



**APPL-NPS Forum
January 18, 2006
Washington, DC**

Introduction and Overview

APPL President Charles Money asked each Forum participant to introduce him or herself and to state an expectation or desired outcome for the meeting. These are summarized below. A list of participants is attached.

Awareness:

- Raised awareness of cooperating associations within NPS, and a reaffirmation of what these associations are about and why they exist.
- Articulation by NPS leadership of what they value from their partnerships with cooperating associations and acknowledgement of the importance and value of these partnerships.
- Putting a face on cooperating associations rather than a brand on the shelf – shared passion for mission as illustrated by representation of members at the forum.

Clarification:

- Understanding of what NPS expects from cooperating associations, how cooperating associations fit within NPS strategic planning, and what cooperating associations need to do to hold up their part of the NPS partnership.
- If expectations for cooperating associations and other nonprofit partnerships are changing within NPS, find out what these partners need to do differently.
- Discussion of new models for visitor center operations, their implications, and the NPS process in determining appropriate model(s) for a given site.
- Clarified message and direction for cooperating associations as to whether they are valued for their educational mission and visitor services or for purely financial support.
- Clear direction for cooperating associations on background investigation requirements for employees and volunteers with access to NPS facilities.
- Improvement of the partnership construction and fundraising agreement process to avoid costly delays and communication breakdowns within the system.

Communication:

- Access to the right people within NPS to gain clarification, clear communication, and open discussion about changes and their implications.
- Consistency of communication via leadership from the Washington level to the field and to partners.
- Open and continued dialogue.
- Movement to more proactive rather than reactive communication, thus furthering understanding of NPS and its work with cooperating associations.

Purpose and Value of Cooperating Associations to NPS Mission Fulfillment and Visitor Services

Donna Asbury presented information on the purpose and value of cooperating associations, highlighting their longstanding partnership with NPS. This was followed by an overview of concerns brought forward by APPL membership for dialogue during the day. See attached briefing paper and PowerPoint presentation for key points.

Models for Cooperating Associations and Visitor Center Operations – Implications and Challenges

Corky Mayo and Rose Fennell provided an overview of cooperating associations within NPS and evolving models of service. For purposes of simplification, these nonprofit partnerships might be viewed as:

- Cooperating associations – operate interpretive bookstores.
- Friends organizations – provide fundraising and other services.
- Hybrid associations – operate bookstores and provide other services such as fundraising, educational outreach, and volunteer development.
- Nonprofit entities – private foundations or other organizations that support or may operate visitor services within a park, such as are being piloted/explored in Independence NHP, Gettysburg NMP, New York Harbor Parks, and Colonial NHP. These nonprofit entities are neither cooperating associations nor are they concession operations.

The presentation posed the following questions:

- Who should review the agreements of hybrids and new entities?
- Should there be new policy guidance directed towards hybrids and entities?
- How should park/partner managers be best informed about the current trends and issues?

Partnerships are governed within NPS by policies called Directors Orders. Currently those orders that most impact cooperating associations include:

- DO #20 – Agreements
- DO #21 – Fundraising
- DO #32 – Cooperating Associations
- DO 48 - Concessions

Association representatives voiced concern that in embracing new models, NPS may be burning bridges with longstanding cooperating association partners in return for short-term gains and overlooking what is in the best interest of NPS as a whole. There is no net gain if NPS turns over something that existed previously with a partner to a new entity. There is a need for sound financial analyses so that NPS accurately assesses the value of what exists within its partnerships. A basic premise should be that NPS will go to its established cooperating association partners before determining what partnership model should evolve at any given site or group of sites.

Directors Order #21, Donations and Fundraising

John Piltzecker provided an update on the review process for the new DO #21. More than 1,000 comments were received to the draft published in the Federal Register. The new DO #21 is comprised of three parts: the policy, the reference manual, and appendices consisting of model documents. The main areas of the policy receiving the most comments included:

- Solicitation of contributions by NPS employees
- Vetting of donations/donors
- Partnership construction process
- Corporate campaigns and the Proud Partner Program
- Donor recognition

Next steps in the revision process include selection of an NPS Review Committee, and review of comments and initial recommendations by the Committee, which will be shared with the Directorate. A House of Representatives hearing on Management Policies and DO #21 is anticipated for the week of February 5-18. The recommendations and hearing outcomes will then be shared with the NPS Advisory Board Committee on Philanthropy for their input.

A satellite broadcast training on DO #21 will be held on March 3. Cooperating associations and friends groups may participate with their agency partners. Between March 19 and April 8 the NPS National Leadership Council (NLC) will review the draft. It is anticipated that the final DO #21 will be posted in the Federal Register between April 16-21 and training will continue beginning April 23.

