

the Association of
National Park Rangers



Isle Royale National Park. NPS photo.

NEWSLETTER

Volume 1, Number 2
June 1979

the Association of National Park Rangers NEWSLETTER

ANPR Position Paper

Park Technician and Park Ranger

At the October, 1978 meeting of the Association of National Park Rangers the membership agreed that the most urgent issue facing the profession at this time are the problems related to the Park Technician (026) occupation series. This concern is timely because the Associate Director, Management and Operations has been in the process of trying to resolve some of these problems.

The Association appointed a committee consisting of Dick Martin (Yosemite), Bob Cunningham (Gateway) and Roger Siglin (Yellowstone) to draft this position paper outlining field problems which relate to the 026 series and recommending possible courses of action to the Associate Director. The committee has reviewed a number of sources in drafting this paper. The "Position Paper — Park Technician Series (026)" drafted by the Associate Director, Management and Operations was thoroughly studied. Two of the original FOST team members were contacted for their thoughts. Leaders in the Ranger profession throughout the Service provided management input. A discussion at the Rendezvous resulted in a variety of ideas.

Basically, the Association agrees with the Associate Director, Management and Operations that there are a great many problems related to the 026 series. We wish to go on record as feeling that these problems are complex as they are related to the National Park Service policies regarding employee educational requirements, experience, grade levels, Civil Service standards, performance standards and training policies.

To indicate the magnitude of the problems we have itemized some of the more obvious difficulties as follows;

1. There is no realistic career ladder for 026's above the GS-5 level. This has resulted in diverse morale problems in the 026 series.
2. Field level Ranger/Technician duties such as interpretation, resource management and protection are not viewed by the Service as professional level jobs despite the need for academic training in most of these responsibilities. This has resulted in 026's viewing themselves as second class employees having first class responsibilities and doing a first class job.
3. All seasonal uniformed positions are classed as 026 with no consideration for the academic demands of most of the positions.
4. Because of the pressure to produce, 025's and 026's frequently find themselves performing the same duties side-by-side. The 025 will be a GS-9, and the 026 will be a GS-5.
5. It is difficult to fill many 025 vacancies at the GS-9 non-supervisory level because there are almost no 025's at the GS-7 level.
6. Park Managers have and will receive ever-increasing pressure to produce. Thus, they have and will continue to recruit the very best qualified applicants for all vacancies, whether 025 or 026.
7. Prospective 026's will continue to rush to fill any vacancies, at no matter what grade level, and no matter how the requirements are written, because of the desirability of Service employment.



Petrified Forest National Park. NPS photo

8. Unskilled laborers are receiving higher salaries in most parts of the country than 026's who have professional responsibilities.

9. The vast majority of 026's are willing to be mobile and aspire to careers in Park Management.

10. The Service has an ever-increasing need for flexible employees with a variety of professional skills, rather than employees with narrow specialties in sub-professional skills. The above examples amply demonstrate the complexities of the 026 problems. These difficulties combine to present the Service with some very hard decisions. The Association of National Park Rangers applauds the resolve of the Service to confront these problems head-on.

We feel that the reputation of the National Park Service has always rested squarely on the dedication, esprit de corps, training, and expertise of the public contact and resource management employees. We say this with a great deal of humility because it is a heavy responsibility. There are now some very serious morale, dedication and expertise problems. The reputation of the National Park Service is at stake. The 026 series, combined with current recruitment, training and promotion procedures make up a large part of these problems. This committee believes that the following solutions will solve a majority of the above listed problems. These solutions are divided into immediate, short term actions and longer term actions, over the next two years.

IMMEDIATE ACTIONS

Amend the Technician series to make it both a working series and a trainee series. Provide a realistic career ladder from GS-7, 8 or 9 level whether to remain in basic field skills

or whether to compete for 025 vacancies. Technicians at these levels could apply for vacancies in the 025 series at the GS-7 or 9 level and be selected on a competitive basis. Just this solution alone will solve a majority of the above listed problems.

1. Morale will improve because all 025's and 026's would have come up through the same system.
2. Artificial barriers to cross-over would be removed.
3. It will bring 026 salaries almost up to the level of unskilled laborers.
4. Management will have a pool of eligible candidates for non-supervisory GS-025-7/9 vacancies.
5. Technicians will have the option of remaining in field specialties or competing for higher level jobs.
6. Managers will no longer be required to hold 026's down to narrow, low level tasks.
7. The best qualified applicants will be available for 025 vacancies.

