NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
75TH ANNIVERSARY SYMPOSIUM

Draft Reports of the Working Groups on

OUR NATIONAL PARKS: CHALLENGES AND STRATEGIES FOR THE 21ST CENTURY



For consideration by

A Working Congress on National Park Management
Vail, Colorado
October 7-10, 1991



Printed on Recycled Paper

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
75TH ANNIVERSARY SYMPOSIUM

Draft Reports of the Working Groups on

OUR NATIONAL PARKS: CHALLENGES AND STRATEGIES FOR THE 21ST CENTURY

For consideration by

A Working Congress on National Park Management
Vail, Colorado
October 7-10, 1991

THE NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
75TH ANNIVERSARY SYMPOSIUM

Steering Committee

William J. Briggle
Steering Committee Chair
National Park Service
Seattle, Washington

Robert C. Cunningham
National Park Service
Phoenix, Arizona

Charles Jordan
Department of Parks and Recreation
Portland, Oregon

Amb. L. W. "Bill" Lane, Jr.
Secretary of the Interior Appointee
Menlo Park, California

Nancy Nelson
National Park Service
Boston, Massachusetts

Alan O'Neill
National Park Service
Boulder City, Nevada

Alan Rubin
National Park Foundation
Washington, D.C.

Henry L. Diamond
Symposium General Chair
Beveridge & Diamond
Washington, D.C.

Daniel J. Evans
Daniel J. Evans Associates
Seattle, Washington

Joseph P. Kalt, Ph.D.
Kennedy School of Government
Harvard University
Cambridge, Massachusetts

James Leape
World Wildlife Fund / Conservation Foundation
Washington, D.C.

Philip Odeen
Coopers and Lybrand
Washington, D.C.

Holly Robinson, Ph.D.
National Parks Advisory Board
Atlanta, Georgia

John C. Sawhill, Ph.D.
The Nature Conservancy
Washington, D.C.

CONTENTS

Introduction 1

ORGANIZATIONAL RENEWAL

HERITAGE TO HORIZONS 7
SUMMARY LISTING OF ISSUES AND
PRELIMINARY RECOMMENDATIONS 8
OVERVIEW 11
ISSUES AND PRELIMINARY RECOMMENDATIONS 21
CONCLUSION 37

RESOURCE STEWARDSHIP

SUMMARY LISTING OF ISSUES AND
PRELIMINARY RECOMMENDATIONS 41
OVERVIEW 43
ISSUES AND PRELIMINARY RECOMMENDATIONS 45

PARK USE AND ENJOYMENT

SUMMARY LISTING OF ISSUES AND
PRELIMINARY RECOMMENDATIONS 63
OVERVIEW 65
ISSUES AND PRELIMINARY RECOMMENDATIONS 77
CONCLUSION 102

ENVIRONMENTAL LEADERSHIP

SUMMARY LISTING OF ISSUES AND
PRELIMINARY RECOMMENDATIONS 105
OVERVIEW 108
ISSUES AND PRELIMINARY RECOMMENDATIONS 112

Acknowledgements 131

INTRODUCTION

The National Park Service's 75th Anniversary Symposium is designed as a working congress of key individuals with strong interests in the future of our national parks. Symposium delegates will come together in Vail, Colorado, on October 7-10, 1991, to deliberate on the stark challenges confronting the National Park Service as it prepares for the 21st century. The symposium's focus will be the draft reports of four working groups that have been charged with framing the relevant issues and putting forth preliminary policy recommendations.

The National Park Service is charged with the management of the nation's most precious natural, cultural, and historical resources. These resources are inextricably woven into our national heritage, and they provide citizens the world over with invaluable opportunities for recreation, aesthetic beauty, historical reflection, cultural enrichment, and environmental education. It is the responsibility of those involved in park management and policy formulation to ensure that the national park system does not fail to preserve and protect the resources managed by the National Park Service. Yet, fulfilling this enormous responsibility is not a simple process, nor is it free of controversy.

The National Park Service faces a broad range of challenges to its mission to manage the park system. An ever-growing population continues to surround park units, often bringing traces of economic and social activities that are the antitheses of those activities that the parks are designed to foster. Visitor levels and mixes are changing, resulting in demands for often mutually exclusive experiences and services from the national parks. The Park Service is also being challenged to enhance the national park system as a model of conservation and preservation—a model that can teach valuable lessons to a world increasingly concerned with environmental threats, as well as with rapid cultural and historical changes. To effectively perform under these kinds of pressures, the Park Service itself must be well-managed, and it must be guided by wise public policies.

To assess the organizational and policy problems that most threaten the national park system, the steering committee of the 75th Anniversary

Symposium has asked working groups of knowledgeable, insightful, and diverse individuals to consider four broad areas of concern:

- Organizational Renewal
- Resource Stewardship
- Park Use and Enjoyment
- Environmental Leadership

These topics span the range of important national park issues—from personnel policy to environmental education, from scientific capabilities of the National Park Service to competing visitors' demands for park amenities.

The working groups were convened under the direction of four eminent leaders in matters of policy and management: Mr. Philip Odeen (Regional Managing Partner of Coopers and Lybrand), Mr. John Sawhill (President of the Nature Conservancy), Mr. Charles Jordan (Director of Parks for the City of Portland, Oregon), and Mr. Daniel Evans (former United States Senator from Washington). In addition to the chairperson, each working group consisted of three managers from within the National Park Service and five citizen members. The NPS members, who represent various park units, bring with them a broad range of experience and perspective. The citizen members also have a wide variety of backgrounds and knowledge, and they were invited to participate on the basis of their well-deserved reputations for thoughtfulness and open-mindedness.

The working groups were formed in spring 1991, and each met twice in extended working sessions. At each session the groups also received advice and comments from interested individuals both inside and outside the Park Service (these individuals are recognized in the Acknowledgments section at the end of this document).

Because the national parks have been subjected to numerous studies, conferences, and reports, the working groups took into consideration these previous efforts and sought to draw from them the range of problems and solutions that most deserved attention. Each group then prepared a draft report that identifies the broad policy and organizational problems confronting the

National Park Service—problems that are significant and that can feasibly be solved by the Park Service, the Department of the Interior, or the Congress.

The draft reports, which are included in this document, will be discussed in detail at the NPS 75th Anniversary Symposium, particularly the preliminary recommendations. Each person attending the symposium will participate in several small-group sessions to deliberate on the various recommendations. The intent will be to allow the working group members to hear the views of a broad constituency of respected observers of park issues. Based on the discussions at the symposium (as well as additional comments that interested parties may wish to provide), the working groups will prepare final reports for consideration by the steering committee. Because of the preliminary nature of the draft reports and the opportunity for their modification, the NPS 75th Anniversary Symposium will truly be a working congress.

The steering committee for the symposium is a federal advisory committee appointed by the director of the National Park Service pursuant to the Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA). It is charged with producing recommendations on the future of the National Park Service and park policy for the director's consideration. The steering committee will prepare a report of recommendations based on the final reports of the four working groups, the deliberations of the participants at the symposium, and the written remarks received during an open public comment period following the symposium. This final report is scheduled to be completed by December 31, 1991.

The following draft reports of the working groups are preliminary and do not necessarily reflect the views of the steering committee.

Draft Report

Working Group on Organizational Renewal

Philip Odeen, Chair
Regional Managing Partner, Coopers and Lybrand

Peter Zimmerman, Vice-Chair
Associate Dean for Executive Training, Kennedy School of Government
Harvard University

Ann Brassier
Executive Training Consultant

Maria Burks
Superintendent, Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania National Military Park
National Park Service

James Colvard
Director, Center for Naval Analysis

Michael Finley
Superintendent, Yosemite National Park
National Park Service

Wallace Hibbard
Superintendent, Big Cypress National Preserve
National Park Service

Blair Johnson
Congressional Fellow
Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry

Keith Kambak
Vice President of Recreation, Walt Disney World

The working group on organizational renewal focused on the question of how the structure and administrative systems of the National Park Service can enhance its capacity to achieve its mission of preservation and interpretation of America's natural and cultural heritage. Specifically, we looked at both how the formal administrative systems and the informal culture of the organization have evolved over time, and more importantly, what changes would enhance the capacity of the Park Service to meet the challenge of the years ahead.

We believe there has been significant erosion of the traditional culture and sense of family that has long characterized the National Park Service; that it is subject to increasing bureaucratization and is perceived by many as both staff- and top-heavy; that the professional skills and educational level of its work force are declining and new recruits are less competitive than they were a decade ago; that its employees perceive significant weaknesses in procedures for recruitment, orientation, training, and development; that there has been substantial criticism of financial management practices and procedures; and that there have been increasing attempts by political superiors to meddle in the assignment of mid-level career professionals.

Moreover, we believe the tasks of resource preservation and interpretation are arguably far more complex than a generation ago. Thus, the Park Service needs to adapt its work force to reflect the diverse needs of an increasingly heterogeneous society and to collaborate with a wide range of public and private institutions as it seeks to advance its mission and the public interest. These changes suggest the need for a wider range of skills and experience embodied in the NPS work force and its need for more sophisticated systems to focus the effective energies of the Park Service on its key tasks.

SUMMARY LISTING OF ISSUES AND PRELIMINARY RECOMMENDATIONS

Issue 1. How can the human resource systems for recruitment, orientation, training, and development enhance the organization's base of knowledge, professional skills, cohesion, and sense of shared commitment?

Preliminary Recommendations:

1-A Establish a servicewide work force planning program, including recruitment targets for major fields.

1-B Establish a nationwide recruiting program for hiring new NPS professional personnel.

1-C Strengthen minority recruiting through cooperative agreements.

1-D The Park Service must have a strong base of professional, technical, cultural, and administrative knowledge. The Park Service should establish positive education requirements for its key career fields.

1-E Within each NPS career field, the Park Service should establish typical career paths. The Park Service should strengthen policy and supporting programs to encourage career development mobility, including housing assistance, spouse employment assistance, locality pay differentials and special consideration for the problems of two-career couples.

1-F A comprehensive program of employee training and development should be initiated and implemented to move the organization toward broad-based, mission-driven training.

1-G A top-quality orientation and initial training program should be developed for all NPS employees.

Prior to starting work, employees should complete a brief NPS orientation program.

All employees should receive training upon reporting to the initial job site, as well as orientation to their specific tasks and responsibilities.

Professional hires should complete a more substantial initial training program that focuses on skills and traditions.

During the second half of their initial year, professionals should complete more specialized professional training in their chosen field.

1-H The Park Service should review the existing NPS grade structure.

1-I The National Park Service should work with the Office of Personnel Management to establish an agency-specific register.

Issue 2. How should the process of identifying, testing, training, and developing the managers and leaders of the National Park Service be improved?

2-A The Park Service should develop a new mid-level program to identify, select, and train promising employees as prospective managers and future leaders.

2-B The Park Service should establish career paths for managerial employees.

2-C The Park Service should establish a senior-level executive development program.

2-D The Park Service should establish a human resources management board, that would serve three functions:

Manage the assignment, training, and development of the top 10% of NPS managers.

Review and approve all proposed assignments of the 750 managerial GM employees.

Establish an overall human resources policy.

Issue 3. How can the structure, procedures, and culture of the organization be enhanced in ways that more effectively focus resources on the operation of the system's parks and sites?

3-A The Park Service should introduce internal market incentives into the provision of "support services" for the park system.

3-B There should be a thorough value-added audit of regional and headquarters support functions, as well as those involved in oversight and control.

3-C Key superintendencies in the Park Service should be filled at the SES level.

3-D We recommend that, henceforth, all SES positions within the Park Service have, as a prerequisite, park managerial experience.

3-E Senior managers should shift assignments every five or six years.

Issue 4. How can the National Park Service enhance its ability to acquire and manage responsibly the large-scale financial resources essential to its mission? How can it stimulate and exploit the evident interests of private institutions in contributing to the goals of the organization?

4-A The Service should develop a set of budget demonstrations for several parks that clarify the relationship between costs, service levels, and performance standards.

4-B Reaffirm current legislative authority that permits 50% of all entrance fees paid at a park to remain in that park.

4-C Strengthen financial management training for all managerial personnel and for those directly involved in budget administration, development, and concession management.

4-D The Park Service should experiment with partnerships to fund projects in specific parks.

4-E The Park Service must improve the ways in which it accounts for and represents concession income and contractual relationships.

4-F We recommend immediate approval of the proposed America the Beautiful pass.

OVERVIEW

The National Park Service has a rich history on which to draw as it looks toward the future. As an organization, it traces its roots back to the days when the cavalry policed and managed the early parks such as Yellowstone, bringing with them a tradition of strong leadership, independent action, and initiative. More fundamentally, the mission of the Park Service puts it at the center of national efforts to preserve and interpret our nation's natural and cultural heritage. It is a demanding task in many ways:

> Increasing knowledge and awareness of environmental science has greatly complicated our understanding of the subtle interactions between human activity and the natural environment.
>
> Historical research provides an increasingly complex and subtle understanding of the political, social, economic and technological forces that have shaped our heritage.
>
> Our heritage is not static. Rather, it is an evolving mosaic, crafted anew by each successive generation. And, in what is most distinctive about the American experience, the traditions and values of each generation of new Americans challenge and enrich our cultural heritage.

These and other factors come together in a dynamic (sometimes volatile) mix that frames the milieu in which the National Park Service operates.

The Park Service is well positioned for this challenging task. It is one of the most respected and admired public organizations in the United States. It has its own rich heritage of strong, independent, and colorful leadership in the preservation of our most precious natural and cultural assets. And it has attracted to its ranks an extraordinary cadre of highly motivated and skilled employees. The best of the NPS middle managers are among the very best in American government. They demonstrate a high degree of sophistication, initiative, political and social awareness, and capacity for effective leadership.

To assess the organizational needs of the Park Service, we should first understand its essential culture. Then we turn to the professional orientation and skills of its work force, and how these skills match up against current and future demands. Finally, we examine the administrative systems of the Park Service and how they may best be strengthened to meet the challenges that lie ahead.

Culture of the Park Service

From its military heritage, the Park Service has fostered a culture of decentralized management, authority, and initiative. Like an 18th century sea captain, the early rangers had near total responsibility for the resources in their charge. Living in remote, often isolated locations, the rangers were jacks-of-all-trades whose responsibilities ranged from the most mundane to matters of life and death. Rangers were encouraged to assume personal responsibility for care of the nation's resources. Even today, superintendents reflect this proprietary attitude when they talk about the needs of "my park."

The culture of the Park Service emphasizes and inculcates a number of distinctive values:

> First, NPS employees are proudly independent. While initially a function of their relative isolation, the tradition of self-reliance and independence is still evident throughout the Park Service.
>
> Second, they exercise an unusual degree of initiative. One must be impressed by the initiatives taken routinely by NPS employees. Whether it is a GS-7 interpreter writing a battlefield history or a GS-13 superintendent organizing an area-wide environmental study process, NPS employees stand out in initiative and imagination.
>
> Third, NPS employees have a strong personal stake—even a sense of proprietorship—in the protection of the resources in their care. The aforementioned "my park" characterization does not fully capture the attitude of NPS employees toward the preservation of the natural and historical resources which they superintend.

> Fourth, NPS employees display a high degree of commitment to the park system and their image of the system. This is captured, in part, by the many references to "family" used by NPS employees. Historically, in a fashion similar to the military, one gave over one's whole life to the Park Service. And the Park Service reciprocated. There is a high degree of identification with the organization.

Taken together, these elements—independence, initiative, proprietary stake, and high organizational identification—suggest why the Park Service is regarded as one of the premier institutions in the United States.

At the same time, there are indications that the culture and commitment of NPS employees has begun to erode, in some instances with effects that are less productive for the Park Service. On occasion, the culture of independence and initiative finds expression in actions by a park superintendent that go counter to direction from Washington; or park employees may actively undercut what they perceive to be "political" actions by their superintendent; or a park superintendent may quietly lobby key congressional actors ("for my park") on issues that may have adverse consequences for the park system as a whole.

To take a different kind of example, it has been suggested that park superintendents (and the Park Service itself) too often focus their attention only on what happens within the confines of national parks. Issues are defined in terms of what they mean for a particular park site, rather than the larger ecosystem, nearby communities, or a region as a whole. In the words of one major conservation organization that works closely with them: "The National Park Service is not always a good neighbor." In a similar vein, a park superintendent attended a meeting of conservation organizations where someone turned to him, asking, "Why is the Park Service here? You folks must have a budget problem." (The conservationist was right.) And the superintendent told the story to other superintendents (who nodded in agreement), concluding that: "We do not work closely enough with other organizations in our community."

Today, the parks have changed, fewer employees live in the parks, more employees view the parks as 9-to-5 jobs, two-career families tug at traditional loyalties, and political appointees try to influence mid-level NPS assignments.

All these factors and others have eroded the sense of "family" that was once at the heart of the Park Service culture. A group of superintendents tried to explain that, rather than feeling part of a family, they felt more isolated, more distrustful of headquarters, less supported by the regions, and needing to depend more on their own political and managerial resources.

Moreover, the Park Service is suffering from increasing bureaucratization that is eroding the independence, autonomy, and sense of efficacy of many employees. New levels of controls are imposed from regional offices and headquarters. Specialized programs and initiatives become bureaucratic fiefdoms and competing sources of power and influence within the organization. Divisions arise between headquarters executives with no field experience and field personnel who have never served in Washington. In some areas key managers extend their tenure in particular jobs to 10 years and more, seeing the world from an idiosyncratic vantage point at variance with the rest of the organization.

It is hard to know what to make of these qualitative observations. There is no clear baseline or standard of measurement to assess how things are, in fact, different today from the recent past. And managers in other federal agencies would probably voice similar concerns. But if one combines these elements with the increasing challenges in Park Service jobs (with their expanding environmental and law enforcement roles) along with reduced qualifications on the part of new entrants to the work force, it leads to an inescapable conclusion that there is a real risk to the base of high commitment, initiative, and independence that has made the Park Service a revered institution.

Professionalization in the Park Service

Everyone loves the park ranger; both the public and many NPS employees have an image of the ranger as someone who can do anything. However, current trends—internal and external to the Park Service—are conspiring to make this archetypal "do anything" ranger outmoded.

First, our concern and awareness of environmental interests has increased dramatically in the past generation. Our understanding of the delicate balance

of ecosystems, the wide range of man-made interventions with potentially adverse effects, and the need to balance—in subtle ways—exploitation and use of our natural resources with their preservation have made the task of environmental management vastly more complex. Given this increased complexity, it is no longer feasible to call upon generalist rangers who lack the needed professional education to make the decisions that have to be made. While 82% of all rangers have college degrees, only 66% of rangers hired in 1989 had a college degree of any kind. In fact, ranger educational attainment has been steadily declining since the abolition of formal education requirements in 1969. What is equally disturbing is that only 40% of all NPS professionals hold degrees in fields related to the management of natural or cultural resources.

Second, we are an increasingly diverse nation. Recent studies highlight the changing racial and ethnic mix of the population and the future national work force. The recreational, cultural, and historical needs and interests of the American population in the next century will be far more diverse and complex than when the Park Service was founded in 1916. It will be important to attract and retain people knowledgeable in special cultural and historical fields, and it will be necessary to make the Park Service a more attractive career option to minorities.

Third, the mission of the Park Service has become increasingly diffuse. Once focused on the preservation of America's natural crown jewels, the expansion and diversification of the park system has significantly complicated the task of park employees. Many of the newer parks symbolize important historical and cultural events, movements, and people, and they provide access to important ideas. In fact, there are now a total of 16 different classifications for units within the national park system: national battlefield, national battlefield site, national battlefield park, national historical park, national historic site, national lakeshore, national monument, national memorial, national military park, national park, national preserve, national river or riverway, national recreation area, national seashore, national scenic river or riverway, and national parkway.

Finally, law enforcement, particularly in the urban parks, has become a more complicated task as drugs and urban violence ignore park boundaries. At the

same time, the isolation of some rural parks has proved an irresistible lure to other forms of criminality.

The National Park Service is, and must be, a highly decentralized operating organization. Each of the 357 sites managed by the Park Service is different. Each has its own distinctive history and cultural context, its own ecological features, and its own political, economic, and social context. Successful leadership at each site requires a unique adaptation of general NPS policies to idiosyncratic local circumstances. Many initiatives, including partnerships with other public and private organizations, participation in community, and regional planning and policy development are best conceived, planned, and implemented at the site or (where two or more sites are in close proximity) at the sub-regional level.

