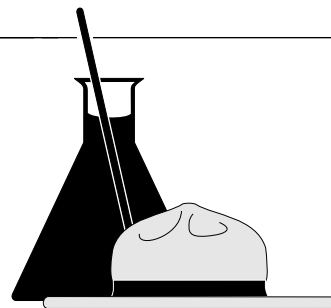


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THE NATURAL RESOURCE TRAINEE PROGRAM: PROFESSIONALIZATION TRIUMPH OF THE 1980s AND EARLY 1990s



Who are they and where are they now? See the key on page 17 to identify these participants of the first Natural Resource Trainee Program and learn what they are up to now.

BY THE EDITOR

THE NEED TO ESTABLISH AND PROFESSIONALIZE science and resource management functions and apply them in the management of national parks was recognized as early as the 1930s. Then, biologist George Wright published several papers on wildlife management and made the clear connection between science and informed park resource management activities. Yet, for the next 5 decades, resource management work continued to be done mostly by park rangers who were trained primarily in law enforcement and other operational areas, not necessarily in an applied science. In 1976, Bandelier National Monument Park Ranger John Lissoway, involved in park visitor protection training at the time, recognized the lack of a natural resource component to round out his training. Southwest Regional Chief of Resource Management Ro Wauer suggested a resource management training component be added.

Working within the scope of the IDP (Individual Development Plan) program—a NPS training needs and personnel development tool—Lissoway and Bandelier Superintendent John Hunter identified park resource management needs and translated them into concrete training requests. Each training need was product oriented, bringing direct benefit to the park. To achieve Lissoway's natural resource training goals, they identified training advisors—often from other agencies, the private sector, or universities—who would be the primary sources for

imparting the skills. Regional office funding allowed parks to send staff to the training and backfill behind them to take care of unfinished park work. Other superintendents soon heard about the training opportunity and wanted to be a part of it. Wauer then prioritized individual park needs, opting for placing resource management trainees at parks that formerly didn't have any resource management expertise.

The program went national in the early 1980s following publication of two different conservation organization reports on threats to national parks and a response by the National Park Service in the form of a state-of-the-parks report. Having a surprisingly deep impact, the latter report prompted Congress to direct the National Park Service to identify potential remedies to the threats it so capably identified. One of those remedies was to train staff in professional resource management techniques and get them out to the parks with the greatest needs. Called the Natural Resource Trainee Program, the initiative was patterned after the pilot training efforts developed in the Southwest Region. Having moved to the Washington office, Wauer became the primary coordinator for the new course along with the help of Southwest Regional Chief Scientist Milford Fletcher. Seeking to place 30 trained resource managers in high priority parks each time the course was offered, the first 2-year class began with 36 trainees in August, 1982 (see the key to the cover photograph and Table 1 on page 17).

Continued on page 16

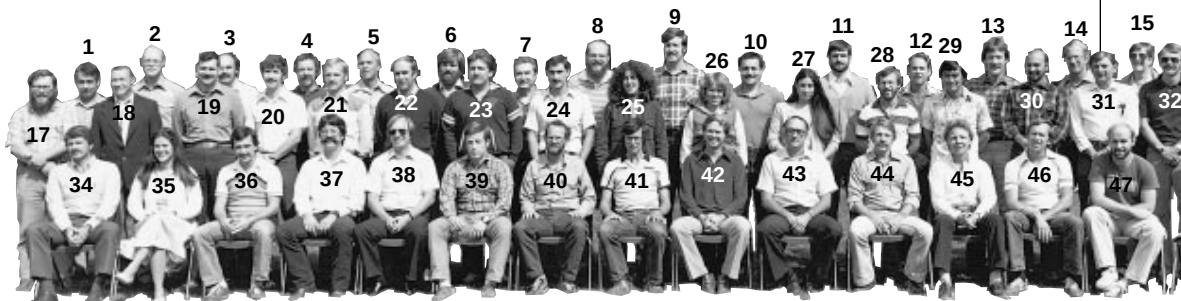
WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

Results of a recent informal survey of participants from the first Natural Resource Trainee Program indicate that they have gone on to flourish in natural resource management careers, many of them becoming leaders in their field. Nearly 90% of the first 36 trainees completed the course. Only four did not graduate, and of those, two still work for the National Park Service in resource management related positions. Six are either superintendents or assistant superintendents (one has retired), while ten have become chiefs of resource management. Ten have remained in various resource management positions other than division chief; six have not moved from their original park, deepening their understanding of the resources and their respective ecosystems. Three are system support office natural resource program leaders and two now conduct biological research in parks for the National Biological Service. One became a district park ranger and has put his prescribed fire background from the course to good use. Two retired and two have died. Of three who left government service, one is pursuing a Ph.D. in wildlife biology.