LONGER TERM ACTIONS

ONE RANGER SERIES

Combine the Park Ranger and Park Technician Series into one Park Ranger occupation. This will include all visitor protection, resource management, and interpretive duties that require academic training, expert judgement, professional skills or supervision. Rote, non-judgmental, low level positions will be consigned to the Park Aid Series. Examples of Park Aid jobs will be non-supervisory positions in fee collection, fire line work or information desk. All positions with decision-making responsibilities requiring judgement, academic training, field skills or supervision will be included in the Park Ranger occupation. The seasonal

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ANPR Update

In this issue, you will find two position papers that the ANPR has produced. The first, a product of the committee composed of Dick Martin, Roger Siglin, and Bob Cunningham that you appointed at the Rocky Mountain Rendezvous, addresses the technician/ranger dilemma. The Director asked that we forward our comments to Jim Tobin for his use as he and other members of the Directorate tried to resolve the problems generated by the 026/025 series. In a memo to the Regional Directors, with our position paper attached, Jim wrote:

During the February 5 conference, mention was made of a position paper received from the Association of National Park Rangers (ANPR) which had been solicited by the Director. Rick Smith, President of the ANPR, told me that distribution of their position paper was welcomed. A prolonging of the issue seems unnecessary, yet I feel you all should have the opportunity to read the paper. Other problems may arise that would be eased by consultation with the ANPR and/or the several other employee organizations. I suggest you get to know them.

The personnel division subsequently published National Park Service Personnel Management Letter No. 79-9 (335). I suggest that you all carefully read this letter. It makes substantial changes in the manner by which technicians can qualify for conversion to the ranger series. Your personnel officer in the park or region can obtain this letter for you. Hopefully, this is merely the first step in resolving this important issue.

The second paper is our Association's response to the Associate Director of Administration's request for comments on the proposed merit promotion plan. Since this draft proposal details both how the vacancy announcement system will operate and how candidates for vacant positions will be evaluated, it seemed vital that we let Nancy Garrett know which parts of the draft from our point of view needed further refinement. A committee chaired by Jim Carrico prepared our comments. The following cover memo accompanied the committee's paper:

Enclosed please find the ANPR's comments on the proposed merit promotion plan. Our review was prepared by a committee chaired by Jim Carrico.

We are convinced that the vacancy announcement system will benefit both the Service and the individual employee. Please contact Jim or me if the ANPR can be of further assistance in the review process.

The ANPR will continue to comment on issues that affect field personnel. I hope that if the executive committee asks you to participate in the preparation of such position papers that you will eagerly accept the opportunity to offer Bill and his staff the benefit of our point of view.