Most of the critical transactions between citizens and the Park Service take place in the parks, remote from headquarters, regional offices, and in larger parks, distant from the superintendent. Other encounters involve park leadership with local and state officials and private interests. Whether dealing with visitors, park criminality, the effect of development on a watershed, or regional, cultural, or environmental concerns, key judgments are best made locally. Most NPS managers agree with this characterization. It is consistent with the organization's long heritage and remains an element of the current reality, at least for some superintendents.

But our review suggests there is a gap between rhetoric and reality in the National Park Service. As one former assistant regional director told us, "The rhetoric said we were there to help the parks, particularly the smaller parks. The reality was that we were galvanized by the big park issues and spent lots of time on politically sensitive questions." Superintendents in smaller parks talk about the difficulty of getting timely assistance from headquarters and the regions ("they operate on their own time") and these same superintendents said bureaucratic retribution would follow if they complained too loudly about lack of support and assistance.

Careers in the Park Service

For purposes of illustration, a Park Service career can be divided into three phases. The first phase (years one through eight) takes place at the field level. If the employee is a ranger, he will provide front-line service to the visiting public. Duties during this period in either protection or interpretation bring the employee in constant public contact, and the public will question him about park resources (i.e., what is this plant? what causes this event? why is this species in decline?). The personnel at this level are representing the National Park Service to the public; they are educators and ambassadors, developing understandings of resource impacts and public use. They need to be articulate and knowledgeable about natural processes and basic natural resource concepts. At this point, historical events relative to a given site can be learned and applied through reading and research. Other professionals will practice their craft (architecture, engineering, administration) in this period of their career. All professional employees need a strong educational base that will provide the necessary skills to support this stage.

The second career phase (mid-level work) is framed within years 8-10 to years 18-20. These are the years when field personnel begin assuming supervisory jobs. They are generally overseeing the activities of both permanent and seasonal personnel. The employees rely heavily on their first-level experience gained at various park units. Now it is necessary for these employees to understand budget and administrative procedure, and to acquire and demonstrate supervisory skills. As first-line supervisors, they devote much of their time to the training, mentoring, and oversight of their first-line subordinates.

The third career phase (senior-level management: years 20 to 30 and beyond) is comprised of superintendents, regional office managers, etc. At this level program direction, management decisions, and issues or dispute resolution require a well-founded basis of experience. Policy implementation must be sensitive to agency culture, law, regulation, and policy. Experience at levels one and two is essential. At this level, managers need continuing education and growth. The Park Service needs to provide senior level employees with training and experience that will provide exposure to new applications and enhance

public administration skills. Senior development programs, advanced education, and mentoring are extremely important.

Each phase in a professional career should provide new challenges, opportunities for growth, and the chance to master new skills.

Organizational Renewal

Today, there is not a single National Park Service. It varies from region to region and park to park. The culture described earlier is fraying at the edges. In this world, the big parks—the crown jewels—will do fine. They have extensive networks of supporters and substantial professional resources, are politically sensitive, and (often) are led by the most experienced and savvy superintendents. But smaller and newer national park system sites will suffer. And the reverence and respect of the American public, that most precious of NPS assets, will begin to erode.

Renewal of the NPS organization, at its core, should have three broad objectives:

> First, to affirm the best of the NPS heritage and culture; to refocus the entire NPS organization on support of park management; and to strengthen the identification and loyalty of all employees with the mission of the National Park Service
>
> Second, as the NPS is strengthened internally, to further open the organization to relationships with other public and private organizations; to both learn from other institutions and share the NPS culture and expertise; to draw on resources of other organizations, and to build partnerships that advance NPS goals and the public interest
>
> Third, to strengthen the professional leadership of the National Park Service; to equip its career leaders with the management and leadership skills needed to foster renewal of the service; and to undertake its leadership role in the preservation and interpretation of our national heritage

Each of these objectives leads to multiple recommendations, affecting the ways in which NPS personnel are recruited and trained, career paths, NPS structure and incentives, how resource allocation decisions are made, and how the National Park Service is financed.

Organizational renewal is a never-ending task. Successful organizations must constantly reexamine their operating premises, test and adapt their organization, and equip their personnel with new skills. The history of American management is one of constant organizational change and adaptation as institutions—both public and private—compete for scarce resources. Like other organizations with a strong mission focus, the Park Service has concentrated its investments in increasing its understanding of the substantive challenges it faces (in areas such as resource and cultural preservation). The Park Service has devoted less attention to the organizational and administrative implications of these challenges, a feature common among public organizations.

The working group on organizational renewal has focused its attention on the question of how the administrative capacities of the Park Service might be adapted to enhance the organization's resilience and ability to meet the challenges ahead. We have inquired about formal administrative systems (structure, personnel, and budget), as well as attempted to gain insight into informal systems such as the norms, values, and culture of the organization. Knowledge of both formal and informal systems are critical in shaping the collective capacity of institutions to adapt to change. In shaping the strategy of any organization, a key task is to harness the internal administrative systems to produce the skills, orientation, incentives, and behavior appropriate to the substantive challenges confronting the organization.

We have identified four areas where there is significant potential for strengthening the human and institutional capacity of the National Park Service. It is not our intent to be critical of either past or current practice, but to reflect the need of all human organizations to constantly adapt as we learn more about the challenges facing our institutions and the potential contribution to organizational effectiveness of changes in structure, systems, and personnel.

The four areas of opportunity we have identified are

> First, how can the human resource systems for recruitment, orientation, training, and development enhance the organization's base of knowledge, professional skills, cohesion, and sense of shared commitment?
>
> Second, how can the process of identifying, testing, training, and developing the managers and leaders of the Park Service be improved?
>
> Third, how can the structure, procedures, and culture of the organization be enhanced in ways that more effectively focus the resources of the organization on the front-line task of operating the system's 357 parks, sites, and other facilities?
>
> Fourth, how can the Park Service enhance its ability to acquire and manage responsibly the large-scale financial resources essential to its mission? And, how can it stimulate and exploit the evident interest of private organizations in supporting the goals of the Park Service?

Each of these areas is discussed below.

ISSUES AND PRELIMINARY RECOMMENDATIONS

Issue 1: How can the human resource systems for recruitment, orientation, training, and development enhance the organization's base of knowledge, professional skills, cohesion, and sense of shared commitment?

Background and Findings

There are many distinctive features of the human resource needs of the National Park Service. For example, a sizable fraction of the work force is seasonal, many returning to the Park Service year after year. Second, many NPS jobs require a particular blend of specialized knowledge along with excellent communication and interpretation skills. A corollary is that NPS personnel are expected to be jacks-of-all-trades—exhibiting broad knowledge, multiple skills, and a high degree of adaptability. This has been somewhat problematic for NPS employees, as the civil service classification system bases its judgment about appropriate grade structure (and thus pay) on the acquisition of highly specialized knowledge and educational requirements. The classification system awards points for depth more than for the breadth of professional skills typically required of NPS personnel. The Park Service has gradually weakened the educational requirements for key series (such as ranger) with the consequence that the grade structure for ranger jobs is depressed, and it is harder to attract well qualified candidates. At the same time, the Park Service seems reluctant to weed out poor performers, which reduces the opportunity to promote younger, more able personnel.

Similarly, with the exception of law enforcement, NPS training and development is largely individually focused and initiated. There are no clear career paths for rangers or other professional and administrative employees, nor are there Park Service-prescribed progressions of training and skill enhancement. The Park Service spends more on training than do many federal agencies (about 1.5% of payroll). In the past much of it focused on initial and refresher training for those employees involved in law enforcement. Current training policies do not reflect a clear corporate sense of NPS needs and skills for its work force.

Recruitment procedures are highly decentralized and somewhat haphazard. There is no national recruiting program. Most permanent professional employees come from the ranks of seasonal and part-time people, who after a number of years find a means of entry into the career service. For example, of the 150-200 new rangers hired each year, more than 80% begin their permanent employment at five parks. A common pattern is for a seasonal employee to accept a low-graded, non-professional position in an urban park such as Independence or Gateway, establish permanent civil service status, and move into the ranger ranks. New hires are the most persistent, not necessarily the best qualified. And, the absence of national recruiting makes it much more difficult to broaden the diversity of the NPS work force.

The consequence is a work force with declining educational and professional qualifications at the very time when far more are needed.

The National Park Service must undertake a substantial revision of its human resource programs.

Preliminary Recommendations

1-A **Establish a service-wide work force planning program, including recruitment targets for major fields such as the ranger series (025) and other series such as administration and facilities maintenance.**

1-B **Establish a nationwide recruiting program for hiring new NPS professional personnel such as rangers, civil engineers, landscape architects, and so on.**

All candidates for full-time employment, including those drawn from seasonal and part-time ranks, would compete for acceptance into various professional series.

1-C **Strengthen minority recruiting through cooperative agreements with several schools with substantial enrollments of minority**

students engaged in the fields of study related to natural or cultural resource management.

Students could engage in seasonal or part-time work with the Park Service during their undergraduate years and be well positioned to compete for permanent professional positions on graduation.

1-D **The Park Service must have a strong base of professional, technical, cultural, and administrative knowledge. We believe that the Park Service should establish positive education requirements for its key career fields.**

For example, it is imperative to strengthen the professional educational base of the ranger corps. Candidates for selection as rangers (025) should be drawn from those who have completed undergraduate degrees in fields relating to natural resource management and environmental science, or cultural resource management and history. Appropriate background requirements should be established in other fields. For example, candidates in administration should come from fields such as accounting, business administration, or financial management.

1-E **Within each NPS career field (rangers, maintenance, administration), the Park Service should establish typical career paths with initial entrance requirements, standards for professional attainments and training at various grade levels, and expectations about mobility. The Park Service should strengthen policy and supporting programs to encourage career development mobility, including housing assistance, spouse employment assistance, locality pay differentials, and special consideration for the problems of two-career couples.**

1-F **A comprehensive program of employee training and development should be initiated and implemented to move the organization toward broad-based, mission-driven training.**

For each NPS career field, the Park Service should prepare a model development plan which addresses the knowledge and skill enhancement

required at key points in the career cycle. Where appropriate, model plans should include developmental assignments in key partner organizations, such as state and local government, other natural resource agencies, and private organizations. Employees should devote some time each year to formal training as an integral part of their duties. As a guideline, each employee should spend a minimum of 40 hours each year in formal training.

1-G **A top-quality orientation and initial training program should be developed for all NPS employees. The aim is to strengthen knowledge, awareness, and identification with the Park Service organization and mission.**

The employee orientation program should have several elements:

Prior to starting work, all seasonal and full-time employees should complete a brief (one- to two-day) NPS orientation program.

All employees should receive specific training upon reporting to the initial job site (i.e., "This is Antietam"), as well as orientation to their specific tasks and responsibilities.

Professional hires, such as new rangers, should complete a more substantial initial training program that focuses on ranger skills and traditions and introduces the ranger to key personnel, sites, and challenges of the National Park Service. Many have suggested that the 12-week program, "Introduction to Park Service Operations," held at the Albright Training Center in the 1960s and 1970s, is a good baseline model.

During the second half of their initial year, rangers and other professionals should complete more specialized professional training in their chosen field (visitor protection, cultural resource management, or natural resource management). In the case of cultural and natural resource management, the Park Service would have to develop new programs of several weeks duration.

On completion of training and other assignments in the trainee's initial year and a successful probationary review, he or she would be promoted to the next grade (GS-9 if hired at GS-7). Subsequent promotions would require transfer to a new site.

In meeting these and other training requirements, the Park Service should look at a wide variety of ways to offer such training. While it is important that training be cost-effective, quality is paramount. There is no value in ineffective training, whatever the price.

1-H **The Park Service, with assistance from the U.S. Office of Personnel Management, should review the existing NPS grade structure.**

We believe that the current structure is substantially undergraded. Park superintendents at the GM-12 to -15 level, district rangers, and many other park professionals must master many specialties, integrate them effectively, and exercise substantial discretion and leadership in a decentralized organization. Based on our acquaintance with many other federal agencies, we are convinced there is substantial inequity in the field structure of the Park Service. Major parks in the system should be filled by senior executive service (career reserve) appointees.

1-I **Since the National Park Service is the major user of the park ranger series, it should work with the Office of Personnel Management to establish an agency-specific register.**

The register should entail a thorough qualifying process with appropriate educational and experience requirements. It should involve cognitive skills and substantive knowledge examinations as well as interviews. This process should generate a register of exceptionally qualified candidates from which all park rangers would be selected. At the same time, current back-door entrance methods (such as those described earlier) should be immediately curtailed.

Issue 2: How should the process of identifying, testing, training and developing the managers and leaders of the Park Service be improved?

Background and Findings

Among the many issues discussed with NPS personnel, the one in which there was greatest agreement was the poor state of management and executive development within the National Park Service. Superintendents and others shared countless stories of simply being dropped into managerial roles with neither formal nor informal training or mentoring. No doubt, those who survive are the better for it. But it inflicts undue hardship on both the managers themselves, their employees, and ultimately, the organization. The fact that many superintendents are poorly prepared for their managerial roles invites regional and headquarters managers to closely monitor their performance, impose bureaucratic controls, and rob young superintendents of their autonomy and opportunity to grow. In some regions expenditures in some categories of as little as a few hundred dollars require regional approval. This level of "oversight" is justified on the grounds of the poor preparation of superintendents. The reality is a deadening of initiative and increasing bureaucratization of the Park Service.

There is not any credible servicewide program to identify and develop managerial talent. The Park Service participates in departmental programs, including those for management development, largely on the initiative of the individual. There is no institutional focus or priority for the development of its future leadership.

Preliminary Recommendations

2-A **The Park Service should develop a new mid-level program to identify, select, and train promising employees as prospective managers and future leaders.**

Beginning at the GS-11/12 level, interested and promising employees should be encouraged to compete for a limited number of slots in a new

mid-level management talent identification and development program. This program should provide selected candidates with formal managerial training, shadow assignments with respected managers (as assistants or deputies), and exposure to a wide range of NPS problems. At the core of such a program should be a variety of developmental assignments in different locales and contexts, including Intergovernmental Personnel Act assignments to other public and private natural resource and park organizations.

2-B **The Park Service should establish career paths for managerial employees (approximately 750 at present) that include standards for mobility, formal training, developmental assignments inside and outside the Park Service, as well as a rigorous appraisal program that assesses managerial performance, developmental needs, readiness for broader responsibilities, and promotability.**

2-C **The Park Service should establish a senior-level executive development program that provides both growth and development for senior-level managers. This should include the opportunity for assignments outside the Park Service and advanced management training, including support for long-term training and sabbaticals in public management or public administration programs.**

2-D **The Park Service should establish a human resources management board, chaired by the deputy director.**

The board would serve three functions:

First, as the executive resources board for the Park Service, it would directly manage the assignment, training, and development of the top 10% of NPS managers (approximately 70 individuals).

Second, the board would review and approve all proposed assignments of the 750 managerial (GM) employees of the Park Service.

Third, the board would establish an overall human resources policy for the National Park Service.

The board would be composed of the deputy director (chair) and four rotating members, each serving a four-year term. One member would be drawn from Washington headquarters, one from the regional office structure, and two would be park superintendents at the GM-14 (or above) level. A service center manager could substitute for one superintendent. The board would be staffed by an executive personnel professional who would serve as executive secretary. The board would draw on other human resource professionals as needed in its policy role.

With respect to subordinate management positions, we envision the board working in the following way. The executive personnel professional who staffs the board will assemble a slate of three to five candidates for each managerial position as it comes vacant. The slate will be based on the executive secretary's judgment and interpretation of service-wide objectives, including diversity, mobility, the desire to balance current operating needs against future development, and ensuring that the slate represents the best match servicewide against the requirements of the position. The slate is then approved by the board and forwarded to the appropriate selecting official. The selecting official may chose a candidate from the approved slate or may reject a slate, in so doing clarifying requirements of the position not met by those on the slate.

Issue 3: How can the structure, procedures, and culture of the organization be enhanced in ways that more effectively focus resources on the operation of the system's parks and sites?

Background and Findings

Public institutions exist to create public value, much as private institutions generate private value. What should be noted in the case of the Park Service is that virtually all of its value-creating activities are centered in individual parks

and sites. It is essential to operate these sites in ways that preserve their natural, cultural, and historic properties while facilitating public education and enjoyment. This is the core of the Park Service's mission. Yet today, nearly one-third of all NPS employees (including all 21 NPS senior executives) work outside the structure of the parks. In theory, many of them exist to "support" the parks and activities therein. In reality, the support resources in regional and headquarters offices become instruments of secondary control through special programs and supplementary appropriations. Many such staff operate, in effect, in the line for those parks led by less experienced managers. More junior superintendents find themselves hamstrung by bureaucracy and petty controls. At the same time, the more experienced superintendents, frustrated by the bureaucracy of headquarters staff and regional offices, will circumvent them, dealing directly with top officials inside and outside the Park Service. In some cases, senior superintendents circumvent the management structure of the Park Service altogether, dealing directly with members and key staff in Congress.

We believe there needs to be a major rethinking of the role of staff in regional offices and headquarters and a careful segregation of responsibilities between functions of support and service to the parks, liaison with non-NPS groups (such as state, municipal, and private entities), and control and oversight. In addition, the organization must focus its resources more effectively on its site managers. This requires the training and management development suggested earlier, coupled with broader grants of authority to the superintendent and relief from unnecessary controls and interference by staff in line operations.

Preliminary Recommendations

3-A **The Park Service should introduce internal market incentives into the provision of "support services" for the park system.**

Professional and support functions in regional and headquarters offices designed to support the operation of the parks should meet market tests. Superintendents should have authority to direct these support resources to areas and individuals with the highest benefit. Specifically, we recommend that budget authority for a sizable share of headquarters

and regional support offices be delegated to the superintendents on an appropriate formula basis. Support offices would then have the opportunity to "sell" their services to superintendents who could then use those services they saw as most valuable to mission accomplishment. Each regional office would retain a core reserve (say, equal to about twenty-five percent of payroll) for service-wide initiatives and as a reserve for emergency use. And, one would want to ensure a transition over a two- to three-year period to bring all participants up to speed and ensure against the premature loss of valuable organizational capability.

The virtues of such an approach, which is widely practiced in business (and increasingly in public institutions), are that it focuses support resources on the mission of the agency, clarifies lines of responsibility and accountability, and facilitates the assessment and evaluation of expensive overhead services. As already noted, about one-third of all NPS personnel work outside the parks.

3-B **There should be a thorough value-added audit of regional and headquarters support functions, as well as those involved in oversight and control.**

There is widespread concern that the Park Service may be top-heavy in both support and managerial functions. Some of the concerns raised by the group might be addressed by a careful quality analysis of the type associated with total quality management programs.

3-C **We have noted that the grade structure of the Park Service seems one or two grades low, particularly in many key field positions. We believe that key superintendencies in the Park Service (Yellowstone, Yosemite, Grand Canyon, etc.) should be filled at the SES level.**

These are the crown jewels of the system and those who manage these complex institutions should receive the status and compensation associated with membership in the senior executive service. Such SES

jobs should be designated career reserve, accessible only to experienced park managers.

3-D **Today, several of the top executive positions in the Park Service are filled by people without park experience. As one commentator observed, it is like having a fleet admiral who has never commanded a ship. We recommend that, henceforth, all SES positions within the Park Service have, as a prerequisite, park managerial experience (or comparable field experience in another agency).**

Such a requirement both enhances the importance of park experience—the essence of what the National Park Service is about—and facilitates cooperation and communication between headquarters and the field as key headquarters executives will be more familiar with issues in the field.

3-E **In many areas, the Park Service engages in frequent rotation of park professionals. Most superintendents have worked in several parks. The Park Service should establish guidelines for career mobility for its managers, coupled with expanded support services to facilitate mobility. As a general guideline, we believe that senior managers should shift assignments every five to six years.**

While there may be occasions that justify exceptions, this should be a guideline, endorsed and administered through the human resources managerial board.

Issue 4. How can the National Park Service enhance its ability to acquire and manage responsibly the large-scale financial resources essential to its mission? How can it stimulate and exploit the evident interests of private institutions in contributing to the goals of the organization?

Background and Findings

The finances of the National Park Service are in something of a muddle. Park superintendents are frustrated by widespread controls imposed by regional and headquarters staff, as well as by a resource allocation process that fails to recognize service priorities, meet adequate service levels, or provide clarity to overseers and the public. On the one hand, there are concerns about an enormous backlog of unfunded maintenance and construction projects. On the other hand, there is deep skepticism about the quality of information supporting such claims. There is an absence of clear service and performance standards and concern about the adequacy of accounting and reporting systems. Management, at all levels of the Park Service, has failed to give this issue the attention it deserves.