Directors Order #32, Cooperating Associations

Rose Fennell provided an overview of the process for updating DO #32. Like DO #21, the new DO #32 will include the policy, reference manual, and appendices including the model standard agreement. Rose has been working with an internal review team to identify areas where further clarification is needed regarding terminology, policy, or across related divisions of the agency. This internal review team completed its work on the revision, with the exception of the appendices, in December. It is anticipated that the updated DO #32 and Reference Manual will be sent to program managers for review in January and shared with partners for review in February.

The primary change within the updated DO #32 will be the requirement of a scope of sales statement. A new section on "Sales Planning" has been added to give further guidance to agency and association managers. The tone of the document reflects more of an equal partnership rather than NPS having a dominant role. The section on "Designation" of an association has been expanded to include guidance for park managers on how to go about choosing a cooperating association partner. A separate section on "Evaluation" was created to distinguish evaluations/operations review as a separate process not tied to termination. The concessions-related sections include information on commercial services planning and clarification of authority to use a Commercial Use Authorization when convenience item sales are below \$25,000. References to fundraising have been reviewed to make sure they are consistent with DO #21. Audit requirements were raised from \$1 million to \$2 million with review raised from \$250,000 to \$500,000 to reflect inflation, time value of money, and to be more in line with states that have audit requirements.

NPS Form 1040, Standardized Reporting

Information was provided that the Director approved the new standardized reporting form on January 4, 2006. This will replace the August 1993 NPS cooperating association reporting form 1040. The new instructions and forms are tied to Internal Revenue Service Reporting Form 990. E-mail and hard copy notice went out January 10, 2006 to NPS cooperating associations informing them that the forms will be used to meet their FY 2005 reporting requirements which are due March 31, 2006. Notice also appeared in Inside NPS and NPS Digest. There has been no decision to date regarding use of the form to report contributions from friends groups.

Comments from NPS Director Fran Mainella and Deputy Director Steve Martin

Steve Martin delivered opening remarks, including an update on the draft NPS Management Policies, open for public comment until February 18. He and the Director encouraged feedback on the draft, following which the document will go through another internal review process including the National Park Advisory Board and subcommittee. They also noted that when there is a conflict in management policies, conservation is a priority.

Director Mainella addressed questions posed in advance of the Forum by APPL, affirming that interpretation and education are core to NPS mission, and that cooperating associations are valued for their partnership in achieving this mission. She said that it is the responsibility of NPS to fund core mission and associations to supplement that funding.

The Director commented on recent studies that show volunteerism increased in the national parks last year. Another survey found that people want to visit national parks as their #1 vacation choice. NPS plans to do a survey of the American people to determine the relevancy of national parks. Other news included

mention that First Lady Laura Bush is honorary chair of both the NPS Junior Ranger Program and the National Park Foundation.

Regarding new models for visitor center operations, the Director asked for input from APPL and its members on how to select and fulfill open opportunities for bookstores and visitor center operations. She said that NPS is now committed to holding discussions with existing cooperating associations upfront before any changes take place that may affect delivery of those services. She also asked for examples, or case studies, to illustrate the impact of changes in policies upon partner operations. It was noted that the NPS National Leadership Council has conference calls every two weeks, and that this venue, as well as the APPL convention, can be a conduit to addressing such unfolding issues as background investigations for staff and volunteers at NPS sites.

Background Investigations for NPS and Cooperating Association Employees

Frank Menzer and Paula Platz provided an overview of HSPD-12, Personal Identity Verification, which provides ID badges to federal employees and non-federal employees that access NPS controlled space or internal NPS computers. NPS is working toward implementing this policy, but a lack of clarification exists as to how the process is to be applied in the field, and how/when it affects cooperating association employees and staff. The process is mandated through OMB.

APPL member organizations shared their experiences, exemplifying the lack of clarity that currently exists regarding how to comply with this new procedure. Chris Jarvi acknowledged the situation and said that additional guidance must come from NPS in order for field staff and partner organizations to meet background investigation requirements. This should be communicated to the field through the NLC. In the meantime, he recommended cooperating associations await further direction for implementation. A task force of NPS and cooperating association staff will look at how this policy impacts associations. LeAnn Simpson and Greta Miller agreed to represent cooperating associations on this issue. Nancy Kotz will serve as the APPL staff liaison to the task force, which will also involve NPS staff Rose Fennell, Joy Pietschmann and Paula Platz.

