

The RMT Program . . . One Perspective

By Johnathan B. Jarvis

Two years ago this September I met for the first of several times with the other Natural Resource Management trainees in Fort Collins, Colorado. Our backgrounds were diverse, some sporting Masters degrees, some PhD's, all at least a BS or BA. Some hailed from backgrounds in resource management, some from interpretation, and some from law enforcement. All regions were represented and most of the trainees already had a number of years in the NPS under their belts. Those few from other agencies seemed relieved that they finally had made it into the NPS. All the trainees were elated at being chosen for the program.

As we listened to our charge from Roland Wauer, I could not help feeling a sense of pride and an awareness of building electricity. The group meshed well, minds were sharp, ideas came quickly, and there was an overall sense of purpose – an advocacy for the protection of park resources. We were challenged by Ro that the two years would not be easy, that it would require dedication and self-sacrifice. He said some would not make it. Looking back, he was right on all counts. I recall feeling that in some ways the NPS would never be the same after this program.

As we left for our respective training parks that September, each of us was well aware that the NPS had made a very expensive investment in us. We were paid to learn everything we possibly could in two years about resource management. We were to build on our existing knowledge through formal and on-the-job training, conferences, reading, and independent study. We were granted the funding and (theoretically)

the time to accomplish a laundry list of actions outlined in a lengthy IDP (individual development plan). In my own case, practicality and park priorities often interrupted the IDP schedule and specifics. However, built-in flexibility of the program allowed me to achieve each component in one manner or another. The travel training budget provided me the freedom to attend necessary courses without competing for slots from within park staff. Integration into the park operation allowed me to tailor IDP components to park needs so that both would benefit. The end result is that the park accomplished programs it never before had the time to do, while I developed expertise and reference materials over a broad range of resource management issues – assets I can apply to future problems.

Over the two years, I have communicated frequently with the other trainees and I can attest that the enthusiasm has only heightened. There is a sense of comradery in that we have all faced similar frustrations in our respective parks. There is, too, a sense of professionalism as we recognize the position of Resource Management Specialist and see it rising to its proper place of influence on park management.

I believe that the program has been a success and subsequent programs of its kind will be successes because they sow seeds within the System that will inevitably grow into a group of managers with strong resource management backgrounds. It is this group that will lead the NPS, or perhaps drag it, kicking and screaming, into the 21st Century of natural resource management.