

Rangers participated in an oil spill exercise (mock spill just outside park boundary) with US Coast Guard and Chevron Oil Company, to more adequately plan for potential threats to park resources.

There have been a number of boat groundings, boat accidents, and one significant commercial barge grounding in the park. The barge grounding along the north shore of Petit Bois Island left a 21' deep hole in an area that should have a 7' depth. This incident remains under investigation by the NPS and the Coast Guard.

The Ranger Division SOP's were completely rewritten for ranger operations, fee collection, special use permits, and pavilion rentals.

The park met with several groups involved in the personal watercraft issue and developed a strategy to comply with the new NPS PWC regulations.

Park staff held numerous meetings to determine appropriate language for our draft wilderness plan; the first draft of plan is currently being written.

Specific actions taken to enhance wildlife protection include the posting of "Alligator Crossing" signs on Hanley Road to reduce traffic speed, and the closing of areas on the offshore islands which have been identified as nesting shorebird and nesting osprey sites.

General Agreements were entered into with the newly elected Sheriffs of the two Mississippi counties that surround the district. The park developed a drug-funding request, in cooperation with the Harrison County Sheriff that resulted in a High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area (HIDTA) initiative. This initiative will bring additional federal funding into the counter-narcotics efforts within and adjacent to the park.

The annual Boaters' Rendezvous was held again this year at Ship Island. The event attracted some eight to nine thousand people and over 1,000 boats. The emergency response portion of the event was administered under the Incident Command System, with unified command involving the NPS, Coast Guard, Sheriff's Department, State Marine Patrol, and AMR ambulance service. Members of the NPS Southeast Regional SET team assisted during the event, which involved a total of one hundred and three law enforcement officers from the varied agencies, as well as fourteen paramedics. Due to overcast skies and a brisk wind, the heat was not nearly as oppressive as expected, which undoubtedly reduced the alcohol consumption and the number of problems.

There were only four arrests at the Rendezvous this year, compared to nine last year. There were numerous contacts for minor violations as well as several rescues from sinking, swamped, or capsized boats. Five boats sank during the morning, with an additional SAR due to a Mayday call as the afternoon thunderstorm struck. Three medical evacuations occurred, one each for a possible heart attack, heat exhaustion, and a severe allergic reaction to jellyfish stings. The Rendezvous had originally been scheduled for mid-July, but was postponed until mid-August due to the presence of Snowy Plovers, a threatened shorebird, which were nesting in the area.

Rangers continue to make numerous commercial-fishing cases every year. One case this past year was for commercial crabbing and another for trapping, but the vast majority of commercial fishing cases are for trawling for shrimp in park waters.