Course participants generally laud the value of the trainee program from both a personal and professional perspective. The program rallied support for the professionalization of natural resource management, provided funding for career development, and gave employees the time necessary to get in-depth, specialized training. Trainees stepped into resource management positions, often as newcomers in parks that formerly had no such expertise, and were given time to develop in this challenging role. Other parks saw the course as an opportunity to improve the level of training of their resource managers without bearing the costs themselves. All trainees developed a rich collection of contacts with subject matter experts. Bruce Rodgers, Chief of Resource Management for the southeast Utah group

(Canyonlands, Arches, Natural Bridges) points out that "in those days, few people had a clear idea of what a resource management specialist was supposed to do. This program helped define... those jobs, both for the trainees and for the [National Park] Service." North Cascades National

important aspects of the training. "I... designed most elements of my program. This gave me an opportunity to seek training from many sources and to participate in fact-finding trips in various parts of the country. These circumstances allowed me to better appreciate policies and programs



The first class of the Natural Resource Trainee Program—Taken at Colorado State University in September at the beginning of their 2-year training stint, this photograph appeared on the cover of *Park Science* (volume number 2) and accompanied an article describing this exciting new natural resource training opportunity. The trainees assembled was for their graduation at Mather Training Center in August, 1994.

Park Chief of Resource Management Bruce Freet believes the program formed the basis for "a highly visible, fairly rapid... emphasis on science-based resource management."

Some participants immediately translated training skills into park projects, such as developing an air quality monitoring program for Rocky Mountain National Park or feral animal removal at Haleakala National Park. However, most cite the breadth of the training approach as its main appeal and the source of its success. Participants visited numerous parks and studied resource problems to help them develop the tools needed to deal with diverse issues in the field. "We are not specialists as our titles suggest," one trainee offered, "but daily have to deal with issues that other agencies might have four or five people [to handle]." Natural Bridges National Monument Superintendent Steve Chaney recognized that the course "was not so much a program to teach technical skills as it was a program to teach concepts, instill values, and provide management tools." At the end of the 2-year course, a trainee had developed the broad scope of skills to establish a resource management program in the field.

A further benefit came with the contacts developed between participants and university and private sector experts. Denali National Park and Preserve Chief of Resource Management Gordon Olson indicated that this was one of the most

of other agencies and to establish a broad network of professionals. In today's climate of partnerships, this knowledge has become extremely important and useful in developing professional relationships."

A TRANSFORMING ACT

In addition to developing a more broadly trained and networked natural resource workforce, the program also institutionalized resource management in the parks, elevating it to the level of other operational divisions. Rodgers explains, "the trainee program played the single most important role in establishing resource management as a major discipline in park management. It sent forth trained, educated disciples to articulate the need for integrating natural resource considerations with all other management activities. By the early 1990s... dozens of program graduates [were located] in parks and central offices [and were] able to develop and sustain support for resource management budget initiatives and campaign for... separating resource management from ranger activities at the operational level."

Resource management has clearly become better integrated into park management considerations since 1982. Channel Islands National Park Ecologist Linda Dye sees this happening in her park and in general. "We are operating from a base of

Continued on page 18

TABLE 1. THEN AND NOW—THE FIRST NATURAL RESOURCE TRAINEES (1982)

Back Row (standing, left to right): Then

- 1 Harold Werner Trainee prototype, Southwest Regional Office
- 2 Ben Holmes Coordinator, Midwest Regional Office
- 3 Steve Smith Coordinator, Southeast Regional Office
- 4 John Lissoway (First natural resource trainee—completed course at Bandelier National Monument as pilot program for what became the Natural Resource Trainee Program)
- 5 Mike Maule Coordinator, Mid-Atlantic Regional Office
- 6 Steve DeBenedetti Trainee, Sequoia-Kings Canyon National Park
- 7 Dick Prasil Coordinator, Pacific Northwest Regional Office
- 8 Gordon Olson Trainee, Antietam National Battlefield
- 9 Keith Langdon Trainee, Catoctin Mountain Park
- 10 Larry Belli Trainee, Glen Canyon National Recreation Area
- 11 John Townsend Trainee, Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore
- 12 Bruce Freet Trainee, Big Cypress National Preserve
- 13 Mike Duwe Trainee, Big South Fork National River and Recreation Area
- 14 Dave Haskell Trainee, Shenandoah National Park
- 15 Lillian Rummel Trainee, National Capital Parks-East
- 16 Linda Dye Trainee, Biscayne National Park