As one of the most popular public institutions, the Park Service has the capacity to compete effectively for public dollars in the political arena and to attract private support. We believe there is great potential to elicit private help to meet realistic needs of the parks, while at the same time reducing demands on the federal treasury in ways that are consistent with the values and mission of the Park Service. Strengthening the financial management capacity of the organization is a concomitant requirement to ensure that funds are spent in the most cost-effective manner.

Finally, there has been a flurry of interest and proposals to alter the long-standing Park Service policy on concessions. The purpose of concessions policy over the years has been to assure the availability of needed goods and services to park visitors. The price, character, and scope of services provided is tightly controlled by the Park Service. Concessioners pay a franchise fee (typically around 3% of their gross sales) to the government in exchange for the opportunity to operate in the parks. Generally, concessioners finance, construct, and maintain their facilities, retaining property rights (known as possessory

interest) though not acquiring legal title to the lands. The length of concession agreements varies, but some run for 20 or more years (with reviews of scope, prices, and fees every five years).

Some more recent agreements (such as the innovative TW Services contract in Yellowstone) take a different tack. They are contracts to operate government-owned facilities (the vendor has no property right), and the vendor is given credit for agreed maintenance and renovation expenditures. The contract provides that the combination of credits and vendor payments to the government amounts to 22% of gross sales. This figure, which has been bandied about recklessly by some officials, has been inappropriately compared with the franchise fees of 3% to 3.5% under traditional contracts.

It is the working group's feeling that the government can and should realize somewhat higher returns from concessioners, albeit at the likely cost of somewhat higher prices to park visitors. But before policy decisions are made, there needs to be a much more careful illumination of the complex issues and rights of both the government and its highly regulated concessioners, most of whom have provided quality service to the public over many years.

Preliminary Recommendations

4-A **The Service should develop a set of budget demonstrations for several parks that clarify the relationship between costs, service levels, and performance standards for different levels of park utilization.**

Such a system would communicate to all interested parties—even the park visitor—the state of park finances, what is required to operate parks at various service levels, and some sense of the relationship between dollar input and service. In setting up such a system, it is important that the service levels and standards be well defined, have broad applicability, and be readily understood by NPS constituents.

These model budgets could be subjected to review by third parties, including business and financial experts from outside the park system.

They could be compared with benchmark service levels in private organizations. Such a process would enhance credibility of the budget process for all interested parties. The model budgets would be developed as part of the fiscal year 1993 budget process. Such a process should facilitate comparisons between parks and ensure that the Park Service more clearly meets administrative and congressional objectives.

4-B **Reaffirm current legislative authority that permits 50% of all entrance fees paid at a park to remain in that park.**

Forty percent of such fees are distributed to other parks (based on formula) and 10% go to the director's discretionary account. To ensure that this happens, NPS accounting records need to carefully track these fees and make visible their source and disposition. This does not happen today.

4-C **Strengthen financial management training, particularly for all managerial personnel and for those directly involved in budget administration, development, and concession management.**

For those in administrative and concession management fields, there should be a well-established career path and hierarchy of expectations about the attainment of financial management skills. Training alone will not fix the weaknesses of the Park Service. Priority attention by senior managers to strengthening financial oversight and systems is essential. As reported by the secretary of the interior, the Park Service has failed to meet basic financial management and internal control standards. In an era of increased concern about the management of public assets, the Park Service must give this issue the attention it deserves.

4-D **The Park Service should experiment with a range of partnerships and programs to fund projects in specific parks, especially those that have been postponed because of insufficient appropriations.**

Such partnerships could allow nongovernmental organizations to become official sponsors of the Park Service in exchange for a set amount of

money. All money derived from such partnerships would accrue to the Park Service in a manner similar to the mechanism used by NPS cooperating associations (which sell books in NPS visitor centers). Under such an arrangement, 75% of revenues generated would remain in the park, and 25% would flow to NPS headquarters. Obviously, such partnerships should not pose any apparent or real conflict of interest, and careful restrictions would be drawn on how companies publicize or promote their relationship with the Park Service.

4-E **The Park Service must improve the ways in which it accounts for and represents concession income and contractual relationships.**

Current concession relationships are problematic and should be clarified. In some parks, low cash contributions to the government are offset by in-kind contributions by concessioners. These should be made explicit, accounted for, and reported. Current concession fees, which average around 2.5%, probably should be increased. But there is not yet sufficient information available for informal debate about appropriate rates and terms.

4-F **As an initial demonstration of private support for the parks, we recommend immediate approval of the proposed America the Beautiful pass, which would be marketed by the parks and recreation industry.**

This pass, which would replace the NPS Golden Eagle passport, would be sold for $40, with 10% going to the seller. Firms such as Disney, L.L. Bean, Coleman, and many others have offered to market the pass through their retail outlets and advertising. It is conservatively estimated that such an effort could produce close to $100 million in an initial year, increasing in subsequent years. Such an innovation could provide discretionary resources for the director, in consultation with the Congress, to begin to address some of the Park Service's pressing financial needs.

There are other innovative partnership ideas that should be explored as well. In the end, we believe it is possible that several hundred million dollars annually could be raised privately towards support and operation of the national parks. Before such initiatives are inaugurated, however, it is important that the Park Service agree with Congress on how such incremental revenues would be treated in the budget process. On the one hand, incremental revenues can relieve pressure on other natural resource agencies and lessen the demands made by the National Park Service on the general treasury. On the other hand, the Park Service has real and pressing needs and, if private dollars are seen to replace public dollars on a one-to-one basis, there will be little incentive to make such programs work.

CONCLUSION

The National Park Service has many strengths. The recommendations of the working group are intended to enhance the skills and training of its work force, strengthen its career managerial corps, and help it acquire and manage responsibly the resources needed to continue its proud tradition as one of America's outstanding public institutions.

Draft Report

Working Group on Resource Stewardship

Dr. John Sawhill, Chair
President, The Nature Conservancy

Dr. R. Gerald Wright, Vice Chair
Professor, Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources, University of Idaho
Research Biologist, National Park Service

Robert Barbee
Superintendent, Yellowstone National Park
National Park Service

Brenda Barrett
Director, Bureau of Historic Preservation
Pennsylvania

John Humke
Head, Resource Stewardship
The Nature Conservancy

Dr. Robert Keiter
Professor, College of Law
University of Wyoming

Steve Kesselman
Superintendent, Herbert Hoover National Historic Site
National Park Service

Richard Ring
Superintendent, Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area
National Park Service

Dr. Holly Robinson
Professor, Marist University
NPS Advisory Committee Member

Rick Smith
Associate Regional Director, Southwest Regional Office
National Park Service

Michael O'Connell
Program Officer, World Wildlife Fund

SUMMARY LISTING OF ISSUES AND PRELIMINARY RECOMMENDATIONS

Issue 1. What steps can parks take to more effectively protect their resources from external threats and to positively influence compatible land use and resource protection within their regional ecosystem?

Preliminary Recommendations:

1-A Parks should more effectively and positively exercise the authorities they already possess to deal with concerns and activities that transcend park boundaries. This will require Department of the Interior solicitors and Department of Justice attorneys to be more aggressive and supportive in the use of such authorities.

1-B Congress should adopt a new legislative mandate for the National Park Service to clarify its responsibility and authority to manage park resources in a regional context.

Issue 2. What mechanisms are available to strengthen the ability of parks to identify their resources and to understand how change and disturbance affects those resources?

Preliminary Recommendations:

2-A Substantially increase the number of resource professionals, emphasizing subject matter specialists currently lacking in the agency and the placement of individuals in parks currently lacking sufficient resource management expertise.

2-B Standardize and base fund programs that identify, evaluate, and monitor cultural and natural resources.

Issue 3. How can the National Park Service improve the stature and professionalism of research and resource management programs and promote their integration with park management?

Preliminary Recommendations:

3-A Encourage congressional legislation that establishes a clear research mandate for the National Park Service.

3-B Base resource management decisions on full consideration of the best available scientific research.

3-C Promote closer ties between cultural and natural resource professionals.

3-D Raise the level of professionalism among resource professionals and managers.

Issue 4. How can the National Park Service generate greater public support for its resource stewardship programs?

Preliminary Recommendations:

4-A Greatly expand the local and regional outreach programs of the National Park Service.

4-B Strengthen the constituencies supporting the National Park Service as a leader in resource preservation.

Issue 5. What processes should govern the addition of new areas to the park system?

5-A Base the criteria for the selection of new areas on the resources and themes lacking representation in the national park system.

5-B Provide mechanisms for the professional evaluation of new areas to assure that they meet criteria for national significance, resource integrity, and feasibility.

5-C Work with constituent groups and with state and local agencies to develop suitable strategies for determining how best to protect areas outside the national park system that may not be nationally significant but still have important resources.

OVERVIEW

The efforts of the working group on resource stewardship are only the most recent aspect of a long historical tradition of critiquing the way the national parks manage their resources. Previous efforts have included the prescient *Fauna of the National Parks* studies in the early 1930s, which first identified park resource problems; the National Academy of Sciences' analysis of science and research in 1963, the widely acclaimed Leopold report's review of natural resource management policies of the same year; the National Parks and Conservation Association's thorough analysis of all aspects of the National Park Service, published as *Investing in Park Futures: A Blueprint for Tomorrow*; the National Park Service's own *21st Century Task Force Report*; the Conservation Foundation's report, *National Parks for a New Generation*; and the current National Academy of Sciences study of science and research, which is in progress. Reading these reports impresses one with the insight of past study groups and it brings an awareness that many of the challenges facing the National Park Service are long standing.

This report presents five basic issues considered to be critical to protecting resources in the national parks: (1) the Park Service's ability to protect park resources from external threats and to positively influence compatible land use within regional ecosystems; (2) the parks' abilities to identify and understand their resources; (3) the stature and professionalism of research and resource management and their integration into park management; (4) public support for resource stewardship programs; and (5) the processes governing the addition of new areas to the national park system. Preceding each issue is a brief background discussion highlighting the historical evolution of the concern and describing previous actions that have been undertaken to deal with the issue. Following each issue, several proposed actions are presented. These are draft proposals for the symposium participants to consider. We hope that this format will be the best possible technical background, while still leaving room for fresh ideas.

From the start it was clear that the work would be interdependent with the work of the other three groups. The group worked from the philosophy that the issues identified could be viewed as elements of a larger strategic plan. The group recognized that most successful organizations have a vision of the future, a blueprint leading to where they should be in future years. It is hoped that these elements,

when combined with those of the other working groups, will form the basis of an overall plan providing the vision and the direction needed to guide the National Park Service into the 21st century and to reaffirm its role as the leader in cultural and natural resource preservation.

ISSUES AND PRELIMINARY RECOMMENDATIONS

Issue 1. What steps can parks take to more effectively protect their resources from external threats and to positively influence compatible land use and resource protection within their regional ecosystem?

Background and Findings

For many years boundary lines essentially defined the way public lands were managed. National park managers pursued their mission solely within the borders of their units and paid little attention to what happened outside their boundaries—the borders of which commonly cut across watershed, animal migration, other ecologically based lines, and historical contexts. This arrangement was adequate in a time when most parks were surrounded by undeveloped lands. At that time the pressures of development did not result in the wholesale loss of the historic resources that provided thematic context or an integral setting for cultural sites within the system. Today, however, increased population and expanded resource and energy demands are impacting park resources such as air and water quality, wildlife, and scenic vistas. Shared ecosystems as well as cultural landscapes are being adversely impacted. For the Park Service, the problem is now recognized as one with systemwide dimensions, and it has focused concern on how parks can most effectively deal with park neighbors and their activities.

In responding to this problem, parks can first look to their individual legislative mandates. A few mandates—by recognizing that parks exist in and are influenced by their regional environment—provide much clearer direction than others that are silent on the subject. A number of laws have also been enacted over the last 20 years providing some authority for the National Park Service to involve itself in issues that transcend park boundaries. These include the National Environmental Policy Act, which provides for federal interagency consultation; the Historic Sites Act of 1935, which established a national policy to preserve the nation's historical heritage; the National Historic Preservation Act, which established a requirement for federal agencies to take into account the effects of their undertakings on historic properties; and the National Forest Management Act and the Federal Land Policy and

Management Act, which require the Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management to coordinate their resource management plans with other agencies.

When used effectively and consistently, these laws can provide a level of protection for parks and serve as mechanisms for managers to function in a regional context. However, these acts do not fully protect park resources from external impacts, nor do they provide clear authority for park managers to become involved in certain activities external to the parks.

The first congressional attempt to define the Park Service's responsibility for external land use and resource management decisions occurred in 1978, when Congress passed the Redwood Amendments in response to the upstream logging impacts then threatening Redwood National Park. Section 1a-1 of those amendments provides for the "protection, management, and administration" of the national park system to insure its integrity. Although this provision appears to authorize the Park Service to take reasonable measures to protect park resources from degradation, the Park Service has been reluctant to use this authority, and the courts have not vigorously enforced this provision. A recent congressional attempt to define a specific park's responsibility for external land uses was the Gettysburg boundary legislation, which among other things provides incentives for cooperation among governmental entities and the private sector to protect the battlefield setting.

Further complicating this issue is the fact that most park managers receive little or no training in the laws, strategies, or policies that might be used to address resource issues that transcend park boundaries. As a result, some park managers are reluctant to involve themselves in external affairs, expressing concern or confusion about their authority to do so. Others may feel that they lack the requisite skills to work with external groups and the media, particularly in confrontational situations. These concerns can also hamper a park's ability to cultivate public understanding and support for its own resource preservation and management programs.

With this background in mind, the working group on resource stewardship recommended the following actions.

Preliminary Recommendations

1-A **Parks should more effectively and positively exercise the authorities they already possess to deal with concerns and activities that transcend park boundaries. This will require Department of the Interior solicitors and Department of Justice attorneys to be more aggressive and supportive in the use of such authorities.**

Steps to implement this recommendation:

1. Initiate an intensive training course for managers to explain existing authorities, mechanisms, and strategies for addressing transboundary issues and to help managers view park management in a regional or ecosystem context. Such a course should be a prerequisite for new superintendents and should be a mandatory part of any managerial development program. It should also be an important component in the resource management specialist training program.

2. Make more effective use of the existing scientific data a park may possess; anticipate and conduct additional research on proposed external activities that adversely affect park resources to better document, respond to, and mitigate potential impacts of such activities.

3. Build partnerships with and provide resources and expertise to public and private entities whose activities impact the park so that park involvement in regional land use planning efforts can begin as early as possible.

4. Strive to develop local and outside constituencies and draw upon community public support for parks in order to help parks successfully succeed against specific threatening activities.

1-B **Congress should adopt a new legislative mandate for the National Park Service to clarify its responsibility and authority to manage park resources in a regional context.**

Such a mandate should make clear that the National Park Service, as the steward of the national park system resources, is responsible for maintaining and preserving those resources and processes in an ecosystem and contextual framework. This would enable park managers to integrate NPS management goals with those of surrounding lands and/or nearby sites when ecosystem functions or contextual elements transcend park boundaries. Such a mandate should require consistency and coordinated efforts when dealing with land managers in situations where park ecosystem or contextual functions are impacted by the actions of adjacent landowners or resource managers.

Issue 2. What mechanisms are available to strengthen the ability of parks to identify their resources and to understand how change and disturbance affects those resources?

Background and Findings

Resource stewardship of the parks is based on knowledge of their natural and cultural assets. Some parks have an extensive history of scientific studies and resource evaluations. For example, over 3,000 separate resource studies have been conducted in and around Olympic National Park. This type of documentation is, however, an exception. More often we know little about the actual resources parks contain, their significance, degree of risk, or response to change. The principal reason for this is that most parks lack sufficient staff and/or proper expertise to understand, interpret, and use the information they already have. Based on previous studies, we estimated that this deficiency is true for about 70% of the national park system units.

This section outlines a logical procedure for organizing existing data, identifying necessary additional research, and monitoring those resources that best reflect environmental changes. We recognize, however, that implementing this procedure is not always possible with current staffing levels. The resource issues facing parks are too complex to be handled by resource generalists forced to deal with a multitude of issues and problems. As a result of this problem, parks have a limited ability to

understand and interpret existing information, detect changes resulting from external and internal threats, implement land management plans, monitor trends in resources, recover from environmental catastrophes, and place resources in their proper historical or archeological context.

Once sufficient staffing is in place, a park's ability to use existing and future information is, in large measure, related to its methods of managing that data. Data management embodies the systematic organization and cataloging of information in a form that makes it readily accessible to users. When good data management protocols are lacking, those individuals responsible for interpreting resource information are often unaware of who is conducting or has conducted research, what resources have been studied, and where to find the information.

There are several examples of good data management protocols. Great Smoky Mountains National Park and the three south Florida national parks have established conservation data centers for managing biological information. These centers are a part of, and can exchange information with, the 50-state natural heritage program network developed by the Nature Conservancy. The Pacific Northwest Region is completing a program to catalog all existing resource studies from all of its parks in standardized databases which interface with national library databases. To bring enhanced capabilities for resource management within the reach of all parks, we recommend the following actions:

Preliminary Recommendations

2-A **Substantially increase the number of resource professionals, emphasizing subject matter specialists currently lacking in the agency and the placement of individuals in parks currently lacking sufficient resource management expertise.**

2-B **Standardize and base fund programs that identify, evaluate, and monitor cultural and natural resources.**

Steps to implement this recommendation:

1. Gather and organize existing information.

   Undertake a comprehensive program to catalog all resource information available on a given park and surrounding region. This catalog—typically stored in a computer database—would identify the investigators, describe the nature of the study, and identify where it took place and where the original documents are located. This program would complement the existing cultural sites inventory and could be patterned after the on-going resource database program in the Pacific Northwest Region.

   In addition it will be necessary to organize and fund conservation data centers for each unit or biogeographic region. These centers would collect and organize the results of all appropriate studies and identify information gaps requiring inventory. The center's methods would be compatible with, build upon, and be linked to existing resource databases such as the state natural heritage program where feasible.

2. Synthesize and interpret the available data to identity gaps in resource knowledge. Synthesize the existing information in a report, e.g., a history of scientific and cultural research, which describes the strengths and weaknesses of a park's resource knowledge and provides direction for future data collection and research. Develop comprehensive context studies for archeology and history that provide a broader context for evaluating and interpreting the resources that the parks were established to protect and interpret. These studies will also help place in context those resources that are outside the primary focus of the park but which still may have significance or research value.

3. Fill in gaps in resource knowledge through a comprehensive inventory program of the cultural and natural resources in a park.

To accomplish this it will be necessary to identify and prioritize the existing gaps in the park's resource management plan, and to conduct new studies by the National Park Service and outside sources to fill in the gaps. Inventories should follow standard protocols and focus on site-specific occurrences of significant natural and cultural elements in the parks.

Programs should be established to explore methods of preservation technology that could be applied to materials collections, particularly for those cultural resources where standards are not available. Finally it will be necessary to develop natural resource studies that will place park resources in an ecosystem context and will promote understanding of ecological processes as well as the impact of human activities on park resources.

4. Monitor resource trends and conditions

This will require the identification of measurable parameters or indicators sensitive enough to provide an early warning of change.

Resources that are at risk should be given top monitoring priority.

Issue 3. How can the National Park Service improve the stature and professionalism of research and resource management programs and promote their integration with park management?

Background and Findings

Never in the history of the National Park Service has it been more important for science and scholarship to play an integral role in park management. Maintaining the integrity of park resources requires that resource management decisions be both defensible and prudent. They must be based on the best available knowledge. Unlike most other federal agencies that have science programs, the National Park Service does not have any specific statutory language directing it to engage in science as part of its assigned mission. Instead, the Park Service has determined that it must have

current information about park resources for use in supporting resource management decisions, environmental compliance documents, monitoring the results of resource management actions, and developing interpretive programs. Because of the applied nature of this purpose, the Service has developed a science program that is directly related to its resource management activities and therefore lacks independence and stable funding. This ambiguity is reflected in the history of science in the National Park Service, a history that has been marked by questions concerning its effectiveness and utility to park management and by great fluctuations in support and quality.

The actions listed below speak to the need for the Park Service to achieve a clear mandate to establish a science program—one that has a clear purpose and stable funding. They also recognize that in order for the Service to effectively address resource problems it must base management decisions on sound scientific information.

Today, more than half the units of the national park system are cultural or historically based even though they exist in what may well be significant natural settings. In addition, many of the "natural" parks contain significant cultural and historic resources. Although cultural resources management is a major responsibility of the Park Service, most cultural resource professionals believe that it has not received the same level of support as the natural sciences. Likewise, some cultural resource professionals, particularly historians, feel that they do not have the same opportunities to maintain and enhance their professional credibility as do colleagues in the natural sciences. The working group on resource stewardship concluded that this problem is real, and that in order to have credible programs with stimulated personnel interacting with their peers, the Park Service must work to assure that the professionalism expected of all personnel must be of the highest level possible.

