

8. Concluding Thoughts - ANPR Seasonal Survey, 2010

- 1 How Veterans Preference has ruined the Federal Register. I cannot even move up within my position since I must reapply for a pay raise. I do not even make it in the top 15 for the exact position that I have done for years since the list above me is all Veterans with no experience in that position.
- 2 The inability for your experience to "count." A veteran with his 5 or 10 point preference is hired for a permanent job over a term or seasonal with years of experience. Makes it difficult for good employees to have any stability. I am currently applying for any perm job at any level from GS-3 to 9. I have a Masters in History and 25 years of customer contact and can't make it to perm status versus a vet with minimal experience who clicked expert on all the boxes in usajobs. Doesn't seem fair somehow.
- 3 Working at park's with entrenched, unprofessional management.
- 4 my former perm status doe not seem to be getting me positions
- 5 The hiring process is a ridiculous bureaucracy, and I hate fighting to prove I'm qualified when someone else has some "points" or priority.
- 6 Park Management: I have encountered conflicts with parks where job posts are left unfilled because the management didn't want to deal with the excessive hiring process, or were unable to hire an employee because of it.
As a seasonal, with the ease of terminating 1039 Appointments, I have witnessed retaliation against employees who express concern over park handling, or provide suggestions for improvement.
- 7 Adequate, respectable park leadership.
- 8 We seasonals seem to be fed the promise of a bright future when it is clear that the NPS makes no real effort to force hiring changes to help provide any form of longevity. It is depressing to see so many good rangers flooding from the agency they joined to outside sources that pay better, take better care of their employees, and understand getting "paid in sunsets" is a blatant attempt to play on emotions rather than making it possible to have a guaranteed future with the agency or even afford to live.
- 9 It's really hard to find out WHEN most seasonal jobs actually start, and that makes it hard to plan ahead...some will say EOD Spring of 2010, but most don't even say that!
- 10 The ability to keep my annual leave, year round, instead of getting paid for it. This is both a benefit (to get paid for it), but also a downfall because I start my season with no annual leave.
- 11 Not all supervisors have the "tickets" to be doing the job they do. For some, their personnel skills are lacking. Sometimes not the most qualified, highest quality person gets the permanent jobs.
- 12 Terrible supervisors and managers. And lack of control of budgets for seasonal and permanent LE Rangers. Mayors (SUPT.) of the parks I see can take what they want for their own little cities other wise known as park headquarters.
- 13 Lack of advancement opportunities---there are VERY few GS-7 seasonal positions. I would happily be a seasonal for a decade and not be concerned about moving to permanent if there were advancement opportunities. Similarly, I would be interested in "permanent seasonal" positions or "term seasonals." I would also be interested in term positions shared between parks, ie. Glacier in the summer and Big Bend in the winter, even if there are a few weeks of furlough between each park's busy season.
- 14 Permanent employees tend to treat seasonals as transient and often take little time to engage, mentor, and encourage seasonals. It's also problematic to find seasonal work for two people at the same place because different divisions hire at different times. I've had to turn down a job because a division said they didn't have funding to hire my partner, and then they called to offere him a job a few weeks later after they had already filled the position offered to me.
- 15 All too often, my wife and I have felt that seasonal Park Rangers were treated as no more than "warm bodies" ---as people who were necessary to lead tours, work information desks, and rove sites. Unlike most corporations, we weren't treated as important or well trained resources; our opinions, thoughts, suggestions and feedback were never solicited. And during the season and even at the end, no one ever asked us for suggestions or feedback, no one ever asked how we thought programs could be improved or visitor experiences enhanced, and no one ever did anything to try to have us return. After being the president of a manufacturing company for 27 years, it was just strange watching and observing the differences between how we treated employees and how the NPS treats people! And worse still, many managers were so involved in other projects and in what could only be considered unnecessary paperwork, that they didn't supervise or audit programs, they didn't seem to care about visitor experiences or how to enhance visitor experiences, they didn't seem to care about the seasonals as people and human beings, and they made no attempts to mentor and encourage the better younger rangers in the hope of keeping them interested in the Park Service. It all was very strange and very sad! To be sure, sometimes we felt seasonals were treated like some of the Russian troops during some of the WWII battles, namely, as expendable bodies that could be just pushed forward, and when one dropped (or left), another person would rush in to replace the first body..... Again.....kind of sad!