Now

- Sequoia-Kings Canyon National Park
Fire Management Officer, Great Lakes and Great Plains System Support Offices (SSO)
Fire Management Officer, Atlantic Coast SSO
Area Fire Management Officer, Bandelier and El Malpais National Monuments
- Retired in Santa Fe, NM
Deceased
Retired
Chief, Division of Research and Resource Preservation, Denali National Park and Preserve
Plant ecologist, Great Smoky Mountains National Park
Assistant Superintendent, Everglades National Park
Position in ranger activities, Midwest Field Area
Chief of Resource Management, North Cascades National Park
Environmental Protection Specialist, Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore
Director, Grand Canyon Science Center, Grand Canyon National Park
Deceased
Ecologist-Database Administrator, Channel Islands National Park

Middle Row (left to right):

- 17 Ed Schreiner Trainee, Olympic National Park
Research Biologist, National Biological Service, Forest and Range Ecosystem Science Center, Corvallis, Oregon—Duty Station, Olympic National Park Field Station
With NBS at Northern Arizona University (?)
District Ranger, Mesa Verde
Superintendent, Natural Bridges National Monument
Supervisory Resource Specialist, New River Gorge National River
Chief of Resource Management, southeast Utah group (Canyonlands, Arches, Natural Bridges)
Left NPS, possibly to the Environmental Protection Agency
Natural Resource Program Leader, Chesapeake-Allegheny SSO
- 18 Hank McCutcheon Audited courses while at Rocky Mountain National Park
Natural Resource Program Leader, Columbia-Cascades SSO
Working on Ph.D. in wildlife biology at the University of Massachusetts
- 19 Steve Budd-Jack Trainee, Mesa Verde National Park
Mount Rainier National Park
- 20 Steve Chaney Trainee, Buffalo National River
Chief of Resource Management, Mammoth Cave National Park
- 21 Ken Stephens Audited courses while at Bandelier National Monument
Chief of Resource Management, Haleakala National Park
- 22 Bruce Rodgers Trainee, Assateague Island National Seashore
Assistant Superintendent for Natural Resources, Mohave National Preserve
Retired (possibly in Coral Gables, FL)
Natural Resource Program Leader, Great Plains SSO
Chief of Resource Management, Mount Rainier National Park
- 23 Bob King Trainee, Padre Island National Seashore
- 24 Dave Reynolds Trainee, New River Gorge National River
- 25 Kathy Jope Trainee, Katmai National Park
- 26 Chris Baumann Trainee, Chesapeake & Ohio Canal National Historical Park
- 27 Barbara Samora Trainee, Cape Cod National Seashore
- 28 Jeff Bradybaugh Trainee, Theodore Roosevelt National Park
- 29 Ron Nagata Trainee, Haleakala National Park
- 30 Frank Buono Trainee, Chaco Culture National Historical Park
- 31 Len Frank Coordinator, North Atlantic Regional Office
- 32 Steve Cinnamon Trainee, Wupatki National Monument
- 33 Gary Ahlstrand Coordinator, Alaska Regional Office

Bottom Row (sitting, left to right):

- 34 Bill Horn Audited courses, Channel Islands National Park
Retired as Superintendent of Redwood National Park
- 35 Debbie Buzzell Trainee, Morristown National Historical Park
Left government service
- 36 Norm Fletcher Trainee, Acadia National Park
Left government service
- 37 Brad Cella Trainee, Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve
Fire Management Officer, Alaska SSO
- 38 Garee Williamson Trainee, Cuyahoga Valley National Recreation Area
Cuyahoga Valley National Recreation Area
- 39 Walter Loope Trainee, Pictured Rocks National Lakeshore
Pictured Rocks (NBS field station) National Lakeshore
- 40 Tim Tunison Trainee, Hawaii Volcanoes National Park
Resource Management Specialist, Hawaii Volcanoes
- 41 Jack Gulvin Trainee, Yellowstone National Park
Retired from Cuyahoga Valley NRA (?)
- 42 Stan Lock Coordinator, National Capital Regional Office
National Capital SSO (White House Liaison)
- 43 Ro Wauer Trainee Program Founder and Manager, Washington Office
Retired in Victoria, Texas—writing bird finding guides to the national parks and other natural history publications
- 44 Jon Jarvis Trainee, Crater Lake National Park
Superintendent, Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve
- 45 John Miller Trainee, Grand Canyon National Park
Chief of Resource Management, Padre Island National Seashore
- 46 Jeff Connor Trainee, Canyonlands National Park
Resource Management Specialist, Rocky Mountain National Park
- 47 Allan O'Connell Trainee, Fire Island National Seashore
Research Wildlife Biologist and NBS Cooperative Park Studies Unit Leader, University of Maine
- 48 Joanne Michalovic Trainee, Mount Rainier National Park
Superintendent, Women's Rights National Historical Park

Not Shown

- Elizabeth Johnson Trainee, Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area
Chief of Resource Management, Delaware Water Gap
- Cat Hoffman-Hawkins Supplementary trainee from Mount Rainier—February, 1994. Graduated with 2nd trainee class
Chief of Resource Management, Olympic National Park

more knowledge than in the past. [We have] input into NPS natural resource management decisions. Attitudes are changing and the need to operate from an informed place is being validated.”

