

WASO Directions In Interpretation

By Martha Aikens

Our direction for the past and for the next fiscal years is one that stems directly from the Director's 12-point plan and the six basic objectives for interpretation. These objectives are:

- Information and orientation
- Understanding and appreciation
- Participation and skill development
- Protection of the visitor and park resources
- Dialogue between public and park management
- Education

An analysis of the 12-point plan and the basic objectives for interpretation resulted in a revised Role and Responsibility Statement for interpretation, distributed to the Regional Directors in February 1986. Because the scope and scale of interpretation objectives were expanded, the official guidelines and standards for interpretation (NPS-6) were revised and put out for formal review. The guidelines and standards for Cooperating Associations also were revised and have been distributed.

To prepare interpreters to assume their newly defined duties, we revised the Interpretive Skills courses, adding Interpretive Skills III (Special Programs and Services), Interpretive Skills IV (Interpretive Writing), Interpretation for Managers, Interpretation for Populations at Risk, Interpretation: Private Sector Coordination, Interpretive Planning and Critical Issues: Workshop in Interpretation. We also requested seed money to support the Skills teams and funds to revise a self study course, entitled "A Personal Training Program for Interpreters."

The Park Heritage Gateway Program was developed specifically to help us better utilize urban recreation areas as education centers. Its focus is greater public awareness, involvement, and support of the National Park System. Six pilot areas include four recreation areas, one lakeshore, and a national park.

Other program areas reviewed for more effective utilization were the Volunteer in Parks and the Student Conservation Association programs.

One element of the 12-point plan is "to share our understanding of critical resource issues." The Director has suggested we do that by integrating research, resource management, interpretation, and public information, which is what the interregional resource management/interpretation workshops are designed to do.

In the past, when discussions have been held about "education" as an objective, the discussions have been in terms of advising visitors of the condition and status of park resources. This is done through regular interpretive programming and in-depth seminars and workshops. Now, when we speak of education, we also add the advising of visitors about global conservation concerns — concerns that the National Park System shares with the rest of the world. Our first Servicewide attempt at carrying out this objective could come in 1988, the year in which the Director has expressed a desire to have acid rain and air quality as our Servicewide interpretive theme.