- 16 Lack of support from permanents for seasonals; seem to alternately envy us and revile us
- 17 Seasonals are often used to fill what should be permanent positions. One example of this is when parks hire both winter and summer seasonals instead of combining the positions. Also there should be a system by which time in as a seasonal should earn you automatic appointment as a permanent employee given good performance.
- 18 in-fighting; some employees are unstable and undermine others with strong work ethic. They mis-guide and try to get others in trouble on purpose.
- 19 change in GS level for same job from summer season to winter season because park advertises that way. No change in duties or administrative tasks. Feels like being taken advantage of.
- 20 Professional development opportunities for seasonal workers. Stipends to pay for EMS training, etc.
- 21 Lack on entry level permanent "All Sources" positions, and/or the inability to obtain "status" regardless of the number of seasons you work.
- 22 Every season, I feel unsure if I will be hired back for the same position. It would be nice to have a stronger sense of confidence that I will be employed next year.
- 23 Slow hiring process - particularly delayed this summer hiring season (2010)
- 24 Honestly, these are all critical issues.
- 25 Little or no input for decision making after 13 years with superior job performance rating. Many of the decisions are made by people who are never in the field. Fail to get full 1039 when there is still work to be done. Park would be able to provide more essential services in the winter for visitor access. Seasonals lack the benefits and job security and are treated as less valuable, expendable. Park service loses a lot of talented people because of a lack of upward mobility in the current park of employment. Preference is given to people from other parks who may be less dedicated to the operational goals of the Park, their purpose is only advancement. Those who chose to stay at one park and dedicate themselves to that park's specific mission often find themselves training the next person every few years for a position that they know well but are unable to reach without moving around first. There is also a disconnect with the new hiring processes. Someone might not qualify at a certain level when applying for a job but somehow they rate at a higher level at another.
- 26 The previous ANPR Board Member tasked with 'Seasonal Perspectives' resigned from the Board a year ago. Find out why he resigned.
- 27 piss poor management of seasonals employees, as well as the treatment of seasonals employees compared to Perm. rangers is vastly different.
- 28 The "last minute" hiring practices! It is very difficult to be entering a new season (winter or summer) and be still waiting for job applications/hiring to be complete, thus the syndrome of not knowing where you'll be in two weeks. This has been the most frustrating aspect for me. It is unsettling and makes you feel very unstable.
- The salary is decent on an hourly basis, but not overall when you work only 5 months/yr and can't get winter employment. I've been a seasonal for five years (GS-07 for three) and never even gotten a nibble for winter park employment.
- 29 NPS has an inherent "clique" system that seems to create tension and competition between divisions and ends up with work not being done because it belongs to another division. Perhaps it could be seen as a microcosm of our national problems. Democracy is a difficult thing to maintain without a strong national spirit and positive attitude. The military uses a more rigid system, but seems to be able to build loyalty. Since the Park Service began with a military background, perhaps some of the same techniques and a more inclusive system could rebuild, within the entire work force, the pride and work ethic that characterized the first rangers.
- 30 Too much assigned to accomplish in 40 hours, and no OT pay.
- 31 Not being in the loop with information about NPS opportunities and not provided training opportunities that permanent employees have
- 32 It would be great if there were more subject to furlough opportunities