Increasing the stature of NPS professionals will also facilitate more interdisciplinary problem solving. A strong union between cultural and natural resource programs is essential for resource stewardship. The cultural and natural resources of parks confront similar problems. They are finite, fragile, subject to deterioration, and threatened. They also suffer from a lack of basic resource inventories and from a failure to adequately monitor changes in their conditions. Moreover, the distinction between natural and cultural areas is becoming blurred. Sites originally set aside for cultural reasons are becoming important as natural areas and wildlife preserves, as

open space diminishes. These new values influence the way historic landscapes are presented, interpreted, and maintained. Likewise, virtually all natural areas are now recognized as having diversity of cultural values which may fundamentally alter the understanding and management of those sites.

To address this situation, some of the recommendations below list ways to improve communication and expand interdisciplinary study among resource professionals.

Preliminary Recommendations

3-A **Encourage congressional legislation that establishes a clear research mandate for the National Park Service.**

3-B **Base resource management decisions on full consideration of the best available scientific research.**

Steps to implement this recommendation:

1. Provide a training course for park managers on the research process, including design, methodology, peer review, and publication.

2. Provide training and experience for managers in the role of science and recognize and reward managers who effectively use science in the decision-making process.

3. Bring scientific expertise into management decision making as early as possible.

4. Maintain full open communication between scientists and managers during all scientific investigations.

3-C Promote closer ties between cultural and natural resource professionals.

Steps to implement this recommendation:

1. Establish joint meetings and workshops that focus on an interdisciplinary approach to problem solving.

2. Consider new organizational structures that more closely link cultural and natural resource management responsibilities.

3-D Raise the level of professionalism among resource professionals and managers.

Steps to implement this recommendation:

1. Resource professionals should strive to develop closer ties with like professionals in the academic sphere as well as in state and other federal agencies.

2. Resource professional positions in all disciplines should be considered for placement under research grade evaluation. This evaluation should consider assistance to managers and internal communication of findings to nonprofessional field staff as well as research studies and publications.

3. Consider developing alternative forms of evaluation for professional individuals whose disciplines are necessary but do not involve research.

4. Resource professionals should be encouraged, funded, and possibly required to attend major nonlocal professional meetings at least once every two years.

5. Resource professionals should be encouraged to publish their findings in recognized, scholarly peer-reviewed outlets.

6. Expand the system of cooperative park studies units at universities to include cultural resource professionals in appropriate disciplines. Units established at universities already supporting a natural sciences CPSU should improve interactions between both categories of professionals,

7. Expand interdisciplinary resource studies in the parks.

8. Fill open positions with individuals holding appropriate professional qualifications.

Issue 4. How can the National Park Service generate greater public support for its resource stewardship programs?

Background and Findings

The National Park Service has long been acknowledged as the country's leader in resource preservation. The Park Service has in the past used this respect and support generated from its reputation to help it pursue its mission, to gain needed fiscal resources, and to confront problems that impact the cultural and natural resources of parks. The agency also receives substantial outside support for the preservation of natural resources because the interests of many conservation groups largely coincide with those of the Park Service. Over the years groups such as the National Parks and Conservation Association, the Sierra Club, and the Wilderness Society have assisted the Park Service in acquiring new parks, adding buffer zones around parks, and bringing legal action to help curb environmental problems threatening parks. The constituent groups supporting the role of the Park Service in the protection of cultural resources have also played an important role in the success of the agency.

In relying on its image and outside groups to support its mission, the National Park Service has been somewhat reticent to develop its own outreach programs. Such programs could enhance the agency's image by identifying the many positive contributions the Park Service has made in preserving the nation's heritage of cultural and natural resources. Outreach programs could also fulfill an acknowledged need to provide environmental education to the public. The general public is often unaware of the needs of cultural and natural resource management, and even less aware of the complexity of issues facing the parks. Park related environmental

education is lacking nationwide in public education, which will result in a weakening of support for parks. The National Park Service has, with its resources, a tremendous opportunity to reverse that trend.

The recommendations listed below are designed to improve the National Park Service's role as the leader in the preservation of the natural and cultural heritage by ensuring the highest quality protection of park resources through furthering public understanding of those resources and increasing public commitment to their preservation.

Preliminary Recommendations

4-A **Greatly expand the local and regional outreach programs of the National Park Service.**

Steps to implement this recommendation:

1. Target public affairs training as a high priority throughout the Park Service.

2. Develop a pilot program to evaluate the utility of establishing a public affairs function in every unit.

3. Provide and encourage training for all managers in public and media relations.

4. Develop an active environmental education program working directly with schools and children to acquaint them with park resources and concerns. Make park films and archives more widely available for educational purposes.

5. Develop public service announcements that spotlight NPS resource management achievements and problems.

4-B **Strengthen the constituencies supporting the National Park Service as a leader in resource preservation.**

Steps to implement this recommendation:

1. Make park facilities and archives more widely available for research and study.

2. Develop partnerships at all levels, national, state, and local, with cultural and natural resource preservation organizations, academic institutions, and special interest groups.

3. Capitalize on the public relations opportunities offered by external program activities, such as the national historic landmarks and the national natural landmarks, and expand technical assistance programs to natural and recreation areas.

4. Cosponsor activities and events on all levels with natural and cultural resource preservation groups.

Issue 5. What processes should govern the addition of new areas to the park system?

Background and Findings

The original 36 parks united by the 1916 National Park Service organic act represented the great ceremonial landscapes, the wonders of a still growing nation. The National Park Service entered into the field of historic preservation in a major way in 1933 when the military parks administered by the War Department were transferred to the agency. With the passage of the 1935 act creating the national historic landmark program, the agency became a leader in the historic preservation program, and for the first time, undertook a systematic look at history—its identification, evaluation, and preservation.

With the establishment of Lake Mead National Recreation Area in 1936 and Cape Hatteras National Seashore in 1937, the role of the Park Service expanded to include

the administration of areas designated primarily for recreation. The number of new parks grew steadily following World War II. This was also the era that launched the partnership with the states with the new recreation open space and historic preservation program initiated by the Land and Water Conservation Fund Act of 1965 and the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966. The latter act established the standards for a national historic preservation program and authorized the National Register of Historic Places. The role of the Park Service in urban recreation was expanded with the creation of Golden Gate and Gateway national recreation areas in 1972. The first national preserves were created at Big Thicket and Big Cypress in 1974, expanding the Park Service's responsibility to the management of ecological reserves. Finally, the new Alaskan parks added a different dimension in terms of wilderness management and human ecology with their provisions for subsistence and sport harvests.

In the past, areas added to the national park system have contained accepted and understood cultural and natural values. Proposals that lacked national significance or did not meet generally accepted definitions were resisted. Proposals were typically handled by the Office of New Area Studies and evaluations were guided by theme studies and system plans. This office was gradually dismantled in the 1980s, which diminished the Park Service's ability to evaluate proposals and to undertake theme studies.

Today interest in the establishment of new park system areas is high. Many of the new park proposals have posed difficulties to the Park Service because they are often far different in character from traditional areas as they may lack national significance.

Their establishment also tends to draw money and personnel away from already established sites. The general conclusion of the working group on resource stewardship is that the Park Service has lost some control over the process of establishing new parks. Some of the actions below address the need to provide more balance to that process. The working group also feels the Park Service can do more to provide technical assistance to state and local agencies in their efforts to preserve significant resources.

Preliminary Recommendations

5-A **Base the criteria for the selection of new areas on the resources and themes lacking representation in the national park system.**

Steps to implement this recommendation:

1. Revise the *National Park System Plan* using all previous studies as a starting point.

5-B **Provide mechanisms for the professional evaluation of new areas to assure that they meet criteria for national significance, resource integrity, and feasibility.**

Steps to implement this recommendation:

1. Reinstate a new area studies program within the Park Service.

2. Support ongoing studies such as the Fish and Wildlife Service's gap analysis program, which is designed to develop methods to allow a better assessment and evaluation of the resources which require management protection.

3. Facilitate the ability of regional offices to evaluate new cultural areas by elevating the cultural resource programs in all regional offices to full dimension, with the capability to manage both internal and external programs.

5-C **Work with constituent groups and with state and local agencies to develop suitable strategies for determining how best to protect areas outside the national park system that may not be nationally significant but still have important resources.**

Steps to implement this recommendation:

1. Establish a mechanism whereby constituent support groups are encouraged to aggressively lobby the Congress for adequate funding for state appropriations from the Land and Water Conservation Fund and the Historic Preservation Fund.

Draft Report

Working Group on Park Use and Enjoyment

Charles R. Jordan, Chair
Superintendent of Parks and Recreation, City of Portland
Portland, Oregon

Gary E. Machlis, Vice-Chair
Professor of Forest Resources and Sociology
University of Idaho

Derrick A. Crandall
President, American Recreation Coalition

Diane H. Dayson
Superintendent, Morristown National Historical Park
National Park Service

John P. Debo, Jr.
Superintendent, Cuyahoga Valley National Recreation Area
National Park Service

Robert C. Herbst
President, Lake Superior Center

Laura A. Loomis
Deputy Director, Conservation Programs
National Parks and Conservation Association

John Reynolds, FASLA
Assistant Director, Design and Construction
National Park Service

SUMMARY LISTING OF ISSUES AND PRELIMINARY RECOMMENDATIONS

Issue 1. What should be the role of the National Park Service in American society?

Preliminary Recommendations:

1-A We recommend that the National Park Service consider the preservation and interpretation of cultural diversity to be significant criteria in the acquisition of new historic and cultural sites and the management of existing sites.

1-B We recommend that the National Park Service strengthen and expand its program of technical assistance to meet visitor needs for natural. scenic, recreational, cultural, and historical experiences outside the boundaries of the national park system.

1-C We recommend the National Park Service embrace the concept of "partnership parks."

Issue 2. How will the national park system be used and enjoyed?

Preliminary Recommendations:

2-A We recommend the National Park Service broadly communicate the breadth and value of the national park system.

2-B We recommend that the National Park Service embark on an innovative program of facility maintenance, design, and retrofit to prepare the "frontcountry" of each park for future visitor needs.

2-C We recommend that the National Park Service minimize development of visitor facilities within park boundaries and permit such development only when required to meet visitor needs.

2-D We recommend that the National Park Service develop a technical assistance program aimed specifically at gateway communities and regions linked to national park system areas.

Issue 3. How should the National Park Service interpret the national park system and educate the public, and for what purpose?

3-A We recommend that the National Park Service commit its resources to offering all visitors minimum and basic

interpretation including a general orientation to the site and insight into its unique features and significance.

3-B We recommend that the National Park Service embark on an innovative program of educational outreach whereby Americans who do not use the national park system as visitors, and the next generation of visitors, are served.

3-C We recommend that the National Park Service encourage interpreters to examine the issue of how to interpret controversial events and sites.

Issue 4. How will park use and enjoyment impact natural and cultural resources, and what should be done about these impacts?

4-A We recommend that the National Park Service undertake a systemwide analysis of visitor use impacts upon park resources, including a careful documentation of crowding conditions in the parks.

4-B We recommend that the National Park Service undertake a program of trials, where different techniques for minimizing visitor impacts are applied and compared.

4-C We recommend that the National Park Service and its concessioners develop an educational program that encourages visitors to minimize resource demands.

Issue 5. How can the National Park Service make wise decisions regarding park use and enjoyment in the future?

5-A We recommend that the National Park Service establish a task force to improve the public involvement process within the agency.

5-B We recommend that the National Park Service develop an expanded social science program.

5-C We recommend that the National Park Service act to increase the resources it has available to serve park users.

OVERVIEW

This report describes the deliberations of the working group on park use and enjoyment. We approached the task aware that the symposium is part of a historical tradition of self-examination in American conservation and government. Secretary of the Interior Walter L. Fisher convened the first national parks conference at Yellowstone in 1911; other conferences and studies have followed. Therefore, we began by collecting the findings and recommendations of earlier efforts (see box). To read these reports is to gain respect for the insight of past study groups and to realize that many of the challenges facing the National Park Service seem chronic.

Examples of Previous Reports

A Study of the Problem of Recreation in the United States (1941), prepared by the Department of the Interior

The landmark, multivolume *Report of the Outdoor Recreation Resources Review Commission* (1963)

Man and Nature in the National Parks (1967), prepared by ecologist Fraser Darling and geographer Noel Eichorn

The Conservation Foundation's *National Parks for a New Generation* (1985)

Report of the President's Commission on Americans Outdoors (1987)

The National Parks and Conservation Association's *Investing in Park Futures: A Blueprint for Tomorrow* (1988)

The National Park Service's *21st Century Task Force Report* (1990)

We also were aware of the need not to be fully in the grip of the past. Historian and student of the national park movement Robin Winks has applauded the 75th anniversary of the National Park Service, but reminds us to look forward and with a wide view:

> A time of celebration tends to be long on retrospection and short on prospection . . . though one must never forget the intensity of

> environmental challenges faced by the Park Service, one must see those problems within a larger frame.

Therefore, we attempted to gather and examine the trend analyses, alternative features, scientific predictions, estimates, and provocative speculations that relate to park use and enjoyment. Because this includes everything from demographic trends in the American population to advances in communication technology and changing social values, we could only be representative. And we were determined to make our predictions with humility in our ability to forecast the future, and not to avoid unpleasantness and uncertainty if we found it.

Ours is a nation and world that is rapidly changing, and any public service agency that is not adapting will eventually create its own crises. Hence, the National Park Service must *act.* A sense of urgency underlies our efforts. We have tried to be critical yet constructive, optimistic yet realistic. We hope our report helps to provoke spirited debate at the symposium and stimulates the participants to improve upon our efforts.

A Brief History of Visitors to the National Park System

During the mid-1800s, few people visited the areas that would later become national parks. (Throughout this report, the words "sites" and "parks" are used interchangeably to reflect the full range of management units in the National Park System—battlefields, national monuments, recreation areas, national parks, wilderness areas, historic sites, seashores, and so forth.) This changed with the coming of the railroads, the construction of hotels and the social acceptance of national parks as vacation destinations. Lured to the West by advertisements of the railroads, these tourists were mostly the eastern elite and foreign aristocracy. Once in the park, visitors would stay for several weeks, some for a month or the entire summer. Visitors did little hiking or camping. An alternative to hotel accommodations appeared when a camping service was established at Yellowstone in 1893. Similar camping businesses soon appeared in other national parks.

The years 1908–1915 were largely characterized by the coming of the automobile. For years, automobiles were not allowed inside the parks. Public

pressure mounted as the automobile became more reliable and affordable. Individual auto owners joined the politically powerful auto clubs and in 1913, under enormous pressure, the secretary of the interior allowed autos to enter the Yosemite Valley. Motor cars began transporting tourists to numerous other national parks; auto caravans became annual events.

The first NPS director, Stephen Mather, and his assistant, Horace Albright, realized that increased public use was the best defense of park resources. They worked to expand the parks' constituency by promoting park tourism. By the time the National Park Service was established in 1916, most national parks had designated campgrounds. The middle class was visiting the national parks and camping rather than staying in the grand hotels. Camping (or "sagebrushing" as it was called) encouraged the development of more campgrounds, fishing docks, trails and other outdoor recreation facilities. Companies such as Coleman, which had been manufacturing portable stoves for the army, entered the new market; improved tents, cookware, clothing, and other specialized products were to become desired components of modern camping.

With the addition of national parks like Acadia (1919), Shenandoah (1926) and Great Smoky Mountains (1926), the national park system expanded in the heavily populated East. By 1941, Great Smoky Mountains and Shenandoah were the most visited parks in the system, each receiving approximately twice as many visits as Yosemite or Yellowstone. The shift of War Department historical sites (such as Gettysburg) and the public parks in Washington, D.C., to the National Park Service in 1931 created a new population of visitors and new types of use for the national park system.

Park use and enjoyment was, of course, not limited to the national park system. Municipal parks such as Central Park in New York City were established in the 1850s, and beginning in 1884 state parks, state forest reserves, and historical parks were developed. Throughout the 1920s the U.S. Forest Service expanded its outdoor recreation mission.

Development of visitor facilities in the national parks received a boost when the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) was established in 1933 as part of the New Deal. By 1935, 188 CCC camps were operating in the national parks; hundreds

of buildings, trails, ranger cabins, and campgrounds were completed and thousands of young men introduced to park areas. After economic recovery, visitors returned to the parks in increasing numbers. This trend continued until World War II, when visitation dropped to 1920 levels. Several national parks were used for military training, introducing these sites to young men who would return (with families) as tourists.

After the war, visitors again flocked to the national parks in increasing numbers, fueled by the postwar mobility and affluence of American society. Cars and roads were bigger and faster; visitors drove from park to park and spent less time in each. The sharply increased travel meant traffic jams, crowded facilities, and full campgrounds and hotels. In 1956 the National Park Service began a revitalization plan—Mission 66. For most visitors this meant newer and speedier highways, better developed campgrounds, expanded and repaired visitor facilities. For others, it meant that the pristine character of many parks was giving way to development.

In the 1960s the mission of the National Park Service began to be expanded to include recreation areas and urban areas not traditionally treated as national parks. Major urban park initiatives were undertaken in New York, San Francisco, Cleveland, and Los Angeles. As a result, visitors to the system became more diverse. The Wilderness Act of 1964 led to the official designation of numerous wilderness areas within units of the national park system, adding additional requirements to management of the selected lands. Turmoil in the nation was reflected in the parks, culminating in a July 4th weekend riot in Yosemite Valley in 1970.

From 1973 to 1979 systemwide visitation fluctuated with the price and availability of gasoline. Interstate travel diminished, though use of the system rose slightly. Parks near urban centers received most of this increase. Backcountry camping and wilderness use increased to all-time high levels, with permit systems regulating visitation. International visitors to NPS sites dramatically increased as the United States became a foreign tourist destination. New kinds of national park sites were added (such as Lowell), and the Alaskan additions began to attract visitors.

The General Outdoor Recreation Situation in the United States

The national park system cannot be understood or managed in isolation; the National Park Service is one of several agencies responsible for outdoor recreation. Participation in outdoor recreation activities on public lands has increased virtually every year since World War II. Local parks and recreation areas are used most often, and the growth in municipal recreation land has closely paralleled the population growth in cities. Visitation to state park systems has grown steadily, but total acreage has decreased slightly; emphasis is toward intensive management of existing acreage and facilities and away from expansion. An unprecedented number of tourists are visiting federal recreation lands, including national parks, wilderness areas, forests, and wildlife refuges. Day use of these areas has grown more than overnight stays. In response to the increasing number of visitors, multiple use federal agencies, such as the U.S. Forest Service and the Bureau of Land Management, have initiated policies which place a greater emphasis on recreation.

Recreational opportunities and demand are greatly influenced by changing landscape patterns. Suburbanization is converting rural farmland to housing developments; rural communities near wilderness areas are experiencing population increases. Coastal areas (along the oceans, Great Lakes, and other shorelines) continue to lose open space and public access; such landscape changes increase pressure on existing recreation sites.

Recreational activities have diversified with the development of new lifestyles and technologies. Commitment to fitness has encouraged a move toward more physically demanding activities, and participation in high-risk adventure (such as hang gliding, rock climbing, and white water sports) soared with the maturation of the baby-boom generation. Technological changes in recreation equipment have changed recreation participation by making activities more comfortable and accessible. Outerwear and other clothing have been revolutionized; advances in alloys and composites have led to lighter weight, greater strength, and improved performance in backpacks, skis, bicycles, sunglasses, and other equipment. In some cases (the snowmobile, for example) new recreation activities have been spawned by equipment development. Outdoor recreation is an important industry: American consumers spent $100 billion on outdoor recreation in 1984.

Current Use and Enjoyment

Our knowledge of contemporary national park system use and enjoyment is fragmented, but some useful statistics exist. From 1980 to 1989 the total number of visits grew 35% and is now over 258 million annually. National parks account for less than one-quarter of total visits to the system (see table). The Southeast and Western regions of the national park system host 45% of all visits. A large proportion of visits are to areas added to the system after 1971; a shift in visits from the summer (still the busiest time for the parks) to other seasons is occurring, though not uniformly across the system.

Visits to Selected Types of National Park System Areas, 1990

Type of Area	Recreation Visits (in millions)	% of Total
National Parks	58	22
National Recreation Areas	47	18
National Parkways	29	11
National Monuments	24	9
National Historical Parks	22	8
National Seashores	20	8
National Historic Sites	15	6
National Memorials	13	6
Other Types of Areas	31	12

A recent report of the National Park Service, entitled *A Diversity of Visitors: A Report on Visitors to the National Park System*, provides a descriptive profile of current park use, based on a series of surveys conducted in 1985-89 in over 20 parks. The findings suggest that use varies significantly from park to park; a brief description follows.