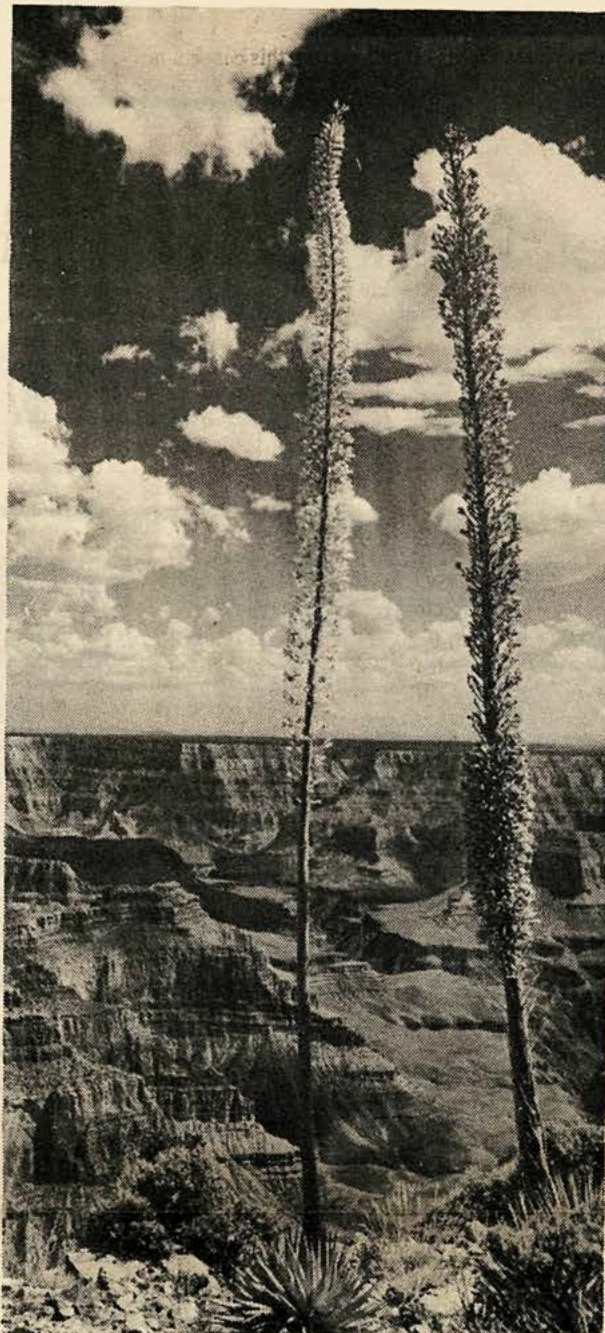


Photo by Dave Ochsner

Third Annual Ranger Rendezvous

If the amount of early reservations is any indication, the Third Annual Ranger Rendezvous should be a whopper. Because of the large response, Jimmy Graves, Innkeeper of Graves Mountain Lodge has decided to close the area to the public and turn the entire lodge over to the Association. This means that lodge facilities, swimming pool, tennis courts, horseback riding, etc. will be for the sole use of members of the Association.

As we have stated before, the Lodge has a large variety of accommodations ranging from dormitory space, rustic cabins, old farm houses to modern motel units. In addition, Jimmy will provide space for camping units for a \$2.00 flat fee. This fee will cover the cost of renting several "Johnny on the spots." October is a beautiful month to camp in the mountains of Virginia.

Graves Mountain Lodge's reputation for fine food stretches throughout the South, and Jimmy has some treats in store for us. Dining will be family style for all meals — all you can eat. The only rule is that you cannot leave any food on your plate! Tentative menu: Monday, southern fried chicken and Virginia ham; Tuesday, fresh trout and roast beef; and Wednesday, steak. Those who wish to hike or take trips will be provided box lunches.

Prices will range depending on accommodations selected, however, the full packages will range from \$25 to \$35 a day. That price includes lodging, meals, beer, coffee and snacks. Those who wish to stay elsewhere but eat at the Lodge should plan on about \$15 per day for meals.

There are millions of attractions close by, particularly in Charlottesville. We plan to have bus trips for family members to Monticello, Ash Lawn in Charlottesville, and one to Washington, D.C. Aside from the meet and greet function Monday, we will have a Virginia Bluegrass-Texas Swing Dance Band on Wednesday evening. Weather permitting we will have this function outside.

We will have some exciting topics to discuss and some difficult problems to resolve and we need your input so plan to attend. If you are unable to join us, make your thoughts known to your regional representative and encourage membership.

For people in the Western areas getting to the 1979 rendezvous may be a considerable expense. To help to reduce the cost group rates secured through a travel agency may be a solution. The main problem will be getting your group together. To facilitate getting the people interested in group rates together the regional representatives will be contact points. Those people interested in flying to the meetings can contact their rep, the rep will then select people from each geographic area to organize charter flights. This will allow people from outlying areas to be able to benefit from traveling in a group. Having several large groups arriving at the other end will also reduce logistical problems of picking up a multitude of single travelers.

For reservations contact:

John Chew
Shenandoah National Park
Rt. 3, Box 138F
Elkton, Virginia 22827

Park Technician and Park Ranger

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employee levels will be GS-4/5/6/7. The permanent employee levels will be GS-5/7/9/11/12/13. Park Management positions at grades GS-11 through GS-15 will be an extension of this series or can be assigned another series.

OCCUPATION STANDARDS

The occupation and grade level standards will be revised to provide a logical progression of increasing duties, increasing field skills, and increasing complexity from GS-5 to GS-13.

1. The GS-5/7 levels will be the training and first performance level. Emphasis will be on field skills, training, and developing operational ability.

2. The GS-9/11 levels will be the full performance and first supervisory levels. Park staff officers may also fall at these grades. Emphasis will be on continuing field skills and developing supervisory and basic management skills.

3. The GS-12/13 levels will be for division chiefs of major parks or major staff positions in regions and WASO. Emphasis will be on the continuing supervision and developing management skills.

RECRUITMENT

The National Park Service has always required career employees whose interests and academic training reflected an interest and ability in both park resources and visitor services. Those with interests only in resources or only in visitor services have never had the flexibility to understand our double mission of resource management and visitor services. Current NPS educational requirements are not providing Ranger personnel who are academically trained to perform our conservation/resource management/visitor services mission. Therefore, our recruitment procedures must be changed.

1. Require all applicants for Park Ranger jobs to have a minimum of 30 hours of academic training in a field natural science.

2. In addition, require all applicants for Park Ranger jobs to have a minimum of 30 hours of academic training in a human related science, such as sociology, criminology, psychology, geography and history.