In many cases, the trainees themselves have risen to positions of influence and should be able to help continue the integration process into the future. “In a very practical sense,” says Bruce Freet, North Cascades National Park Chief of Resource Management, “[we] would not have the [positions] and monies... allocated for natural and cultural resource management that we have today [if it were not for the trainee program]. Our class and others that followed... had an effect on NPS priorities over time. Now, many of us... are in influential management positions, so the effects on the agency could be even greater during the next decade.”

Not all changes occurred in parks, however. The training program also launched the National Park Service into new areas of expertise as Frank Buono, now Assistant Superintendent of Joshua Tree National Park, points out. He views the course as having “provided a basis for developing experience in complex legal and regulatory areas—air, water, minerals, rights of way—that was previously missing.” These national programs continue to serve parks well primarily from the newly established Natural Resource Program Center in Colorado.

Over the course of six classes from 1982-1993, the trainee program placed over 140 resource professionals in the parks and helped the National Park Service take a big step forward toward resource management professionalization. The highest percentage of graduates¹ have become resource management specialists (29%), followed by natural resource specialists (17%), park rangers or supervisory park rangers (13%), and supervisory natural resource specialists (5%). Other graduates are biologists; biological, physical science, and GIS cartographic technicians; fire management officers; and environmental protection specialists, etc. Three (as of 1992) are superintendents. According to Bill Walker, Wauer's successor as trainee program manager for courses 2-6, “we continue to see all course participants making strong contributions

to the resource management profession. Graduates from even the most recent courses now serve in chief of resource management and superintendent positions, and more and more of them will move up as the 1990s come to a close.”

While under way, the trainee program evolved considerably, originally concentrating on just the individual needs of participants. By the mid-1980s, the program changed to combine both park-tailored courses with a core set of academic courses in an effort to make the training more even for all participants. In the end, the program had succeeded in placing the first professional resource managers in many natural resource parks, but it could not be expected to train all NPS resource managers. Subsequently, the emphasis on training in the technical aspects of resource management (e.g., biology, fisheries, wildlife management) shifted. The Vail Agenda and the Strategic Plan for Natural Resource Management, both published earlier this decade, recommended that the National Park Service concentrate on recruiting academically trained resource managers with appropriate degrees and training them in the National Park Service approach to resource management (e.g., compliance, practical aspects of resource management planning, etc.).

WHAT'S NEXT?

The revitalized Albright Employee Development Center is already offering training that shares the NPS-specific approaches to resource management not taught in an academic setting. Designed to cover both fundamentals and advanced topics, these courses will build on the most successful components developed during the Natural Resource Trainee Program.

The natural resource management training manager at Albright, Dennis Vásquez, recently coordinated the ambitious 6-week course, “Fundamentals for Professional Natural Resource Managers.” This training focused on developing competence in the areas of NPS resource stewardship, planning and compliance, professional credibility, communications, project and program development, and other areas. Offered last May and June, the course was funded from a central account and was attended by more than 20 park resource managers with an average of 2½ years of NPS employment. Albright

will also serve as a natural resource training clearinghouse, facilitating NPS participation in training and professionalization opportunities offered through university short courses and other non-NPS means.

While training is important, Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area Chief of Resource Management Beth Johnson points out that “we need to be able to attract previously trained, highly skilled scientists to advance our resource management programs. They must complete the inventories that are so much needed, [and] they must design and implement monitoring programs and analyze the data that is produced to meet the agreed upon management objectives for the park unit.”

Some of her concerns are addressed in the long-range resource management professionalization thrust that gained focus through the Strategic Plan for Natural Resource Management, the Vail Agenda natural resource careers committee, and the Ad Hoc Report. Now a *stewardship* professionalization plan that includes both cultural and natural resources is in final review and is expected to be released later this year; this document stresses an integrated approach to professionalization as the key to taking resource management to the next tier. Important parts of the professionalization movement include continuing to establish positions with positive degree requirements, carefully recruiting academically trained specialists, retraining NPS staff, encouraging career paths that can lead to superintendencies, and developing natural resource competencies. Also important are enhancing and developing new partnerships, improving our relationships with the National Biological Service and universities, pursuing NR-MAP staffing level recommendations through a separate initiative, and keeping attention focused on Director Kennedy's support of the “Stewardship Today for Parks Tomorrow” initiative to double resource management staff by the year 2000. All are exciting potentialities, but restructuring, reengineering, and diminishing budgets have all made professionalization goals more difficult to reach. However, when the time is right, we are ready to move forward.



¹ Percentages pertain to 108 graduates from the first five courses as of October 1992.