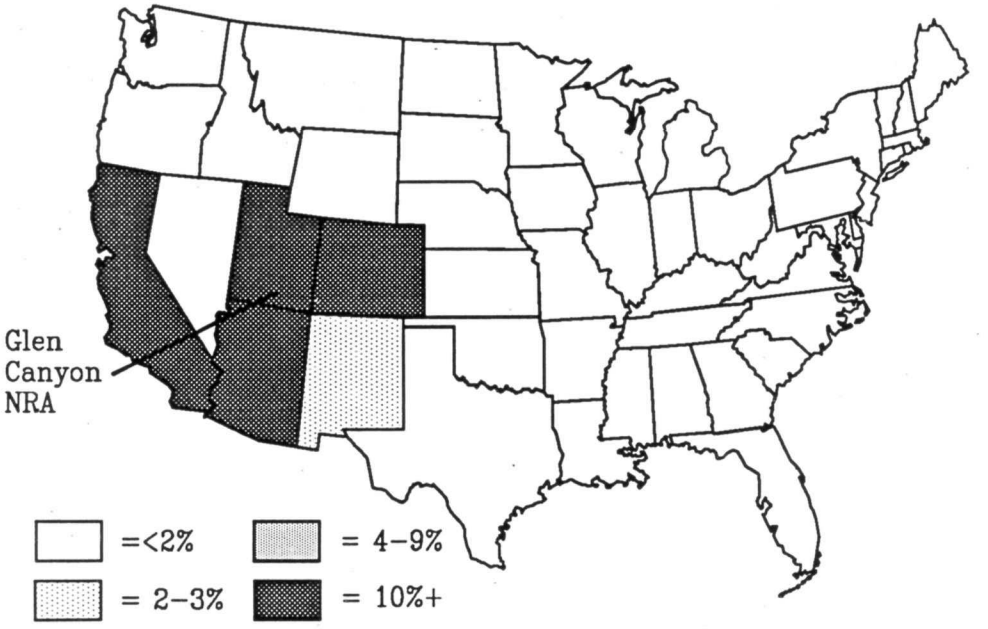
People of all ages visit the national parks. Each park attracts a distinct mix of age groups. Cost, access, available facilities, and purpose of visit influence these patterns. National park visitors represent the global community, and at a few parks at certain times, international visitors outnumber U.S. visitors. The growing number of international visitors is due partly to the maturing of the tourism industry worldwide and the increased prosperity of select nations. It is also due to the inherent attractiveness of the national parks to international

tourists wanting to "see America." United States citizens travel from all over the country to visit national parks, and each park has a geographically distinct mix of visitors. Some parks, such as Glen Canyon, draw visitors from a limited region. Others, such as Gettysburg, are visited by people from a broader regional area. Still others, like Grand Teton, attract visitors from all over the country (see maps). Families are the most common group and reflect the diversity of family life in the United States: married couples, single parents and children, large extended families and other social arrangements. There are exceptions: Many of the urban recreation areas like Gateway and suburban sites like Valley Forge attract individual visitors, and some sites attract large numbers of tour groups. Still others, like Natchez Trace, are largely used by commuters.

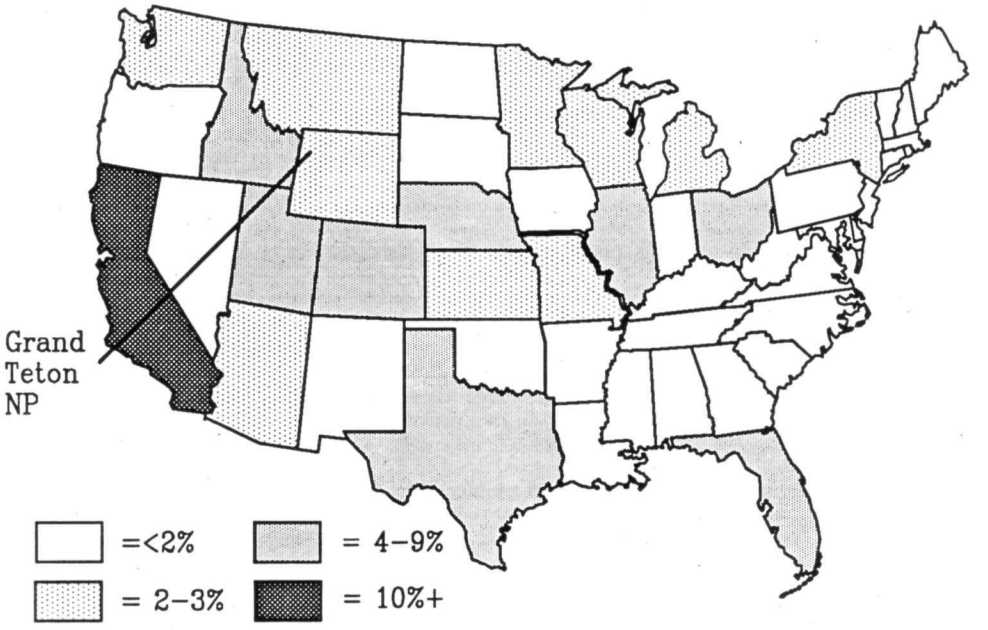
Visitors enjoy many activities in the parks. Some activities, such as sightseeing, are almost universal. Other activities, like camping in the back country of Mt. Rainier or taking historical tours at Harpers Ferry, involve only a relatively small portion of park visitors. Participation in specific activities varies from park to park, depending upon visitor interests and the availability of services. Their opinions about the importance of services are varied. At most parks, the park map and brochure, good directional signs and clean restrooms are rated most important. When asked to evaluate the quality of services, from lodging to interpretive programs to emergency medical care to food service, most visitors rate them above average, though some visitors are extremely disappointed and critical.

Such statistics are informative, and they warn against a standardized, centralized, and inflexible approach to managing visitors. They do not describe the reasons why people visit the parks. A 1991 national survey of adults conducted for Citibank reported several "major reasons": to see nature (86%), to vacation (82%), to see someplace new (76%), to see history (69%). Yet the reasons people visit the national parks may be more cultural, sentimental, and emotional than numbers suggest; one elderly visitor wrote on her questionnaire:

> I have traveled all of the lower 48 states, and shirley (sic), Yellowstone is the American Garden of Eden.



Lakeshore Visitors by State, Glen Canyon NRA, 1988
Source: Visitor Services Project Report 17, 1988



Visitation by State, Grand Teton NP, 1987
Source: Visitor Services Project Report 11, 1987

The stereotype of uncaring park visitors rushing madly to collect unauthentic souvenirs, demanding elaborate services and barely contemplating (and not comprehending) the unique resources around them is, like all stereotypes,

simple and wrong. There is a diversity of visitors using the national park system, and no one description will do them justice.

Future Trends

To predict the future is to have confidence in the past: We hope historical knowledge of trends and events will somehow empower us to predict what may happen next. There have been many predictions about the future of American society and its impact upon the use and enjoyment of the national park system. For example, the 1941 report, *A Study of the Park and Recreation Problem of the United States*, made several accurate predictions: The United States population would dramatically age; leisure time would increase; the rural population would decline; and demand for outdoor recreation would increase. It also made wildly inaccurate predictions: The population of the United States would peak at 158 million in 1980 (it was over 200 million and growing); the industrial East would continue to grow and the South would not (the reverse was true); and cultural differences would disappear as a national culture emerged.

Hence, predictions about the future of the national park system and how it will be used must be treated cautiously. It is unlikely that our predictions will be fully accurate. In addition, too few efforts at predicting the American future look at its grimmer side: the rise in inequality between the rich and poor, the increasing poverty overtaking whole segments of the population, the enfeebling effects of drug addiction, the decline of the public school system, and environmental degradation and its impact on health, among others. Will not these trends also affect the leisure and recreation habits of the citizenry?

Several reports have provided predictions relevant to park use and enjoyment. The 1977 *Third Nationwide Outdoor Recreation Plan* argued that two key trends will influence park use: the geographical shift of people to the South and West and the aging of the population. An analysis of the outdoor recreation needs of the American public was completed in 1986 by the President's Commission on Americans Outdoors. For 18 months the 14-member commission of outdoor policy and recreation experts canvassed the American public. The *Report of the President's Commission on Americans Outdoors* offered specific

predictions, essentially repeated in the National Parks and Conservation Association's *Investing in Park Futures* (see table). The NPS 21st Century Task Force repeats several of these predictions about park use and enjoyment, such as more year-round use, increased demand for "nontraditional" activities, and the need of visitors for more sophisticated information to aid in visit planning.

Predictions by the President's Commission on Americans Outdoors

The baby-boom generation is approaching middle age and is likely to increase its park-going due to higher discretionary income.

Senior citizens will increase from 12% of the population currently to between 18-24% of the population by 2030. Their demand for outdoor recreation is uncertain.

By 2000, 60% of the population will live in the South or West; demand for recreation areas in the South may exceed supply.

Leisure time is decreasing due to dual-career families and the entry of women into the work force. Park visits are likely to be more planned and of shorter duration.

Such predictions about future park use and enjoyment rely on broad insight about American society. A report from *American Demographics* provides a well-rounded and realistic set of predictions for the 21st century; they helped guide our discussions and are summarized below.

1. *Everyone will belong to a minority group.* Whites will no longer be a majority group in several states (for example, California); Asian and Hispanic populations will dramatically increase, with Hispanics outnumbering African-Americans by 2010. Politics will he altered; by 2000 most mayors in the nation's big cities will be people of color; racial crossover voting will be common.

2. *The family will be redefined.* By 2000, over half the children in the United States will spend part of their lives in a single-parent household. Interracial marriage and adoption will increase. Nontraditional family arrangements—unmarried heterosexual couples, homosexual couples, and friends who live together—will gain legal recognition and social acceptance as families.

3. *Educational inequalities will increase.* Employment will require education beyond high school; the less educated will be driven further into a cycle of poverty. The percentage of urbanites on welfare will continue to increase; semiskilled workers will be relatively scarce. For others, there will be an education revolution: Children will learn by computer; the flow of electronic information will increase and diversify; adult education will grow.

4. *Full-time homemakers will approach extinction.* By 2000, more than 80% of adult women will be in the labor force, with most of the rest only temporarily unemployed. Women will make up close to half of the labor force, with employers dependent upon their skills. They will also remain responsible as the family's principal caretaker, and family stress is likely to rise.

5. *The retirement population will dramatically increase.* By 2009, the baby-boom generation will begin to retire, with consequences: 3.5 million Americans will retire that year, 63% more than in 1990. Half of Americans will be age 40 or older by 2015.

6. *Big cities face big challenges.* Population and jobs will continue to move from the urban centers, with corporate headquarters scattering. Southern and western cities will face growth crises, eastern and midwestern cities will face decline, and in all cities, the difficulty of governance and providing necessary services will increase.

What do these predictions mean for the National Park Service? First and foremost, they imply that the next 25 years of park use and enjoyment will see dramatic change. The aging and redistribution of the population suggest that significant shifts in visitation are likely: from eastern to western and southern parks, from summer to other seasons, from backcountry to frontcountry areas. The trends in work and education imply that many visitors will have less time and more demand for information and unique experiences. Economic trends suggest that park-related tourism will grow as an important local industry and that parks as tools of economic development will have strong political support.

Changes in American values imply an expanded role for parks in the life of the nation.

With these predictions, and with confidence that some will be borne out and others will not, we turn to a discussion of the major issues facing park use and enjoyment in the 21st century. The issues and recommendations are not listed in any order of priority, nor are they all necessarily of equal importance.

ISSUES AND PRELIMINARY RECOMMENDATIONS

Issue 1. What should be the role of the National Park Service in American society?

Background and Findings

This issue is one of mission and ideals, as the purpose and vision of the agency significantly influence how the parks will be used and enjoyed. Hence, it was a primary concern to our working group. Several critical questions emerge: What is a national park (historic site, recreation area, battlefield) *for*? What is the future role(s) of the national park system in American culture and in the world? Is the current mission of the National Park Service relevant to 21st century America?

Historically, the rationale for national parks has included scenic nationalism (our mountains are better than Europe's), efficiency (wholesome recreation is necessary for worker productivity), economic benefit (the See America First! campaign of 1910); refreshment of the populace (Muir's "tired, nerve-shaken, over-civilized people" in need of wilderness), and public training (the environmental education programs of the early 1970s). Specific arguments have been made for natural areas (open space for urban populations, saving endangered species, wilderness, preserving ecosystems, and now conserving biodiversity) and for historic areas (preserving of native cultures, paying homage to the deserving, teaching military strategy, and economic revitalization through tourism). It is doubtful that additional rationales would add much that is significant.

The organic act establishing the National Park Service has likewise been discussed in detail; often the strictures to "provide for the enjoyment" and "preserve unimpaired" have been treated as contradictory policy directives. Debates have centered around which goal is primary, with each going in and out of fashion according to perceived political winds. The possibility that congressional intent (or inadvertent consequence) was to prevent purist preservationists or overzealous developers from dominating the agency, and to

create a demanding balance of ideologies, is less explored but plausible. Lack of consensus may be inevitable and permanent.

Given the long litany of discussion, what can we add? We start from the point of view that the national park system is a major and unique contribution to the national culture and the heritage of mankind. We are a nation of many peoples and many points of view, with a democratic tradition and demographic trends that ensure cultural pluralism. We all take pride in our individual heritages.

But we also have, in less than 250 years, created a unique and enduring national culture. The parks, historic sites and recreation areas that make up the national park system are an integral part of this culture and our national identity. The Statue of Liberty National Monument and Martin Luther King, Jr., National Historic Site are crucial to our image of ourselves, as are Yellowstone, Everglades, Yosemite, and Canyon de Chelly. It may be that the essential purpose of the national parks is to help bind us together as Americans, to form a common heritage, both natural and cultural. To the extent that the national park system reflects our unique national history (both environmental and social), it represents an important tool for other peoples of the world to understand us.

Hence, park use has meaning and purpose higher and apart from purely recreational, entertainment, or economic values. It is partly an act of nation-building. This should not be confused with superficial patriotism or pridefulness; it is more meaningful and long term. The national park system has evolved into a superb inventory of what Americans value: the special landscapes and wildlife we clamor to see, the historical scenes and events that formed the national character (and characters), and the diversity of peoples and cultures that shape our contemporary affairs. For example, over 40 sites in the system preserve and interpret native American cultures. Park use and enjoyment continually reaffirm the importance and vitality of these resources.

At the same time, the national parks are "pleasuring-grounds" (albeit of a special kind); and whether it is a walk along the South Rim of the Grand Canyon or a meal at a concession or a tour of Thomas Edison's New Jersey home, public enjoyment is a traditional, legitimate, and important responsibility of the National Park Service. Few governmental agencies are charged with

contributing to the nation's *fun*; it is an important task. To provide for pleasure and enjoyment does not imply that unchecked hedonism should guide visitors or the agency: To be a "pleasuring-ground" does not require that all pleasures be provided. The recreational activities afforded by the national park system must be carefully considered. Because each unit of the system has its own legal rationale and visitor use pattern, we caution against a single, general mission statement. Instead, we adhere to Darling and Eichorn's advice in *Man and Nature in the National Parks*; the question must be reframed and asked as "What is *this* national park for?"

If each unit is a unique contribution to the system, then the system represents a unique collection of national heritage, a benchmark of who we are as a people. And since cultural diversity is our national experience (*E Pluribus Unum*: out of many, one), the national park system must be a collection of culturally diverse resources. The criterion for inclusion must be national significance, but of a special kind: *the significance should relate to the building of a nation out of so many different peoples and environments*. Yellowstone has this significance; so do Morristown and Chamizal and Mesa Verde and Haleakala. Our history is still unfolding; new contributions to the national experience are emerging. Our landscape is changing rapidly; once-common scenes and resources will inevitably become worthy of preservation. Hence, the system must continue to grow (at what pace is debatable) or eventually lose its relevance as a record of our people and environment.

If the purpose of the system is to preserve the national heritage, does it follow that the National Park Service should restrict itself to the system's management? We suggest not, for several reasons. First, the interdependence of recreation resources makes such isolation impossible. Use and enjoyment of the national parks is intertwined with local, county, state, and other federal resources, and with local communities, regional landscapes, and private recreation facilities. Regardless of rhetoric, parks are not islands (they never were, ecologically or socioeconomically), and use of the National Park System will be heavily influenced by management practices of other agencies and organizations. Second, the NPS has leadership responsibilities that transcend the land base of the agency, under the Land and Water Conservation Fund Act, the National Trail System Act, other broad federal laws and dozens of specific acts (such as the Michigan-Illinois Canal Heritage Corridor Act).

Third, the NPS has historically been looked to for counsel and assistance by many entities that provide for park use and enjoyment. The abolition of the Bureau of Outdoor Recreation (after its evolution into the Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service) transferred significant tasks to the National Park Service, where this function has been largely deemphasized. Ironically, this is coincident with Congress and other interest groups demanding greater assistance efforts by the agency. There is disagreement (including within our working group) as to whether such functions should be reemphasized in the National Park Service or given a new institutional framework outside the agency. There is strong agreement that such functions are critical to the future of outdoor recreation in America.

Finally, viable alternatives to direct ownership and management of land by the National Park Service have historically been attempted (an example is the 1930s national recreation demonstration areas) and in the 1980s have emerged as important strategies for providing needed resources for park use and enjoyment. There are numerous examples of "affiliated" NPS areas (for example, national heritage corridors). Most include substantial private ownership of resources, land use regulatory mechanisms, incentives and economic revitalization as key components. The NPS involvement in these "partnership parks" involves varying degrees of technical assistance, grant programs, operational staffing, land acquisition, and capital development funding. They represent important alternatives to traditional "own and manage" approaches. Future expansion of the national park system will, by necessity, often involve the creation of units that are partnership parks.

Preliminary Recommendations

1-A **We recommend that the National Park Service consider the preservation and interpretation of cultural diversity to be significant criteria in the acquisition of new historic and cultural sites and the management of existing sites.**

Steps to implement this recommendation:

1. The National Park Service should continue to revise its list of "cultural themes" to reflect more accurately the breadth of American culture, with advice from the public and professionals outside the agency.

2. Individual units of the system should be encouraged to widely publicize their unique purpose to employees (through additional training), local populations (through local media and schools) and visitors (through interpretive programs).

1-B **We recommend that the National Park Service strengthen and expand its program of technical assistance to meet visitor needs for natural, scenic, recreational, cultural, and historical experiences outside the boundaries of the national park system.**

Steps to implement this recommendation:

1. The National Park Service should use its existing authority and resources to reorganize its technical assistance programs into a more coherent, efficient and influential enterprise. It should include technical assistance, partnership brokering, consulting, and transitional period management.

2. Emphasis should be on creating a highly visible and efficient program that is accessible to local governments and citizens, treats regional land management as a partnership, is state-of-the-art in both concepts and technologies, and is proactive rather than reactive.

1-C **We recommend that the National Park Service embrace the concept of "partnership parks."**

Steps to implement this recommendation:

1. The purpose of these areas should be to preserve, protect and develop the full potential of areas of national significance through cooperative involvement of public and private sectors.

2. The National Park Service should develop an organizational strategy to provide input to Congress on evaluating proposals for establishing such areas and recognize that partnership parks represent an important component of the future national park system.

Issue 2. How will the national park system be used and enjoyed?

Background and Findings

Park use is not static—and as it changes, so too must the Park Service, concessioners, gateway communities and visitors themselves. Several critical questions must be addressed: Who will use the national parks and why? Who will not use the parks and why not? How should the Park Service provide opportunities for unique park experiences? Which visitor activities are appropriate and which are not? How should the Park Service define needed visitor services, and how can these services best be provided?

While visitors will likely have less time for leisure, and visits will continue the 50-year trend of becoming shorter and shorter, many NPS employees and other park professionals decry the change and argue that national parks must be experienced at a pace appropriate to the 1880s. Such arguments are nostalgic and unproductive: The diversity of visitors will require the National Park Service to provide opportunities to both the hurried and the leisurely visitor.

Several challenges confront the agency. Park and recreation design in general is problematic, and results vary; it is one of the few design fields today where the

clients (who are actually visitors, not park managers) are seldom directly involved in the design process. Special populations (senior citizens, international visitors, the disabled) are not consistently served.