- 33 I could voice complaints for hours, but my greatest concern as a seasonal interpreter is that a tremendous amount of expertise is expected of us for ridiculously inadequate compensation. As a former permanent interpretive ranger, I chose to return to seasonal work to work in a dream park. I had no idea the amount of perks (travel, benefits, low expectations) in the life of a permanent ranger until I became one. Back now in the seasonal life, I love the NPS, but have to balance that with a little self-worth - which means I can't live without job security and benefits forever. It is hard to be one of "the best" at one's profession but be told by the director of the NPS (Mary Bomar in June of 2008) that we are "paid in sunsets."
- 34 I would work seasonally forever if there were health benefits.
- 35 lack of critical evaluation of the value of seasonals to the service. I have been praised immensely by managers and by the public for the quality of my interpretative work. This is in part because of the skills I've developed 20 years of work in another career. A female colleague of mine is also middle aged and capable of very high level interpretative work, yet because we are seasonals, we cannot do IDP, we cannot compete for positions, and at the same time the NPS is populated with many instances of "dead wood" with GS-09 positions. Efforts must be made to attract and bring in the best talent and remove deadwood from the system
- 36 poor housing in most parks for seasonals
- 37 When you work at a park that has housing for seasonals and your wife cannot stay in housing when she comes to visit.
- 38 I have been a backcountry ranger for 5 years, always as a GS-5. With my position there is no possibility of becoming a GS-7 without becoming a law-enforcement ranger, which is more or less unnecessary for the job. I feel there is far too much emphasis on law enforcement when that is only one of the many important components within the NPS. I would like to see the possibility for growth in other fields within the NPS. I think if one works anywhere long enough, there should be commensurate compensation.
- 39 The quality of park housing is, in my experience, quite poor, and seasonals tend to get the worst of the worst.
- 40 I just want to reiterate the lack of health benefits--I love my job with the NPS so much but I worry that a personal injury will end my career because I won't be able to afford health care.
- 41 Poor quality of seasonal housing at most parks and the ridiculous system in place to determine how much rent to pay. Seasonal housing costs for seasonals should be the measured cost of utilities used. Construction, maintenance, and upkeep of seasonal housing should be paid by the park / DOI.
- 42 You covered it with lack of health & retirement insurance plus the lack of step increases. Considering I need a college degree to be an Interpretive Park Ranger I could use a little better income to pay off student loans.
- 43 Not enough permanent jobs and the few that are out there are taken by veterans-who have little or no experience in the field.
- 44 Just to reiterate-health care should be given to all..as should retirement-the years I have worked as a seasonal have been many all together, yet get nothing for that in the way of benefits. Hopefully, that is going to change very soon. It should.
- 45 I don't feel that seasonal workers have a "voice" if they are treated unfairly by their supervisors. It feels like if you go to the next level with a complaint or concern, you will suffer by not being invited back as a rehire the next season.
- 46 Housing is AWFUL. Parks need to do something to upgrade the housing for seasonals. I spent one summer living in my tent in a campground, and one summer in a efficiency that was 45+yrs old. Lack of privacy, thin walls, leaky sinks, rusty cabinets, etc.
- 47 The arbitrary nature of the uniform code, as to what is accepted and what it not allowed----is so bizarre and varies so much from park to park.
- The jaded manner in which many of the permanent employees conduct themselves. Talk about gov. waste and abuse of the system.
- 48 Opportunities for education tuition reimbursement.
- 49 Park housing for seasonals isn't always up to snuff.
- 50 1) Lack of opportunity for training opportunities that will grow my skills (I mean beyond the usual early season trainings and recerts).
2) Lack of flexibility by the management in trying a hybrid type job such as Interp and Backcountry ranger.
3) Lack of support for creative solutions to creating a term job based on park needs and employee willingness to do the leg work.
4) My biggest concern listed above is lack of step increases or even grade increases for rangers that return year after year.
- 51 lack of input into the decision making process, inability to provide feedback on the performance of superiors.
- 52 Not knowing exactly how long your season will last as changes in budget allocation can occur mid-season (i.e. sometimes you stay on later or sometimes you have to leave earlier than was originally stated).
Lack of fairness in the hiring process. Sometimes it is equal opportunity, but sometimes it is about who you know.
- 53 Lack of housing for spouses/families/pets. Constant moving every 4-6 months to find employment.

- 54 Providing additional points for veterans who served in the armed forces. What do you think the civilians did while they were serving, we were as well. I have seen employees get a job not qualified for just because of the veteran status. If we are all equal, why additional status?
- 55 Shared housing or lack of housing all together sucks! I've turned down more offers over housing issues than for any other reason, including permanent stf positions.
- 56 All of these issues listed are a major on going concern of mine. I have only been a seasonal employee for the NPS for 2 years but have worked as a seasonal for the US Forest Service for over 6 years. My largest problem is that no matter how hard or long I have worked for either agency my ability to move into permanent employment does not improve. I have tried for almost ten years to gain permanent employment and always get bumped out of the running by a status candidate or a veteran. Also, seasonals are some of the hardest working and most dedicated employees yet are treated like second class citizens, with no real opinions that matter, or input into park management. Seasonal jobs are also often of the highest risk (ie. trails, fire, law enforcement) and yet have no health benefits to cover degenerative effects of laborious work. I want my time as a seasonal to count towards obtaining status level, I want to be treated as an equal among permanents, and I want the same benefits that permanents have seeing that we work just as hard and are just as dedicated. Maybe more dedicated since there is no guarantee of employment year to year, yet we keep coming back!
- 57 No.
- 58 The whole hiring process is really crazy. I really hate the a,b,c,d,e questions. You cannot explain yourself or truly describe your skills. Also, the idea behind having to work seasonal work before being able to get a permanent position is not good...I have a great variety of education and work experience, but that does not seem to matter. Also, the federal government needs to get away from special hiring authorities...why not just hire the most qualified person?
- 59 Many of us are concerned about the commercialization of parks. The concessioners have too much clout. They are often allowed to maintain substandard facilities and utilize NPS employees for their own profit.
- Some parks and monuments are relying on volunteers for interpretation. They are often NOT cost effective (at least in the monument in which I work) and do not fit the high standards of the NPS. Seasonal employees are not always valued for the rich experience and knowledge they bring year after year.
- 60 Seasonals do not receive as good of training as permanents. All summer long, the seasonals are passed over for training opportunities so that the permanents can go. Since Seasonals have less experience, are in the field more and do not have winters to receive training, I feel this is a dangerous practice and is a leading issue to why I will not be returning as a park service employee.
- 61 We travel with our family--hubby and 2 teenaged sons. Family housing is a HUGE issue for us. It's the major factor in my ability to work. (I've had to sit 2 seasons out due to lack of housing.)
- 62 seasonal positions lasting only 1040 hrs., especially when there is work in the shoulder seasons and money in the budget to pay for it. Why not 9 month positions??