Facilitated Discussion on the Interface Between NPS, Cooperating Associations, Friends Groups, and Other Partners

Chris Jarvi facilitated discussion on these topics, seeking ways that NPS can continue the dialogue between APPL and its members. Comments and suggestions included the following:

- Appreciation was extended to NPS on the attitude of openness exhibited in this forum.
- There is a need for an ombudsman within NPS and a tracking system to carry capital projects through the capital construction approval process to minimize delays and keep all parties informed.
- There is an obligation to look at cooperating association and other nonprofit partner models that exist and bring forth case studies.
- There is an opportunity to bring superintendents and cooperating associations together for an annual forum of this type – perhaps incorporated into the APPL convention. NPS can send a message to superintendents encouraging their participation in the convention along with their partner associations. APPL should have NPS staff on convention planning committees to ensure relevancy of content.
- NPS could hold a partnership training or forum as a pre-or post APPL convention opportunity.
- APPL and NPS could hold two forums of this type annually, one at the APPL convention, and another in Washington, DC or at a partner association site.
- Conference calls focused regionally or by topic/issue could be organized regularly with partners and their NPS colleagues and leadership.
- APPL could address the NLC annually, based upon issues of national partnership importance.

- There needs to be a stronger regional focus on cooperating associations, much like the partnership coordinators' focus on friends groups. Chiefs of Interpretation need to become reconnected to cooperating associations. These Chiefs hold a conference call every month.

Discussion also ensued around the question of finding balance between earned and philanthropic revenue, and the role of various partners in generating such support. It was noted that friends organizations are seen as being valued for their ability to raise support for a variety of needs, while cooperating association support is focused to the educational/interpretive mission of the NPS. Comments included:

- There needs to be a letter from the Director canceling the “Mott Memo” that forced the division between cooperating association functions and fundraising functions, requiring the formation of two nonprofit partners to accomplish both needs. This has caused public confusion, duplication of effort and costs, and in some instances, divisiveness.
- Organizations that were previously forced to become separate, as well as other nonprofit partners, need to consider how their organizations should look and function 10 years into the future.
- The cooperating association function operates under a specific set of legislative authorities – not to be viewed as nonprofit concessionaires.
- Cooperating associations are not interested in competing with one another or with friends groups. There is no one-size-fits-all model for partnerships, and determining what blend of partnerships is right for any given site shouldn't be an either/or situation.

Capacity Building and Training for NPS and Cooperating Associations

Donna Asbury provided an update on APPL capacity building initiatives that include: a training corps of experienced APPL member and agency representatives, the APPL convention, and customized fee-for-service training and consultation. APPL is in discussion with NPS regarding development of a standardized association operational review process based upon functional areas and best practices. APPL is also developing an NPS-focused affinity group that will help guide future forums of this type and help ensure the voice of its membership as to what is happening in the field.

John Piltzecker noted that Rich Fedorchak, partnership training coordinator, will be conducting a partnership training needs assessment. He will send us notification of partnership training courses to be delivered. Currently, NPS is using the TELNET system of delivery for much of its training, and cooperating associations and other partners can attend such training with their NPS partners. Upcoming courses will include a session on DO #21 on March 3, a course in cooperation with APPL on obtaining grants through partnerships, and future training on developing and working with friends groups. For information, visit www.nps.gov/partnerships.

Corky Mayo noted that his division is also tasked with keeping up the skills of 4,000 interpreters in 10 areas of competency. These workshops include a cooperating association message. A business plan for interpretation and education has been developed to move these functions forward and embrace the variety of people providing the services. NPS intends to reintroduce a cooperating association course for NPS and partner representatives and is planning to work with APPL on content and delivery.

Discussion noted support for an association review process that could be delivered as a fee-for-service offering through APPL. Other suggestions included the development of a “fundraising boot camp” that would encompass fundraising practices and agreements. Similarly, a “cooperating association boot camp” should be offered and NPS partnership coordinators should go through it to help them more thoroughly understand this type of partnership.

Summary, Action Items, and Next Steps

Charley Money summarized the day's discussions and accomplishments, as follows:

- Communication channels have been suggested to continue this dialogue on a more regular basis.
- A task force has been formed to look at the implications of background investigations for cooperating associations to help inform the implementation of the process.
- NPS has committed that there will be reviews of new visitor center models before changes are made, and that current partners will be informed and engaged in the discussion/review.
- Awareness of the value of cooperating associations and what they provide has been elevated, with a commitment to finding ways to further build this knowledge among NPS staff at both the management and field levels.
- Access is available to the NLC on a consistent basis, based upon current issues.
- Next steps and timeframe for revision of DO #21 are announced and underway, acknowledging that some differences of opinion exist and will need to be dealt with.
- The plans for updating DO #32 are underway and understood.
- Time has been designated at the APPL convention to continue the dialogue, and a forum task force (affinity group) will be implemented within APPL to help develop the needed regional representation and involvement.