Of equal concern is the fact that the ownership of the national park system extends to those citizens who will not or cannot use the national parks. A sizable portion of Americans have never visited a national park (by the Citibank-sponsored study's estimate, 32%); even fewer do so on a regular basis. Some citizens do not visit because national park sites have little meaning or interest to them; in a way this is a failure of the National Park Service and related organizations to communicate the breadth and value of the national park system. Some do not visit because they are unaware of what resources they co-own as citizens; again this is partly a failure of communication.

A sizable portion (how large is difficult to estimate) cannot visit the parks. The prerequisites for visiting most NPS areas include private transportation, free time, discretionary income and good health. Other than a few urban recreation areas (Gateway comes to mind) and numerous cultural sites, many national parks are at present out-of-bounds for Americans in or near poverty. The solution—a significant improvement of the economic and social health of the nation's poor and near-poor—is beyond the scope of the National Park Service.

The challenge is to articulate what responsibility the agency has to enfranchise nonvisitors, to find ways that the national parks can become meaningful to those who do not enter them. Not all park use and enjoyment requires a visit. As Costa Dillon, an NPS interpreter, recently wrote:

> If you decide to decorate your apartment in Iowa with an Eliot Porter photograph of Great Sand Dunes National Monument, are you not enjoying the park?

Park use and enjoyment must be broadly defined, and the role of the national park system in our national culture must be expanded.

For those citizens who do come for a visit, what will and should they find? Perhaps no term has been more loosely used in park management than "the park experience." Scientific evidence is largely limited to white, middle-class

outdoor enthusiasts, managers' definitions are largely based upon their personal beliefs, and the tourism industry focuses on that part of the visitor's stay that can return a reasonable profit. The diversity of visitors makes it unlikely that there can be *the* park experience: Can a 14-year-old girl experience Pearl Harbor like a 70-year-old veteran of the attack? And why should she be expected to? It is one thing for managers to provide a planned spectrum of recreation opportunities (say, from concession lodging to wilderness campsites); it is another to attempt to socially engineer the emotional reactions of the citizenry to the resources of their parks.

At the same time, and because of the uniqueness of each unit of the national park system, a visit to a national park should not be simply one more entertainment or common recreation. Each unit of the National Park System has the potential to provide visitors a unique experience, without surrogate or substitute. There is no substitute for Gettysburg or Wupatki or Ford's Theater or Bryce Canyon. *The challenge is to emphasize each area's uniqueness. The guiding principle is to do nothing to dilute the special qualities of that particular site.*

Activities must be compatible with park resources. To manage this way implies that activities appropriate at one location may be inappropriate at another; what is appropriate in a recreation area may be inappropriate in a wilderness area. This is a difficult management challenge and will sharpen as the demand for allowing nontraditional uses increases (often by those who would profit, rather than from visitors themselves).

Inflexible standards and management approaches will do little good and much harm; the principle of protecting each park's uniqueness can and should be applied. For example, facilities like gas stations and grocery stores may be necessary to park use and enjoyment; it does not follow that these facilities must be inside a park. Reasonable standards can be developed and applied; key criteria include sustainability, a lack of adverse environmental impact, and an emphasis on basic and needed services. The same principle should be applied to employee housing, recreation areas, staff parking lots, and so forth.

Preliminary Recommendations

2-A **We recommend that the National Park Service broadly communicate the breadth and value of the national park system.**

Steps to implement this recommendation:

1. Inventories of the system should be kept up-to-date and widely distributed.

2. A tourist information database should be established whereby the tourist industry and the general public can easily and inexpensively access information about the entire system and individual parks.

3. Nongovernmental organizations related to the National Park Service should actively support the development of additional guidebooks and other media (print, film, and especially television) that emphasize different aspects of the system (desert parks, Civil War sites, wilderness areas, presidential homes, and so forth).

4. Communication of the full range of park values, including visitor enjoyment, preservation and ecological importance, should be stressed.

2-B **We recommend that the National Park Service embark on an innovative program of facility maintenance, design and retrofit to prepare the "frontcountry" of each park for future visitor needs.**

Steps to implement this recommendation:

1. The Park Service should undertake to develop a new generation of state-of-the-art designs for needed facilities such as trails, overlooks, transportation systems, visitor centers and campgrounds.

2. Such designs should be based on the unique values of each site, visitor needs, and a full accounting of environmental impacts.

3. Construction and operational impacts should be reduced to minimal levels. The objective would be to design facilities so that visitors to the frontcountry of a park can gain an appreciation of the area's unique values. For natural areas, this means a "glimpse of the backcountry" so that further exploration is encouraged. For historic areas, it means access to historic features that help visitors understand the significance of the entire site. NPS planners and designers should develop a state-of-the-art "visitor-based design."

4. Demonstration projects at selected parks should be undertaken, evaluated by those that must use the facility (i.e., field staff, concessioners and visitors), refined and applied to additional areas in the system.

2-C **We recommend that the National Park Service minimize development of visitor facilities within park boundaries and permit such development only when required to meet visitor needs.**

Steps to implement the recommendation:

1. Convenience and profit should be legitimate concerns in development of park facilities, but they are not sufficient rationale for providing services and facilities within parks. The standard of necessity should be flexibly applied at each park through a revision of the current planning process, and the determination of need should include significant public involvement.

2. The National Park Service should use existing authority to remove, whenever possible, unnecessary facilities.

3. Visitors should be informed of the need for and availability of gateway services; so should employees.

4. In all instances, the protection of each park's unique values should be the determining factor in development decisions.

2-D **We recommend that the National Park Service develop a technical assistance program aimed specifically at gateway communities and regions linked to national park system areas.**

Steps to implement this recommendation:

1. The National Park Service should encourage the development of private sector visitor services in the gateway communities so as to contribute to local economic development, encourage competition, increase choices for visitors, and minimize the need for in-park facilities.

2. The National Park Service should encourage and assist local governments in land use planning and economic development at ecosystem, landscape, and regional scales.

3. Where needed, new legislative authorities should be sought to enable the National Park Service to be effective in this role.

4. An interdisciplinary team—including development specialists and economists from other relevant federal agencies—should be assembled, and demonstration projects should be undertaken near several parks. These pilot projects should be monitored, evaluated by both the National Park Service and the local communities, refined, and expanded to other areas in the system.

Issue 3. How should the National Park Service interpret the national park system and educate the public, and for what purpose?

Background and Findings

The National Park Service's responsibility for the nation's heritage extends beyond protection and management; it includes the interpretation of what these resources mean and education as to their proper use and preservation. Interpretation has always played an important role in park use and enjoyment. The evolution, growth, and development of NPS interpretation has been one of the most significant contributions that the agency has made in the world park movement, and excellent programs exist throughout the national park system. Yet the goals of the Park Service's interpretation activity are less clear. The issue is current and controversial, as the believers in cultural diversity and cultural unity now confront each other in the fields of education, history and natural science. The Park Service must enter this debate, as it is responsible for much of the nation's natural and cultural heritage. It is also a practical issue: How best can interpretive and educational material be delivered? To whom? Who should be responsible? What criteria can we use to judge success?

Interpretation has historically been treated as a secondary task by the agency and many individual park managers; it has been viewed as a specialized activity of certain employees and not others. This attitude is shortsighted, ineffective, and to the extent that it prevents the public from fully understanding their resources, undemocratic. When a visitor looks for directional signs and cannot find them, asks for a brochure and does not receive one, tries to find a park ranger and cannot locate one, the National Park Service has failed.

Use and enjoyment of national parks must include a basic level of interpretation and/or education. To visitors, all park staff and concession employees are potential interpreters. Visitors desire more information, and informed visitors are more likely to practice good resource stewardship. The unique significance of each site (i.e., its relationship to the visitor's personal experience and the nation-building described earlier) is a necessary and basic theme. We consider basic interpretation (that which describes the unique

theme. We consider basic interpretation (that which describes the unique significance of the site) an essential component of park use and enjoyment, equal in importance to resource management.

Much of the interpretive activity in the National Park Service is imaginatively conceived and well-appreciated by visitors. At the same time, quality varies widely. Many programs are offered with little concern for cost versus benefit; interpreters often choose media, program content, time, and location for management convenience rather than for meeting visitor needs. Appropriate technologies (desktop publishing, park newspapers, dioramas, park radio stations, and relief maps) are often underused. There is a backlog of antiquated exhibitry and film largely unchanged in style and delivery since the 1950s (this in the MTV age!). It is no wonder that the private sector, more willing to "market" interpretation as a profitable visitor service, has increasingly filled the demand for information. An example is the growth of video products related to the national parks. The private sector and particularly concessions have a legitimate, productive role to play in educating park visitors, and their involvement should be encouraged. Some in our working group believe it should be required.

As an educational resource, the national park system is a premier national education system. History. geography, art, science can all be taught using the National Park System: A schoolchild in Nebraska or West Miami learning about the American Revolution needs to learn that Bunker Hill is very real, that it has been preserved for her to visit and personally experience, and that she will then be responsible for passing on this heritage to the generations that follow. Yet the integration of the national parks and the educational system (including primary, secondary and college levels) is incomplete. Educational outreach programs are in some parks intensively and productively being pursued (Gateway and Everglades are examples; so is the recent development of an NPS/NPCA biodiversity curriculum). In too many others this activity is ignored or unfunded. Regional offices of the National Park Service have great potential in coordinating such outreach, but the potential is not fully employed. Other organizations (cooperating associations, friends' groups, private philanthropies, teachers' groups) could also play a major role in public education using the parks.

Finally, the National Park Service finds itself directly in the middle of a major intellectual debate concerning education and public history. Beginning in the 1960s (primarily with the Black Power movement), the dominant vision of America as a "melting pot" of peoples gave way to the realization that ethnic heritage and national culture are not mutually exclusive. The idea that a single "truth" exists regarding historical and environmental events has been critically challenged. There is now black history, feminist history, and so forth to compete with traditional interpretations. An example is the reinterpretation of Columbus, his monumental discovery of the New World, and the upcoming quincentenary celebration. The National Park Service is involved: 39 sites in the system are "quincentenary parks" related to the event. Yet, to some Americans, his real name was Colón, the discovery was actually an encounter of disastrous consequences, and there is little to celebrate.

The National Park Service will increasingly be drawn into such debates over how to interpret the past. What should be its response? Should it attempt to provide a singular interpretation of an event or location—be it Ellis Island or Custer Battlefield or the Yellowstone fires—or should it provide a range of histories and points of view, confronting the visitor with a set of choices? We consider this a significant question; we have no satisfactory answer. We do believe that the National Park Service cannot and should not attempt to be the official "arbiter" of American cultural and natural history.

Preliminary Recommendations

3-A **We recommend that the National Park Service commit its resources to offering all visitors minimum and basic interpretation—including a general orientation to the site and insight into its unique features and significance.**

Steps to implement this recommendation:

1. Where existing resources do not allow this commitment to be fulfilled, the interpretive staff and budgets should be increased.

2. Interpretive themes should be carefully scrutinized by park staff and directly related to the unique features and significance of each site.

3. All park, concession and cooperating association employees should receive basic interpretive training.

4. All visitors should receive a park brochure when entering any area of the national park system, and these excellent interpretive tools should be further improved.

5. The Park Service should increase its work with appropriate and new technologies, using pilot projects to demonstrate effectiveness.

6. The Park Service should use partners (cooperating associations, advocacy groups, concessions, schools, and the media) to assist in delivery of interpretive messages to wide and diverse audiences. Statutory restraints that limit such partnerships should be relaxed. All new programs (as well as old) should be carefully evaluated, and the evaluations used to improve services.

3-B **We recommend that the National Park Service embark on an innovative program of educational outreach, whereby Americans who do not use the national park system as visitors, and the next generation of visitors, are served.**

Steps to implement this recommendation:

1. The National Park Service should revise its philosophy, policy, and management approaches to reflect the legitimate role the agency has as a national public education system.

2. The agency should develop ways to learn from and cooperate with the modern communications industry in order to increase its use of technologies and delivery systems appropriate to its educational mission and the future.

3. The National Park Service should cooperate with other organizations in developing a complete K-12 curriculum for school teachers to integrate the national parks into the classroom.

4. The National Park Service should encourage the production of video, film, radio, and television programs related to the national parks and their distribution nationwide.

3-C **We recommend that the National Park Service encourage interpreters to examine the issue of how to interpret controversial events and sites.**

Steps to implement this recommendation:

1. This examination should be on a site-by-site basis. Methods might include local conferences, public hearings, and experimental interpretive programs.

2. Participants should include both mainstream and radical historians, natural scientists, public educators, park superintendents, and field interpreters.

3. The consequences of revisionist history and public controversy over environmental issues should be thoughtfully considered. This ongoing activity should result in the preparation of a policy statement, flexible guidelines and useful training materials.

Issue 4. How will park use and enjoyment impact natural and cultural resources, and what should be done about these impacts?

Background and Findings

Park use does not occur in a vacuum—it has effects upon the very resources visitors come to use and enjoy. We realize that the impacts of park use and enjoyment are varied from park to park, season to season, day to day, and site

to site. Hence, we frame our questions cautiously: To what degree are the parks adversely impacted by park use? And what should be done about these impacts?

All human activity has environmental impacts; our use of energy, land, water, and resources inevitably changes the world around us. Ecological change is a necessary by-product of park use. To demand that human impacts upon the parks be negligible is to reserve the parks for scientific study only, an action that is as unacceptable as it is undemocratic. In addition, few, if any, parks are insular; most park ecosystems are linked to human systems through an intricate set of biophysical pathways including watersheds, airsheds, transition zones, migratory routes and so forth.

Hence, there is little question that park use and enjoyment impacts park resources, both natural and cultural. The research literature confirms the obvious through a series of detailed case studies, primarily of backcountry use and its impact upon "pristine" habitats. Studies of frontcountry impacts are rare, comparative data across parks (such as the 1980 *State of the Parks Report*) are superficial, and a sustained research program on visitor impacts has not been accomplished. The National Park Service does not have a reliable knowledge base, and the extent of impacts caused by visitor use and enjoyment (except in rare cases) cannot be determined. The impact of automobiles (air and noise pollution, acreage for roads, gasoline stations) may be more significant than the impact of visitors themselves. This suggests the importance of including transportation systems (current and alternative) in any analysis. We do not fully understand the resiliency of park ecosystems as they respond to visitor use.

This has not dissuaded the press, both national and international, from treating the issue as newsworthy, and a torrent of newspaper articles has appeared in this anniversary year that repeat the theme of Robert Cahn's 1969 Pulitzer Prize winning series, "Will Success Spoil the National Parks?" The rhetoric, often inflamed by park professionals themselves, includes "loving the parks to death," "gridlock in our national parks" and "trampling the nation's backyard." Most of the articles cite visitor statistics (often collected in such form as "visitor days"), then a few examples ("4 million tourists jam Acadia's 27 miles of road yearly"), and then quote park managers as being frustrated by the situation. In most cases, overcrowding is seen as a major cause of visitor impacts, along with

the effects of new recreation technologies (climbing equipment, mountain bikes, snowmobiles and so forth).

The National Park Service has a real and pressing responsibility to document and then communicate the reality of current park use and its effects upon park ecosystems. There *are* parks that are overcrowded, ecosystems that are being irreparably harmed by use and overuse, and cultural resources being damaged by visitation. Such impacts must be dealt with, as they threaten the very purpose of these parks. But there is no evidence that the national park system is being overused, that visitors are the major cause of a general decline in park values (activities outside the park are often the real issue), or that "the park experience" is no longer possible in most parks.

Many parks are "underused" (a situation perhaps worth investigation); many parts of even the most heavily visited parks have low densities of visitors, and the system continues to slowly expand its offerings. Most visitors enjoy and appreciate their experiences. Effective management of harmful situations will require a factual understanding of the real scope of the problem, and honest communication of the challenges to the American public.

While the scope of the problem has not been carefully documented, possible solutions have been developed and implemented on a sporadic and often successful basis. The academic community has offered the concept of "carrying capacity"; the National Parks and Conservation Association's contribution is its "visitor impact management" technique; the U.S. Forest Service has developed and widely implemented a technique to establish "limits of acceptable change" and a "recreation opportunity spectrum." Many parks have established *de facto* carrying capacities through the manipulation of tickets, public transportation, and visitor services. The redistribution of visitors (to other locales, seasons, parks) has been attempted almost solely through the backcountry permit system, which has been well accepted by visitors. The argument that concentrating use to protect larger ecosystems has been considered unacceptable, though in practice it is routinely applied (such as roads, boardwalks, and campgrounds).

Most of the techniques and approaches available for adoption were designed for backcountry locations in the mountain habitats of western parks; their

application to frontcountry areas, historical and urban parks, and the humid, deciduous forests of the East and South must be established through trial and evaluation. Techniques for redistribution of large numbers of tourists (by education, transportation systems, or incentive) have not been carefully pursued; their value in reducing real problems of crowding and impact is therefore unknown.

Finally, visitor impacts not only reflect the number of tourists that enter an area, but the demands they place upon critical ecosystem functions (water, air, soil, and so forth). That is, per capita demand for potable water in arid parks may be as important as the overall number of users. Reduction of resource demands (through education, conservation, public transportation, recycling, state-of-the-art technologies) could provide significant relief to overburdened ecosystems, though the scale of reduction is difficult to measure. Conservation gains during the energy crises of the 1970s suggest the benefits could be significant. Park-going should be made as environmentally efficient as possible, and visitors should be encouraged to minimize their resource demands. To succeed, the National Park Service and its concessioners will have to lead by education, enforcement, and example.

Preliminary Recommendations

4-A **We recommend that the National Park Service undertake a systemwide analysis of visitor use impacts upon park resources, including a careful documentation of crowding conditions in the parks.**

Steps to implement this recommendation:

1. The National Park Service is developing a useful geographic information system (GIS) capability; it should be applied in this effort through the mapping of visitor density levels and suitability studies.

2. The analysis should be interdisciplinary, consider cultural and historic areas as well as natural areas (including wilderness), and be widely reported to park professionals and the general public.

3. The results should be used to target further documentation for areas identified as particularly threatened, as a precursor to management change, and as a tool for the public in selecting sites to visit.

4-B **We recommend that the National Park Service undertake a program of trials, where different techniques for minimizing visitor impacts are applied and compared.**

Steps to implement this recommendation:

1. There are many techniques available; what is needed is a series of carefully monitored "field trials" where their real-world effectiveness can be examined and compared. Particular attention should be paid to evaluating techniques for visitor redistribution, reservation systems, public transportation, and outright limitation of entry.

2. These trials should be undertaken at parks identified in the analysis described above, and the successful (that is effective and practical) techniques should implemented on a flexible and as-needed basis.

3. Training on visitor impact management should be increased for both resource management specialists and superintendents.

4-C **We recommend that the National Park Service and its concessioners develop an educational program that encourages visitors to minimize resource demands.**

Steps to implement this recommendation:

1. The program's focus would be voluntary compliance, and its design should involve NPS professionals and concessioners.

2. Visitors should be informed as to the value of reduced resource use, and opportunities for their participation (such as the recycling programs now underway) should be made convenient and widespread.

3. The agency and its concessioners should lead by example, and the Park Service should prepare an inventory of state-of-the-art technologies (from low-water toilets to recycled paper products) for use by park and concession staff.

4. Incentives (such as preferential treatment of recycled products in purchasing), challenge grants, and special contracts may be valuable approaches.

5. In all cases, successful results should be communicated throughout the agency and the public kept fully informed.

Issue 5. How can the National Park Service make wise decisions regarding park use and enjoyment in the future?

Background and Findings

The decision-making process within the National Park Service is a critical and appropriate concern for several of the working groups. We asked several key questions specifically related to visitor use and enjoyment: How can the Park Service best learn about visitors (new and prospective) and then integrate this knowledge into all aspects of its operation? What process(es) should the Park

Service use to continually prepare itself to serve future visitors? And more broadly, how should NPS decision-makers be equipped to manage for uncertainty and change?

The National Park Service continually makes decisions that affect visitor use and enjoyment: approving concession prices, designing an interpretive program, modernizing a visitor center, establishing a shuttle system, and approving a special use permit. Throughout this report we have expressed a guiding principle for making such decisions: *Provide for visitors' needs, yet do nothing that would harm the unique significance of each park.* A process for making such decisions is equally necessary.

Historically, NPS professionals made many of the major policy decisions in consultation with the administration, Congress, and special interest groups; specific, local and technical decisions were left to the professionals in the agency. Beginning with NEPA in the late 1960s, there has been a steady increase in the legislative requirements for public involvement in resource management decisions both policywise and technical. For example, each amendment to the Endangered Species Act has included additional opportunities for public comment and scrutiny. No federal agency is immune to this trend, and there is no evidence that the public's demand (and Congress' insistence) for input will wane.