3. Require all applicants to be interviewed by a board of successful field and supervisory level Park Rangers.

TRAINING

Train all new Park Rangers during the first two years of permanent employment at one of the central training centers. This training should relate primarily to the concepts and field skills in protection, resource management, and interpretation. Supervision and management training will be left for later. Train all occupants of law enforcement positions at FLETC during the first two years of permanent employment. Continue regional and local training in specialized skills.

CAREER LADDERS

There are currently huge bulges in the number of employees at the GS-5 and at the GS-9 levels. The upward mobility for these employees is not good because of limited retirements and because of position ceilings. These people will have realistic career ladders only if we provide a more logical pyramid of number of positions at the GS-7 and GS-11 levels. To this end we suggest the following actions:

1. Establish more positions at the GS-7 level by upgrading some of the more responsible GS-5 positions, or downgrading some of the less complex GS-9 positions.

2. Establish more positions at the GS-11 level by upgrading some of the more responsible GS-9 positions.

There are likely other logical alternatives and solutions to our 026 problems; however, the above actions will give the Service the best combination of capable and flexible employees. We feel that the above measures have good field support, that they will improve morale in both the 026 and the 025 series, that they will benefit park management and that they will enhance the reputation of the National Park Service through efficient resource management and visitor services.

ANPR — Who Is Eligible To Join

Membership in the Association of National Park Rangers is open to everyone who is interested in the park ranger profession. Send your first year membership dues of \$10.00 to:

Association of National Park Rangers
Post Office Box 3059
Yellowstone National Park, WY 82190

Revisions to Merit Promotion Plan

Thank you for this opportunity to comment on the proposed Merit Promotion Plan. We support the vacancy announcement system concept and believe it will be instrumental in improving employee career development and will be beneficial to management by surfacing the best available candidates for any given vacancy. Our specific comments and concerns with the proposal are listed below by reference to subchapter and page.

Subchapter 1.5, Delegations (page 3)

The authority delegated to the Regional Directors to administer merit promotion actions at GS-14 and below is a big departure from past practice. We can envision some workload imbalances in the Regional offices until they have had sufficient time to develop the expertise to handle this added responsibility. More importantly though, we can envision a trend toward career regionalization. That is, employees spending much of their career in one region. It is not only important for the Service to encourage cross-fertilization between regions, but it is necessary for the development of its employees. Our recommendation is to provide for periodic and systematic review of selections and placements to ensure that the career development needs of the Service and its employees are met. This is properly the function of the Washington Office and should be documented in the plan.

A second concern under delegation is the redelegation authority. It is conceivable, and quite likely, that this authority will be redelegated to some of the larger park areas that have the capability to do this type work. While some employees of those regions and areas where this has taken place might be aware of its occurrence, it would not be generally known to employees of other regions. We recommend that this redelegation, which must be in writing, be included as an appendix to the plan. This not only will promote better employee understanding of the workings of the plan, but will more definitely fix responsibility for its fair implementation.

Subchapter 2.1D, Servicewide Vacancy List (page 9)

It is readily apparent that the distribution of the weekly list is a key factor in the success of the proposed vacancy announcement system. It is imperative that responsibility for timely distribution be fixed and this should be detailed in the plan. This entire section is too short on details. Who will receive the lists? Will they be sequentially numbered so that missing lists will be noticed? Will they be mailed to the Regions or directly to the Parks? Will the vacancy be listed just once or will it run announced until the closing date is passed? Will the weekly listing fulfill the formal requirements for announcements or is it a convenience list such as the Departmental Vacancy Information System List (DVIS)? These details are of vital concern to employees and this information must be available in the plan and not promulgated by separate memoranda.

We have one specific comment on the mechanics of the weekly list. With reduced print size techniques, could not the listings be longer or provide more detail than the one-line proposal? A sentence or two about the job's responsibilities, housing availability, etc., would be helpful and could stimulate interest, particularly in some "difficult to fill" job locations. The 2/26-3/2/79 DVIS listing indicated 60 vacancies in one liner format for 20 different servicing personnel offices, all on both sides of a single piece of paper. It's not likely the Service would have this heavy a workload. Space would be available for more job information by using reduced print and our weekly list could still be kept to one page.

Subchapter 2.2C, Methods for Locating Candidates (page 11)

Explain in detail the statement: "Vacancy announcements for positions in grades GS-9 and above may be augmented by the use of a Servicewide computerized skills inventory maintained by the Branch of Employee Evaluation and Staffing." This appears to have far-reaching consequences and deserves a full explanation of how it will be used. Will it identify candidates for promotion? It is misleading to have this subject included with the subsection "Vacancy Announcements"; it should be listed separately.

