

Albright Expands Leadership and Management Course

By Mark J. Maciha and Jim Corless

In January 1993, the Facility Manager Development course at Albright Employee Development Center became the NPS Leadership and Management Course. The former course had, for five years, been instrumental in meeting the call for highly trained managers in the maintenance field. The new version was developed through the efforts of NPS managers in four fields, to include trainees in maintenance, interpretation, law enforcement, and administration.

Thirty-six personnel, mostly supervisors—some line, some division chiefs—from these four disciplines attended the first session of this course and chose to name their class after newly appointed Secretary of the Interior Bruce Babbitt. They felt that Secretary Babbitt exemplifies the revitalization of the Department and of the NPS that class participants are striving for.

The five-weeks course was made possible through efforts of the Employee Development Office, the WASO Divisions of Interpretation, Maintenance, and Ranger Activities, and the regional administrative offices. Countless opportunities were provided for the group to approach problems from a multidisciplinary perspective, using the diversity of the group's knowledge and skills. The result was a coming-together not only in locality, but intellectually.

A team approach developed quickly, as participants became first roommates, then as co-workers to solve case studies and exercises, and finally as friends, who discussed creative solutions for addressing their park concerns. They came to recognize the different perspectives of the disciplines and capitalized on those differences in preparing class assignments, in addressing their own park issues, and in resolving misunderstandings about different divisions.

It became apparent how diversity in personal and work styles could be used in a complementary way to produce a more excit-

ing and productive work environment. Decision making, time and risk management, communications, negotiation, media relations, and managing change—all were components of the curriculum. Sessions on planning interfaced well with presentations on resource management issues.

Participants, who said they often were at odds with other divisions in the parks, found they were able to meet management objectives far better when they worked with other disciplines from the very start of planning or problem solving. This training will be reinforced when the participants go on their individual four week details to other park areas, primarily with different divisions, to broaden their experience and put their new learning to the test. A counselor, selected for each participant, helped trainees develop goals and objectives and project assignments.

A perceived shortfall of the course was the scarcity of the trainees' resource management expertise compared to their experience in their principal disciplines. Although the course agenda included resource management topics and case studies, all exercises shared by the class would have been more meaningful with representation of resource management specialists' perspectives. An integrated approach to resource management and protection is critical, not only between cultural and natural resources, but among all park divisions. This course contributed to awareness of resource issues among all participants and will facilitate integrated approaches and solutions to resource management issues.

Class members adopted a plan—a set of objectives and actions—to further their self-defined mission: "To strengthen the pride and vision of the NPS by empowering people through creative leadership and an interdisciplinary team approach."

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