Agencies like the National Park Service will increase their shared decision-making with the public (often represented by special interest groups), either willingly or by legal and political coercion. The surrender of decision-making power is inevitable. For an agency composed of professionals with large enthusiasms and high ideals, this transfer of power will be painful, difficult and often denied; many park managers view the resource base as their client rather than society and would prefer to make decisions about resources with little interference from the public that owns them. There currently is significant and valuable public involvement in NPS decision-making, yet trends in American resource politics suggest even more will be required. Our working group is unsure and divided as to what actions should be taken.

The National Park Service's ability to manage effectively is diminished by its lack of systematic knowledge about visitors, and almost all internal and external studies of the agency in recent years have called for an expanded social

science program. Institutional memory is weak: The Outdoor Recreation Resources Review Commission report of 1963 was a landmark in understanding visitors; the Park Service had a pioneering social science program in the 1970s, and efforts like the Visitor Services Project have produced detailed visitor information for selected parks.

Gaining information about visitors is one challenge; integrating this knowledge into the agency's operation is equally important. Design of facilities occurs with almost no data about potential users; interpretive programs are conducted with little systematic feedback from audiences, and policy decisions are made in Washington with no special analysis of social or economic impacts upon park user groups and local communities. Encouragingly, training programs are including "understanding visitors" as a topic, and most park superintendents have realized the advantages that up-to-date visitor information can provide. Ironically, it is the private sector and concessioners that lead in gathering and using such information; it is treated as a necessary marketing tool and a wise investment.

Effective public involvement and careful monitoring of visitor feedback are important to wise decisions regarding park use and enjoyment, but decisions made in the context of too few resources (human and financial) are unlikely to be successfully enacted. For example, improved interpretation will require increased recruiting and retention of professional employees.

Meeting the legitimate needs of tomorrow's park users will require increases in the quantity and the quality of many park services and facilities, such as interpretation and visitor centers. These expansions and enhancements, in turn, will require additional funds.

In general, park users today receive good value for any direct costs they encounter through entrance fees, fees for specialized services and facilities (such as campsites), and indirect fees collected on operations of concessioners. Evidence is strong that park users are willing to pay for continued and improved park opportunities. Some working group members felt that expanded reliance upon a "user-pays" philosophy should be pursued; others disagreed except for special events and services. Equity concerns (differential impacts upon rich and poor) must be addressed.

Improved operational efficiencies can range from savings in energy use to cost-sharing of interpreters with local tourism interests and cooperating with other organizations on training, design and procurement. Systemwide fee changes deserve careful review, ranging from entry fee price changes to concessioner and cooperating association payments. Even more important is local flexibility to recover visitor program costs.

Finally, it is vital that Congress appropriate, and the administration expend, the necessary funds for meeting the commitments of the agency. Numerous public opinion polls show that citizens strongly support the use of additional tax dollars for operating the national park system.

Preliminary Recommendations

5-A **We recommend that the National Park Service establish a task force to improve the public involvement process within the agency.**

Steps to implement this recommendation:

1. The task force should include public involvement specialists from the Park Service and other agencies as well as representatives of interest groups.

2. Its attention should extend beyond the minimum involvement required by law and include an analysis of successful techniques that could be applied to the Park Service.

3. The task force should prepare recommendations for improving the use of public involvement in management decisions.

5-B **We recommend that the National Park Service develop an expanded social science program.**

Steps to implement this recommendation:

1. Such a program should include visitor studies, evaluation of visitor services, trend monitoring, economic analysis, and basic research on park use.

2. The program should be integrated into the existing natural science division so that social and biological research programs operate together within a scientific division of the agency.

3. The program should be closely coordinated with similar efforts by the U.S. Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, state parks and other organizations (including the private sector) that conduct outdoor recreation and tourism industry research. A combination of park-level, regional and WASO-directed efforts should be supported.

4. Funding should focus on research and monitoring that produces usable knowledge for park managers.

5-C **We recommend that the National Park Service act to increase the resources it has available to serve park users.**

Steps to implement this recommendation:

1. Realistic budgets that fund necessary and additional commitments of the agency should be presented to Congress.

2. Increasing the available resources for park user services can be accomplished through a mixture of creative partnerships, improved operational efficiencies in parks and administrative offices, systemwide fee actions, and new, localized flexibility in recovering visitor use program costs.

CONCLUSION

We have presented in this report five issues we think are the core of challenges facing the National Park Service as it serves park use and enjoyment in this anniversary year and in the future. For each, we have recommended a series of actions. We know and appreciate that others at the upcoming symposium will add their voices to the discussion; our work can only be improved by such participation.

A report is merely paper if it does not inspire action. Of special importance is the need to prioritize needs and available resources, to answer carefully the question, *What must first be done?* We urge the symposium participants, and the National Park Service, to vigorously pursue a strategy of action that converts the opportunities described in our report into significant achievements.

In 1909 Allen Chamberlain of the Appalachian Mountain Club wrote a reply to an article about visitors to the national parks. He stated his case matter-of-factly:

> . . . if the public could be induced to visit these scenic treasurehouses, they would soon come to appreciate their value and stand firmly in their defense (1901:1).

The first 75 years saw the building of a great and wondrous national park system; the next 75 will witness its maturation or diminution. Those who work with and care deeply about the parks should prepare themselves: no Stephen Mather will "come on down to Washington and run them himself," the Alaskan expansion will not be repeated, the insular esprit de corps of the old-time National Park Service can only be replaced with a new and modern spirit. The challenges and opportunities that face the National Park Service in the 21st century, now so close, will reflect that age and not another.

Draft Report

Working Group on Environmental Leadership

The Honorable Daniel J. Evans, Chair
Daniel J. Evans Associates

Henry Lee, Vice Chair
Executive Director, Environment and Natural Resources Program
Kennedy School of Government

Mark Abramson
President, Council for Excellence in Government

Robert Bendick, Jr.
Deputy Commissioner, Department of Environmental Conservation
New York

Denis P. Galvin
Associate Director, Planning and Development
National Park Service

Maureen Finnerty
Superintendent, Olympic National Park National Park Service
National Park Service

Ernest W. Ortega
Associate Regional Director, Southwest Region
National Park Service

Max Peterson
Executive Vice President, International Association of Fish & Wildlife Agencies

Joseph Sax
Boalt Hall School of Law
University of California, Berkeley

SUMMARY LISTING OF ISSUES AND PRELIMINARY RECOMMENDATIONS

Issue 1. What steps should the National Park Service take to embrace a leadership role in ecologically and culturally sound management?

Preliminary Recommendations:

1-A The National Park Service should promote the sound ecological management of its natural and cultural resources and develop visitor use policies consistent with such management, as the two primary goals in the coming century. Where appropriate, policies and programs to implement such a management strategy should he undertaken cooperatively with both public and private land managers located outside park boundaries. Partnerships should be a basic part of the NPS management strategy.

1-B The National Park Service should develop and clearly articulate a research program and provide it with consistent and substantial budgetary support. The Park Service should strive to be recognized by the year 2000 as the major focus of scientific, educational, and leadership expertise about the ecological health and management of park systems to the global community.

Issue 2. How can the National Park Service lead in environmental and cultural education?

Preliminary Recommendations:

2-A Create a professional career path for interpretive personnel.

2-B Reward creativity and innovation in interpretive programs.

2-C Develop heritage education programs with local schools.

2-D Rely to a greater degree on films and television programs to interpret park resources in order to reach audiences beyond park boundaries.

2-E Establish relationships with cooperative park education units. Such CPEUs provide professional interpreters with links to researchers in their fields of expertise; they also expand the Park Service's role as a provider of "classrooms" for college students.

2-F Seek base increases to budgets to carry out these recommendations and to increase overall interpretive staff.

Issue 3. How can the National Park Service promote a leadership ethic practiced throughout the agency?

Preliminary Recommendations:

3-A Refocus the NPS training programs.

3-B Open up the lines of communication between the director and the regional directors, between the regional directors and superintendents, and between employees in Washington and the regional offices and those inside the parks.

3-C Develop an effective, shared vision for the Park Service. The director should work with NPS people in the field and the headquarters office to develop an agenda for leadership.

3-D Rewards and incentives should be structured so that efforts to carry out the agency's mission are rewarded. Managers taking risks and demonstrating creativity in ways that fulfill the shared vision of the Park Service should be recognized as leaders within the agency.

Issue 4. What management practices will ensure that NPS personnel are able to exert professionalism in a political environment?

Preliminary Recommendations:

4-A The secretary of the interior should clearly delegate managerial and operational programs to the director of the Park Service, with appropriate policy direction from his office.

4-B The secretary of the interior should meet at least once a month with the five principal land management agencies.

4-C The director of the National Park Service should establish a planned rotation system between the field and key assignments in Washington to ensure that there is a continual interchange of ideas, as well as an understanding of current NPS programs and challenges.

4-D The secretary of the interior and the director of the National Park Service should insist that NPS people at all levels establish constructive, cooperative working relationships with adjacent federal, state, and local organizations.

4-E The regional offices of the Park Service should be given clearer authority and responsibility for the coordination and direction of NPS activities within the region, including ensuring that NPS programs and policies are effectively developed and executed.

4-F The director of the Park Service should establish an interchange program with other federal and state cultural, historical, and natural resource organizations.

4-G The secretary of the interior should review the organization levels between the secretary and the director of the National Park Service with an eye to shortening them as much as possible and to ensure that there is a mutual understanding of programs and policies.

4-H The National Park Service should develop an annual legislative program. This program should be prepared by the director in cooperation with the regional offices.

Issue 5. How can the National Park Service take a leadership role in cooperative efforts to protect America's natural and cultural heritage?

Preliminary Recommendations:

5-A A new grass roots planning process should be established to identify the pieces of America's heritage that the public wants to save.

5-B An American heritage area (AHA) system should be established to accomplish preservation without long-term federal involvement.

5-C The National Park Service should submit to Congress a new approach to funding, planning for, and carrying out heritage conservation activities at the state and federal level.

Issue 6. How can the National Park Service take on these leadership responsibilities at a time when its Operations Budget is already stretched to the limit?

Preliminary Recommendations:

6-A Require backcountry campers to pay a fee.

6-B Require mountaineers and rock climbers to pay a fee.

OVERVIEW

The creation of the national parks of the United States was the first systematic effort undertaken anywhere in the world to protect natural and cultural landmarks from the impacts of everyday life and commerce. The idea of a national park system resulted from an intuition by the American people that, in time, population and industrial growth would make it important to have set aside exceptional places for public benefit. The national park system has been of immeasurable value in providing recreation, education, and the protection of unique ecosystems and historical settings. All of this, and other important resources unprotected by the traditional national park system, are threatened by the cost, complexity, and changing character of today's world. In its 75th anniversary year, the National Park Service needs to be able to respond to these threats by taking a renewed leadership role in protecting America's heritage.

When the first national parks were established, they were vast and isolated places, virtually untouched by the march of settlement that was transforming the North American landscape. At that time, nothing more seemed necessary than to reserve the land from ordinary use and habitation and to appoint custodians. Visitors were few and posed little threat to the wonders the parks enclosed.

The world has now closed in on the parks. Development has reached the borders of even the most remote places. Tourism has become a massive enterprise. Newer park units are located at the edges of or even within major cities, while most every park unit is exposed to the environmental hazards of a modern industrialized society.

The portfolio of the National Park Service has expanded continually over the past several decades. Today, there are 357 parks representing 16 categories of units within the national park system—ranging from national battlefields to scenic rivers to national historic sites. Concomitantly, the role of parks is perceived differently by various segments of the population. This is not surprising, since the portfolio of parks is constructed to serve many different purposes. To campers or backpackers, the parks are areas of magnificent natural beauty. To urban residents, they are valuable places for recreation and education. To tourists and sightseers, they are landmarks representing the

history of the country and the culture of our diverse society. To preservationists, they represent islands of wilderness. To some communities, they are the attraction which fuels the local economy.

Each of these groups measures the Park Service's performance based on that aspect of the park system that has value to them. Few either understand or care that the Park Service's mission is much broader. Appreciation of the multifaceted mandate of the Park Service is essential if one is to effectively define what it means to be a leader within this agency. Under the best of circumstances, leadership of an organization with such diverse responsibilities is a challenging task. Unfortunately the best of circumstances are not what face the Park Service today. Money is tight as the federal government grapples with continuing budget deficits. Fiscal crises are often even more pronounced at the state and local levels. At the same time, Congress faces growing pressure to expand the Park Service's mandate to include regional economic development. As members of Congress respond to the demands of segments of their constituencies, the Park Service has, in some instances, become hamstrung by the earmarking of funds for new initiatives while funds for general operations have not kept pace with increasing needs.

Confrontational policies of the early 1980s have left in their wake disincentives and obstacles to asserting leadership. During this era, the historical ties between NPS people in the field, the director, and the Department of the Interior, as well as the working relationship between Congress and the Park Service, were severely strained. At one point in time, for example, park officials were constrained from operating outside of their boundaries, making it difficult to establish strong and cooperative relationships with neighboring communities. This policy also all but prevented the agency from assuming a leadership role in cultural, historical, and environmental education. Morale in some areas of the Park Service has deteriorated, but loyalty has remained a prominent attribute of NPS personnel. In fact, some have referred to the Park Service as a "dysfunctional family."

Administration and congressional leadership has reversed many of these debilitating policies, but their legacy continues to be an albatross around the neck of one of the most dedicated federal agencies.

To reverse this trend, concrete actions must be taken in several broad areas.

- Managers within the National Park Service cannot perceive their responsibilities in isolation from their community, their state, and their region. While units may have been selected because of their national significance, entry into the park system does not imply removal from the regional context in which these units exist. Park managers must develop and implement a proactive partnership with neighboring communities.

- There must be strengthening of the characteristics of the Park Service that have given it credibility worldwide. The underpinning of this credibility must be a perception that Park Service policies are based on principles of wise resource management. The Park Service should emphasize these principles. A strong research component is a prerequisite to achieving this end.

- Reestablishing the respect and credibility of the Park Service with the public and the professional community of natural resource, cultural, and historical experts will provide the Park Service with a unique opportunity to assume a leadership role in conveying to each generation the American story. Each park unit represents a small part of the heritage and character of this nation, and the Park Service, through an expanded program of interpretation and education, has a unique opportunity to reach millions of people each year.

- Leadership is an ethic which must be espoused and encouraged at all levels of the Park Service. Leadership refers to the culture of an organization. Managers should be creative and embrace responsibility, not avoid accountability and play it safe. Rewards, incentives, and promotions are the means by which an agency can establish such an ethic. The Park Service must discard negative self-images and encourage its managers to be leaders in upholding the historical missions of the Park Service.

- The top managerial leadership of any federal agency lies in its senior executive service (SES). In the case of the Park Service, over 60% of its SES managers are regional directors. Both they and the top NPS managers in Washington must realize that the responsibility for leading

the agency is in the hands of those who hold those positions, and they should be held accountable for its performance.

- Communication is critical to leadership. Establishing processes through which effective communication can take place is essential. These processes must ensure that there is close and ongoing communication between Congress and the Park Service, between the secretary of the interior and the department's management agencies, between the director and the top NPS managers, and between these managers and the park superintendents. Communication with the public through the press is equally important and is an essential step in breaking away from the "island" mentality, which too often characterized the Park Service in the past.

- Effective leadership requires an understanding of the changing political environment in which an agency operates. Policies and goals must fit into this dynamic context. In a democracy, an agency that ignores its political environment does so at its own peril.

Part of the NPS political environment is a demand for Congress to designate more areas as units of the national park system. Often this requires a broad definition of the term "national significance." As more units are added, the Park Service finds its resources spread thin and its ability to provide quality services reduced. New programs are needed to meet the demands of citizens to protect more of America's heritage while recognizing budgetary and management limits.

The working group on environmental leadership has crafted recommendations to meet these needs. The group divided its deliberations into five issues: (1) establishing a program to promote ecologically and culturally sound management practices; (2) providing leadership in environmental and cultural education; (3) establishing a leadership ethic at all levels of the Park Service; (4) ensuring professionalism within the Park Service; and (5) developing cooperative strategies to protect the natural and cultural heritage of the United States. Funding is a sixth area which cuts across each of these topics.

ISSUES AND PRELIMINARY RECOMMENDATIONS

Issue 1. What steps should the Park Service take to embrace a leadership role in ecologically and culturally sound management?

Background and Findings

The central task of the National Park Service remains constant without being static. Its job is to maintain, within a world that is mostly governed by human activity, a substantial sample of functioning natural systems that are not characterized by human domination and to protect major examples of past human activity so that present and future generations can learn what the past has to offer them. As the world changes, the specifics of the task change. Where once custodial management and the promotion of tourism were sufficient, now scientific expertise and first-class research capability have become crucial.

Ecologically sound management requires the maintenance or restoration of native ecosystems and resistance to the establishment of alien organisms. Where possible, ecosystem management should attempt to preserve natural processes, operating at a scale consistent with the evolution of the ecosystem being managed. Preserving the evolutionary matrix of environment and organisms is the transcendent task of managing ecosystem processes.

In a world heavily affected by human activity, such protection requires active management and requires looking beyond artificial boundaries, taking an ecological perspective. This does not necessarily mean limiting visitor enjoyment, but that use of park resources must be consistent with ecologically sound management practices.

Providing visitors the opportunity to experience such places is an NPS responsibility concomitant with its responsibility to practice ecologically sound management. To establish a strong ecosystem management culture within the Park Service requires that the service be able to speak with a strong voice of authority in areas ranging from natural resource sciences to culture and history.

Prescient observers like George Wright saw the future. More than half a century ago, Wright called for a change from custodial protection of island enclaves to active, constructive management, founded on knowledge-based scientific study. This was repeated in the Leopold and Robbins reports of the 1960s, which led to the expansion of the science program within the National Park Service. Similar pleas have been made for scientific professionalism in the management of historical and cultural resources.

Despite recommendations that have been repeatedly made over the last three decades, the NPS response to those calls for a strong research component has been sporadic and inconsistent, characterized by alternating cycles of commitment and decline. In a world where ecological management has become a primary concern, this is a serious deficiency. If it cannot keep pace, the National Park Service risks losing not only its prestige and distinction as a leader in natural and cultural management, but its relevance to a world where research-based scientific excellence is indispensable.

On the cultural side, there is no existing database of archeological, ethnographic, and historic sites. Most known cultural sites have not even been evaluated to determine their significance. In addition to research needs, contemporary commitments to pluralism offer the Park Service new opportunities to work together with distinct communities and native peoples to aid them in expressing their own heritage.

Preliminary Recommendations

1-A **The National Park Service should promote the sound ecological management of its natural and cultural resources and develop visitor use policies consistent with such management, as the two primary goals in the coming century. Where appropriate, policies and programs to implement such a management strategy should he undertaken cooperatively with both public and private land managers located outside park boundaries. Partnerships should be a basic part of the NPS management strategy.**

1-B **The National Park Service should develop and clearly articulate a research program and provide it with consistent and substantial budgetary support. The Park Service should strive to be recognized by the year 2000 as the major focus of scientific, educational, and leadership expertise about the ecological health and management of park systems to the global community.**

Steps to implement this recommendation:

1. The director should establish a scientific advisory committee to work closely with him and a task force of six key senior managers (two regional directors, two park superintendents, and two people from Washington headquarters) to develop a strong research program which will provide the foundation for sound ecological and cultural management. The program should include

    a. a detailed proposal for inventorying the natural, cultural, and human resources of all national park system units, along with a recommended schedule that would allow for the completion of all work by the year 2000

    b. a program to document the extent and significance of internal and external threats to the cultural and natural resources of all park units—Much of this work would have to be done at a regional or park level and should be completed by October 1, 1994.

    c. a program to establish long-term monitoring of natural and cultural resources to document changes—The program should be in place by 1995.

    d. specific recommendations for changing the present training program for rangers involved with both interpretation and natural and cultural resource management—This training should provide participants with a strong understanding of the basic principles involved in their fields as well as innovative approaches for communicating those principles to park visitors,

local communities and the press, using the national parks as examples.

e. detailed estimates of the costs of implementing this program

2. The Park Service should establish a requirement for peer review during planning, execution, and reporting of NPS research. Such a commitment will strengthen the relations between the Park Service and the scientific community outside government and will ensure the free flow and accessibility of scientific information. If the Park Service is to develop and maintain strong credibility as a source of scientific knowledge, such a commitment is a critical step.

Issue 2. How can the National Park Service lead in environmental and cultural education?