Subchapter 2.2G, Certification (page 14)

Does the second paragraph of this section mean that all candidates who apply for a vacancy on a lateral transfer basis will be certified to the selecting official provided they meet

the qualification standards? If this is true, this concept needs to be stated more clearly.

The third paragraph of this section should be rewritten in a positive vein to describe how handicapped persons can compete for promotion.

Subchapter 2.2H (7), Selection and notification (page 17) The opening sentence (a member of the servicing personnel office makes the formal offer of employment) needs clarification so there is no misunderstanding of management's responsibility for selection. How does this match with definition #27 on page 31? In the second sentence of this paragraph, what is meant by "adverse information block placement"?

Appendix A, Definition of Terms (page 29)

Include after #14 the definition of lateral transfer and cross reference to reassignment.

Appendix C, Responsibilities under the NPS etc. (page 37)

Under the Chief Personnel Officer: Item #2 should reach all positions GS-15 and above, instead of GS-16? (assuming the promotion actions at GS-14 and below are delegated to regional and Center Directors as stated on page 3.)

Items 5 through 11 seem to imply that the Chief Personnel Officer has this responsibility servicewide. Suggest this section (A) be organized differently to show servicewide responsibilities and operational responsibilities separately. A clear distinction between staff and line functions needs to be made between the Chief Personnel Officer and the WASO, Center and Regional Office Personnel Officers.

NPS FPM Supplement 335-1, Items F (page S-9)

There is no discussion of the relationship between the weekly Servicewide Vacancy Announcement (one liners) and the standard multi-paged announcement. For cost effectiveness



and reduction of mail room/distribution workloads, it would be most practical to rely on the weekly list as the prime vehicle (legal) for getting out the word. Those employees who were interested could obtain the larger announcement or enough detailed information to determine if they wanted to apply. It would not be the responsibility of the servicing personnel to distribute that announcement to all other field installations. We support this approach.

Additional considerations in Review of Draft Merit Promotions Plan (Memo 2/14/79)

Approve: Exemption from competition upgradings resulting from planned management actions.

Approve: No limit on the number of best qualified candidates referred.

Disapprove: Transfers and reinstatements to positions with higher promotion potential.

Partial Approval: Eliminate the requirement for priority and repromotion consideration. (Require only one year or less for priority consideration.)

Approve: Eliminate acceptance of voluntary applications.

Disapprove: Exemption from promotion plan procedures selection from Reemployment Priority list at a higher grade than last held in competitive service.

We have appreciated this opportunity to let you know of our concerns with the Draft Merit Promotion Plan. Our overriding concern for the plan is that authority be spelled out, responsibility fixed, and accountability present at all levels of its administration. If we can be of further assistance to you in re-drafting or clarifying our position, please let us know.



Seasonal Evaluations

We still want to produce a newsletter devoted to a discussion of the seasonal evaluation process.

If you have ideas or alternatives to consider, please send them to:

Bill Wade
Assistant Chief Park Ranger
Great Smoky Mountains National Park
Gatlinburg, TN 37739

Wanted — ANPR Photographs

We need good quality, black and white photographs for the ANPR Newsletter.

Any subject will do, but we are particularly interested in historical aspects of ranger activities, scenery, etc. We would like to develop a photograph file so send a copy to:

Rick Gale
P.O. Box 206
Grand Canyon, Arizona 86023

ANPR Newsletter

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Isle Royale National Park. NPS photo.

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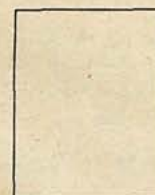
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Photo by Dave Ochsner

Association of National Park Rangers
Post Office Box 3059
Yellowstone National Park, Wyoming 82190

\$10.00 Annual dues (first year only)



A Message From The Chair

It has been an exciting time for the ANPR. Capitalizing on both the enthusiasm created by the first two Rendezvous and on the reputation for the willingness to address difficult issues built by Butch Farabee and his executive committee, the Association has been invited to participate in the Service's decision-making process when the results of the process have implications for field personnel.

What makes it exciting is not just the fact that the Association provides a way for us to express our opinions. It's also exciting that the Director has encouraged his staff to seek our points of view. I don't think that we could have asked for more cooperation.

What we can ask, though, is that you continue to urge your colleagues to join the ANPR. It looks as if we are going to have a real opportunity to influence the decisions that most affect us. This is something we've sought for a long time. Your membership has helped make it work. Isn't it time that everyone gets involved?