Background and Findings

From Everglades National Park in Florida to Gates of the Arctic National Park and Preserve in Alaska, the Park Service has the perfect set of resources from which to provide educational information about ecological systems. Similarly, from Minute Man National Historical Park in Concord, Massachusetts, to San Antonio Missions National Historical Park in Texas, the Park Service possesses the cultural vehicles through which the wide scope and diverse nature of American history can be told. Indeed, it is impossible to imagine that the Congress did not intend for the Park Service to play a prominent role in educating Americans about our nation's heritage when it chose to preserve these sites in the national park system.

Nonetheless, NPS interpretive programs have regularly been sacrificed in the face of competing demands. The resulting message to NPS employees has been that interpretive programs are not a top priority and that strong efforts and innovation in interpretive programs will not be rewarded. While there have been successes, most notably at Everglades, Yellowstone, Lowell, and Indiana Dunes, systemwide there is something missing. Visitors to the parks are not fully engaged by what the parks have to offer. As a result, too many of the 260

million park visitors each year return home with less than they came for and less than they deserve. A park visitor should be challenged by the intricate dynamics of a natural ecosystem or made speechless by the words of an American who came before him or her. A park visit should broaden visitors' understanding and their horizons.

Interpretation is too often isolated from research and resource management. Interpreters are not always current in terms of knowledge about their fields or even informed about park management policies. One reason for this is that parks rely heavily on seasonal employees and volunteers for their interpretive programs and strong internal lines of communication are not developed. This over-reliance on seasonal and volunteer workers also causes the quality of interpretive programs to vary widely.

By and large, park interpreters are engaging, thoughtful, and committed. Nevertheless, they are hampered in an agency which does not regard interpretation as a professional job category. Further, interpreters are often in over their heads academically because the Park Service is generally unable to recruit or retain interpreters with educational backgrounds directly related to the jobs they are asked to perform and does not provide incentives or opportunities for employees to upgrade their academic qualifications. Although many do an admirable job, it is unfair to expect park rangers/interpreters without college backgrounds to provide sophisticated information about where their park fits contextually in the broad scope of natural science or American history.

It is clear, however, that NPS interpretive programs have sometimes been handcuffed by forces external to the agency. In the early 1980s, for example, the Department of the Interior prohibited NPS personnel from engaging in interpretive programs outside park boundaries. Budgetary restraints have also played a role in limiting NPS interpretive programs. Throughout most of the past decade, NPS budgets caused managers to cut back on seasonal positions, many of which were in interpretation. Additionally, lack of funds has resulted in a backlog of out-of-date materials, exhibits, and other interpretive tools, which undermine the public's perception of interpretation.

Fortunately, there are many opportunities for the Park Service to recapture its vital interpretive mission. Foremost, the Park Service must provide professional opportunities for its interpreters and integrate interpretation into park management as a full partner. Further, the Park Service must market what it offers. In an era when the public faces many competing opportunities, NPS officials need to emphasize the services they provide. More attention should be paid to video programs and hands-on tours. A visit to a park visitor center should be more than passive learning—the visitor should be engaged by interesting and informative NPS interpreters and interpretive programs. Furthermore, the Park Service should promote the use of parks as classrooms for nearby schools. Environmental and cultural education programs at national parks provide important opportunities to excite students about our country's heritage. If visitors fail to appreciate the resources preserved in national parks or the threats that they face, then the National Park Service has served neither itself nor our nation.

Preliminary Recommendations

2-A **Create a professional career path for interpretive personnel.**

The results will be a cadre of well-trained interpreters and an interpretive program which is on equal footing with other divisions in the agency. (See report of working group on organizational renewal for more details.)

2-B **Reward creativity and innovation in interpretive programs.**

A clear message must be sent not only to interpretive staff but to park management that interpretation is vital to the agency's mission.

2-C **Develop heritage education programs with local schools.**

Using parks as classrooms, interpreters should work with local schools to develop site-specific education programs for students. Such programs ensure that young people develop a better understanding of their

heritage and enfranchise students from certain regions or ethnic groups that are traditionally underrepresented among park visitors.

2-D **Rely to a greater degree on films and television programs to interpret park resources in order to reach audiences beyond park boundaries.**

2-E **Establish relationships with cooperative park education units. Such CPEUs provide professional interpreters with links to researchers in their fields of expertise; they also expand the Park Service's role as a provider of "classrooms" for college students.**

2-F **Seek base increases to budgets to carry out these recommendations and to increase overall interpretive staff.**

Issue 3. How can the National Park Service promote a leadership ethic practiced throughout the agency?

Background and Findings

Seventy-five years ago it was much easier to be a leader within the National Park Service. The agency's responsibilities focused on caring for the large, isolated parks such as Yellowstone and Yosemite. The world was relatively simple. Today, employees of the National Park Service are expected simultaneously (1) to protect significant cultural, historical, and recreational resources; (2) to serve as a host for approximately 260 million visitors each year; (3) to enforce safety and other laws to protect those visitors while simultaneously protecting the resources within their park units; (4) to be world-class educators that actively inform visitors through interpretive programs; (5) to provide international leadership and expertise in park management; and (6) to work constructively with state, local, and private organizations to advance conservation understanding and action.

Such a mission requires a uniquely diverse and interdisciplinary work force and requires a decentralized organizational structure. But many in the Park Service

do not appreciate the breadth of the agency's mission nor the reasons for its decentralization. Part of the problem is that training for NPS employees does not touch on the broad range of responsibilities faced by the agency employees. In comparison to other federal agencies, NPS training programs are remarkably deficient in giving employees a clear sense of the agency's mission.

Another consequence of the National Park Service's diversity and decentralization is its proneness to communication failures. In an organization like the Park Service, clear lines of communication and formal procedures need to be established. Otherwise, constructive interaction between employees at different levels or offices within the agency will come to a standstill. At different times over the past 10 years, the Park Service has suffered for precisely this problem—managers at various levels believed that they were not being consulted by their immediate supervisors.

Finally, it is important that there be strong direction from NPS leadership as to the agency's immediate and future priorities. A strong leadership ethic requires that performances which enable the agency to better carry out its goals be encouraged and rewarded. A strong message of NPS priorities linked with personnel policies that ensure that efforts to achieve these goals are rewarded makes clear that it is as important for the superintendent at the Effigy Mounds National Monument to be a leader as it is that the director of the National Park Service be one. The scope and focus of their responsibilities may differ, but the need to demonstrate leadership is similar.

Characteristics demonstrated by an agency with an effective leadership ethic include (1) an understanding by all employees within the organization of the basic mission of the agency, (2) a clear organizational strategy understood by all top managers, (3) a strong process for communications and interactions at all levels of the agency, (4) a system of rewards and incentives for top managers and employees who demonstrate leadership, and (5) a culture that promotes interaction and partnership with external constituents. The Park Service can clearly improve its performance in each of these areas.

Preliminary Recommendations

3-A **Refocus the NPS training programs to ensure that employees are knowledgeable about the NPS mission and are able managers.**

Steps to implement this recommendation:

1. The National Park Service should build into its existing introductory training program mandatory sessions on the history and mission of the national park system, orientation to the Park Service, introduction to park operations, natural and cultural resource management, environmental law, and constituency building.

2. Individuals entering the ranks of NPS managers should receive specific training on

   a. the relationship of the Park Service to other federal, state, local, and private organizations

   b. the responsibilities of professionals in the organization to appointed and elected representatives

   c. the basic principles of leading and motivating a diverse work force

   d. preventing and dealing with problems arising from such issues as sexual harassment and racial discrimination

   e. management within a large organization

3-B **Open up the lines of communication between the director and the regional directors, between the regional directors and superintendents, between employees in Washington and the regional offices and those inside the parks.**

The 75th Anniversary Symposium at Vail represents a laudatory effort to allow a broad spectrum of NPS employees to identify problems and

develop solutions. This first step should be followed by the establishment of a process whereby NPS employees at all levels would be consistently encouraged to participate in ongoing decision processes about the management of the national park system. The U.S. Forest Service has successfully implemented a pilot program in which senior management routinely solicits the opinions of a cross section of agency employees that could serve as a model.

3-C **Develop an effective shared vision for the Park Service. The director should work with NPS people in the field and the headquarters office to develop an agenda for leadership.**

3-D **Rewards and incentives should he structured so that efforts to carry out the agency's mission are rewarded. Managers taking risks and demonstrating creativity in ways that fulfill the shared vision of the Park Service should be recognized as leaders within the agency.**

Steps to implement this recommendation:

1. At least once a month, the director of the Park Service should convene a meeting of his regional directors along with other SES employees. A majority of the meetings in the first two years should take place in Washington.

2. While we do not recommend any specific timetable for the regional directors meeting with park superintendents, they should adopt policies and procedures to improve on the existing practice.

3. The National Park Service should develop a short- and long-term strategy for implementing specific goals and objectives. This strategy should be an outgrowth of an interactive process involving the Washington Office, regional directors, and park superintendents. Such a process would not only produce a coherent organizational strategy, but would also be a tangible issue around which to improve communications within the Park Service.

4. The NPS strategy should be supported from the directorate by tying implementation to an improved performance appraisal process to ensure accountability. The National Park Service needs to move away from rewarding and encouraging "safe" managers.

5. The Park Service should build external constituencies by promoting an awareness and an understanding of servicewide, systemwide, and park-specific issues, encouraging membership and active participation in local boards and commissions, and supporting NPS professionals who deal proactively and professionally with other federal and state agencies, local representatives, and other external interest groups. All of these actions should be part of a program to educate the public about the agency's broad responsibilities and its significance to the community served by the Park Service.

6. The National Park Service should develop and implement a proactive public relations agenda that specifically ties resource management programs to media programs. The Park Service should spend less time talking about use of facilities and more on resource stewardship, educating the public on the significance of the individual park units. A coherent media strategy is essential if the Park Service is to move away from its present reactive and defensive mode.

Issue 4. What management practices will ensure that NPS personnel are able to exert professionalism in a political environment?

Background and Findings

Over the past 75 years the National Park Service has grown dramatically in size and complexity, reflecting both the addition of diverse types of units to the system and increasing visitation. Moreover, there is an increasing number of people and activities of all kinds adjacent to parks, particularly in areas where private lands subject to development surround the park unit. The Park Service has found itself frequently pushed into the political arena in which the interface

between career professionals and elected and appointed officials becomes of critical importance.

The Park Service has often chafed under the constraints placed on it by higher levels within the administration or by Congress. On the other hand, encouraged by outside groups, the service frequently has been seen as acting "independent" of direction coming from above. In those instances in which policy decisions and direction from the administration have been opposed by NPS personnel, these individuals have sometimes gone directly or indirectly to Congress or interest groups to rectify the situation. This has strained relationships and has resulted in increasing attempts by political leaders to exert additional control over the Park Service through a variety of means, including placing political appointees in positions formerly occupied by career NPS personnel.

It is unrealistic to expect that the National Park Service will reclaim the "good old days" when it could operate as a cohesive, largely independent professional agency. On the other hand, it is important to the future of the lands and resources that the Park Service manages, as well as to the American public it serves, that the service operate constructively within the executive branch of government and effectively interact with elected representatives at all levels. This will demand an improved understanding and appreciation of the political/career interface between NPS people and elected representatives. The increasing layers of political appointees between the director of the Park Service and the secretary of the interior, as well as the relative lack of familiarity of recent NPS directors with people and problems in the field, have caused confusion, uncertainty, and sometimes open hostility. While in some instances it would appear that the direction from above was clear, it simply was deemed inconsistent with the "Park Service" view of what should be done.

This situation is not unique to the National Park Service. The Volker Commission report concluded that an excessive number of relatively inexperienced political appointees between the secretary of the interior and the career work force of many agencies has reduced the quality and effectiveness of public service. It discourages talented men and women from remaining in the career service or entering in the first place. Ironically, at a time when the private sector is substantially trimming the layers between the top level of an organization and its operating forces, the government is doing the reverse.

Preliminary Recommendations

4-A **The secretary of the interior should clearly delegate managerial and operational programs to the director of the Park Service, with appropriate policy direction from his office.**

4-B **The secretary of the interior should meet at least once a month with the five principle land management agencies.**

4-C **The director of the National Park Service should establish a planned rotation system between the field and key assignments in Washington to ensure there is a continual interchange of ideas, as well as an understanding of current NPS programs and challenges.**

4-D **The secretary of the interior and the director of the National Park Service should insist that NPS people at all levels establish constructive, cooperative working relationships with adjacent federal, state, and local organizations.**

This good neighbor policy could substantially enhance the effectiveness of park management.

4-E **The regional offices of the Park Service should be given clearer authority and responsibility for the coordination and direction of NPS activities within the region, including insuring that Park Service programs and policies are effectively developed and executed.**

4-F **The director of the Park Service should establish an interchange program with other federal and state cultural, historical, and natural resource organizations.**

This could be an effective two-way street for both, providing professional expertise from the Park Service to those organizations, as well as receiving an infusion of new ideas and energy.

4-G **The secretary of the interior should review the organization levels between the secretary and the director of the National Park Service with an eye to shortening them as much as possible to insure that there is a mutual understanding of programs and policies.**

4-H **The Park Service should develop an annual legislative program. This program should be prepared by the director in cooperation with his regional offices.**

Such an effort will provide a tangible common ground for reestablishing effective dialogue between Congress and the Park Service. Without strong congressional support, the National Park Service will invariably find itself unable to affect is own destiny and fulfill its statutory mandates.

Issue 5. How can the National Park Service take a leadership role in cooperative efforts to protect America's natural and cultural heritage?

Background and Findings

Much of the first century of protection of this country's unique cultural and historic heritage involved federal government ownership. It was not until the mid-1930s that Congress first began to consider providing the Park Service with authority to enter into cooperative agreements to preserve historic sites and assist in the planning of parks, parkways, and recreational needs. Since that time, Congress has continued to develop legislative formulae that separate protection and ownership and involve comprehensive planning. In the 1960s and 1970s, the establishment of the Cape Cod National Seashore, the Lowell Heritage Park, the San Antonio Missions Historical Park, and the Martin Luther King Historical Monument extended the portfolio of instruments developed to protect important values without complete federal ownership. Since the 1960s, the Land and Water Conservation Fund has provided financial assistance to states and local governments for the purpose of fostering

partnerships in the creation of new parks and the restoration of old ones and to encourage statewide planning processes.

In the 1980s, a significant percentage of the newer Park Service units incorporated cooperative approaches to preservation. Further, laws were passed for areas not considered units of the park system that relied heavily on concerted and coordinated state, local, and federal partnerships. These included the New Jersey Coastal Heritage Trail, the Blackstone River Valley, the Delaware and Lehigh Canal, and the Illinois and Michigan Canal. During the same period, technical assistance programs were expanded as a result of congressional action. These activities, primarily located in the regional offices, aided state and local governments.

Many of these efforts and programs have been limited by cutbacks in funding at both the federal and state levels. However, the interest has not diminished. There is a deep commitment among Americans to save places of natural and cultural importance to their way of life. Congress, sensing this concern, has been willing to support actions to incorporate many of these places into the national park system. The practice of creating park units for particular constituencies has raised concerns that the criterion of national significance is being discarded and the Park Service's resources spread too thin. Nevertheless, it is unlikely that Congress will turn its back on growing public pressures to preserve and protect places of natural, historical, or cultural significance—even if their significance is more regional than national. Unless new programs are developed, the leadership of the Park Service, as well as those responsible for developing the U.S. budget, will feel increasingly uncomfortable with this tension.

The working group on environmental leadership proposes a three-part program as a means to resolve this dilemma: (1) a grassroots process to identify areas of unique value; (2) a new program to preserve heritage areas; and (3) a program to raise funds to support heritage and natural resource preservation. These recommendations build on the experience of the 1980s, which indicates that there is widespread public acceptance of new approaches to conservation emphasizing multilevel participation of public and private organizations. In many of these approaches the federal government is a cooperator, but not necessarily the landowner.

Preliminary Recommendations

5-A **A new grass roots planning process should be established to identify the pieces of America's heritage that the public wants to save.**

Steps to implement this recommendation:

1. States should be given funds to implement on a voluntary basis a one-year process to identify natural, cultural, and recreational resources which ought to be protected within their boundaries.

2. The federal government, with the National Park Service as the lead agency but with the full participation of other agencies, should offer technical support to the planning work.

3. Each state's plan should identify areas suitable as (a) additions to the federal estate, such as parks, monuments, refuges, forests, and BLM lands; (b) American heritage areas where some national interest is present and where protection of larger areas is needed (see below); or (c) areas of state or local importance.

4. The National Park Service should evaluate each plan's conformance with general guidelines and should make substantive judgments about the suitability of areas for specific designations.

5. The appropriate federal agency should decide on the suitability of nominated additions to federal lands and submit those nominations to Congress for approval. Subsequent federal grants would be contingent upon approval of these plans.

5-B **An American heritage area (AHA) system should he established to accomplish preservation without long-term federal involvement.**

Steps to implement this recommendation:

1. Each project within the AHA system should be an identifiable geographic area in which elements of American heritage are illustrated and interpreted for the public. These areas would not be units of the national park system.

2. Candidate heritage areas would be identified as part of the inventory process outlined in recommendation 5-A. The National Park Service should evaluate the merits of those areas identified by this process and, upon approval, advance a legislative proposal to authorize funding for a heritage area plan.

3. If Congress approves, the federal government should pick up 75% of the cost of a feasibility study to determine whether or not a specific area should be included in AHA programs. States or localities would be expected to cover the remaining 25%.

    a. These funds could be used to cover project costs identified in the plan, but eligibility for this funding would be limited to a set number of years.

    b. The entire process from implementation of the state plan to the conclusion of the implementation phase would be restricted to 10 years.

5-C **The National Park Service should submit to Congress a new approach to funding, planning for, and carrying out heritage conservation activities at the state and federal level.**

Steps to implement this recommendation:

1. This program would be financed by a one cent per gallon surcharge on gasoline and other transportation fuels.

2. Proceeds from the fund would be divided under a preset allocation formula between federal and state programs.

3. As noted above, for the first 10 years, the funds would be available for implementation, after which general stewardship funds could be made available.

Issue 6. How can the National Park Service take on these leadership responsibilities at a time when its operations budget is already stretched to the limit?

Background and Findings

Over the past two decades the National Park Service has taken on numerous additional missions. Some of these have been in the form of new programs or new parks mandated by Congress, while others relate to meeting federal environmental regulations and laws. Despite the ongoing increases in overall responsibility, the Park Service has not benefitted from substantial expansions in budgetary appropriations. During the 1980s, no real growth occurred in the Park Service budget. One part of the NPS budget, appropriations from the Land and Water Conservation Fund for land acquisition by the Park Service and the state grant program, has been funded at substantially lower levels than in the last decades. To compound matters, line-item requests from Congress have functionally reduced the critical operations budget of the Park Service.

The working group on environmental leadership recognizes the difficulties imposed on the budget process by recent budgetary agreements and realizes

that there is no single, perfect funding alternative. All proposals to increase funding have political liabilities. We fully recognize that their adoption will be difficult, but we acknowledge that without incremental increases in revenues, the goals we have outlined cannot be achieved. The group has recommended a one cent per gallon surcharge on gasoline as a means to finance the new partnership programs outlined under issue 5. It also believes that the Park Service and the Office of Management and Budget should look carefully at the Park Service's current portfolio of user and access fees, a portion of whose receipts should be retained by individual parks. Specifically, we propose two new fees which adhere to the user-pays principle.

Preliminary Recommendations

6-A **Require backcountry campers to pay a fee.**

The revenues would in part pay for the maintenance of trails and backcountry campsites and for the development of programs to inventory and monitor biological resources within the parks. A portion of this fee would be used to cover a portion of the costs to implement the research program outlined in issue 1.

6-B **Require mountaineers and rock climbers to pay a fee.**

This fee would not only reflect the cost of maintenance operations relating to protecting the resources used by climbers but, more importantly, establish an insurance fund to underwrite the cost of search and rescue operations undertaken by NPS personnel.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The following individuals have contributed their time, effort, and insights to the working group process. They deserve special appreciation.

Robert Baker
Lorrain Blatsh
José Cisneros
Deke Cripes
William Everhardt
Mario Fraire
Robert Grady
Reginald Hagood
George Hartzog
Gene Hester
Heather Huyck
Jon Jarvis
Jon Karish
Joan Klinger
Andrew Kopplin
William Kornblum
Matthew Krepps
JoAnn Mahoney
Richard Marks
Jean McKendry
Brian O'Neil
James O'Toole
Chuck Odgaard
William Penn Mott
Palma Robeson
Jerry Rogers
Beverly Rogers
Marie Rust
Bruce Schaeffer
Richard Sellers
Neil Sigmund
Katherine Stevenson
Stephanie Toothman
William Walters
Sandra Walters
Stan Wright