

MEMORANDUM

To: Director Bomar

From: Mikaela Kooiker, Human Resource Management Consultant

Date: October 15, 2008

Re: NPS 2008 Workforce Plan

The National Park Service strives to “preserve unimpaired the natural and cultural resources and value of the national park system for the enjoyment, education, and inspiration of this and future generations” (Nps.gov Mission 2008).

Currently, the National Park Service (NPS) workforce is made up of 20,056 full-time employees and 154,000 volunteers responsible for the stewardship of 391 national park units and cultural or national heritage programs (Nps.gov Quick Facts 2008). In 2007, 272 million people visited national parks (Nps.gov Quick Facts 2008). The following memo first presents internal and external challenges that may impact the NPS workforce. Second, I will analyze the future goals of NPS and the workforce competencies needed to achieve those goals taking into account the internal and environmental context. Third, I will present recommendations for human resource development strategies to address the workforce competencies needed to achieve NPS goals. Lastly, I discuss the projected impact of a Presidential announcement to outsource 70% of NPS workforce.

Current Challenges

Planning for future staff and volunteer development demands an assessment of organizational needs in the context of the changing environment (Naff & Riccucci 2008, 142). The National Park Service faces challenges both internally and externally as a result of changing demands in the national and international context. There are increasing pressures on American resources, such as increased demand for water, fossil fuels, land development, and use of recreational facilities (U.S. Department of Interior 2007). These resource demands will impact the National Park Service’s stewardship practices. Other uncontrollable environmental factors, such as natural disasters, the recent downturn in the economy, and homeland security issues may affect NPS’s ability to fulfill its mission.

America’s changing demographics and changing public demands on government compound the pressures discussed above. Increasing cultural and ethnic diversity in America puts pressure on NPS to ensure equity and representation in services and outreach. The current political climate places a strong emphasis on transparency,

accountability, and “increased financial scrutiny” resulting from a low public confidence in government spending (Appendices 2002, 48).

In addition to external demands on the agency, internal demands such as rapid changes in technology and changes in workforce needs will greatly impact NPS. The shifting demographics of the Baby Boomer generation will mean that larger numbers of senior staff will retire, leaving gaps in experience and resources for NPS programs. The new workforce is “thinking differently about what a career means” and has different expectations and demands for NPS, such as greater flexibility and freedom (Ricucci and Naff 2008, 163). To adequately address these internal demands necessitates strategic planning and effective management.

The National Park Service needs to prepare for the challenges ahead to successfully carry out its mission in the future. Workforce planning is a key component to ensure that NPS will have the skills and human resources necessary to accomplish future goals.

Future goals and workforce competencies needed

To address future challenges, NPS needs to prioritize four strategic workforce objectives: retain high-quality employees, prepare future leaders, increase outreach to the public, and ensure accountability by demonstrating efficient use of resources and effectiveness of programs. Specific workforce competencies are needed to accomplish each NPS objective (See Table 1).

Table 1. NPS Workforce planning

Challenges	NPS Workforce Objectives	Workforce competency needed	Action
Shifting demographics, new workforce demands	Retain high quality employees	Good managers, Good recruiters/ Human Resources staff	Maintain competitive salaries and benefits
Increasing cultural and ethnic diversity, shifting demographics	Have ready leaders (succession planning)	Leadership; teamwork approach, cultural competence, multi-lingual; strong interpersonal skills for collaborative decision-making	Preparing future NPS leaders (increase volunteers, increase seasonal Staff, train employees for promotion)
Demand for accountability and public involvement	Re-engage public	IT programmers/ e-gov savvy Staff; customer service-oriented workforce	Increase E-Government capabilities/ Outreach to public
Demanding transparency, efficient use of resources	Be accountable and transparent/ demonstrate efficiency and effectiveness	Staff trained to use performance management tools and program evaluation	Setting performance measurements and conduct program evaluation

Retention

High performing employees are the most important assets to an agency’s performance. Replacing these employees can take significant amounts of time, energy, and training. In addition, when high performing employees leave, the agency can also lose important organizational memory or information. Retention measures are a primary element to ensure that current workforce competencies remain intact. Maintaining competitive salaries and offering desirable benefits, such as work flexibility and telecommuting can be ways to support high performing employees (Karoly and Panis 2004). In addition, NPS could institute a performance-appraisal system to support and incentivize high performing workers (Ricucci and Naff 2008, 149). Understanding individual needs through performance evaluations can help to support and retain needed employees.

To accomplish retention goals, NPS will need experienced managers who can support and motivate their Staff. In addition, NPS will need a strong human resources department to institute and manage an appropriate performance-appraisal system.

Prepare next generation of leaders

As more employees retire as part of the demographic shift of the Baby Boomers, NPS needs to prepare new leaders. There are two main potential groups to highlight: NPS volunteers and NPS seasonal workers. To prepare these groups as leaders, NPS will need to provide further training and support.

Re-engage the public

Public engagement and involvement with the National Park Service are central to its mission and goals. NPS can increase communication and dialogue with the public through increasing e-government capabilities and outreach to the public. NPS currently operates the Take Pride in America program, which runs a database of volunteer projects to engage the public in the park system (U.S. Department of the Interior, 2007, 35). In this way, NPS can expand opportunities for public participation.

To expand e-government capabilities and increase outreach, NPS will need specialists in Information Technology for programming. In addition, NPS needs a diverse workforce to engage the diverse public.

Performance measurements

Integrating performance measurements to budget allocation is essential to the Presidential Management Agenda (see Appendix B). Through setting performance measurements and tracking progress, NPS can ensure effectiveness of programs and efficient use of resources. Open dialogue with the public about performance measurements and progress increases accountability and transparency.

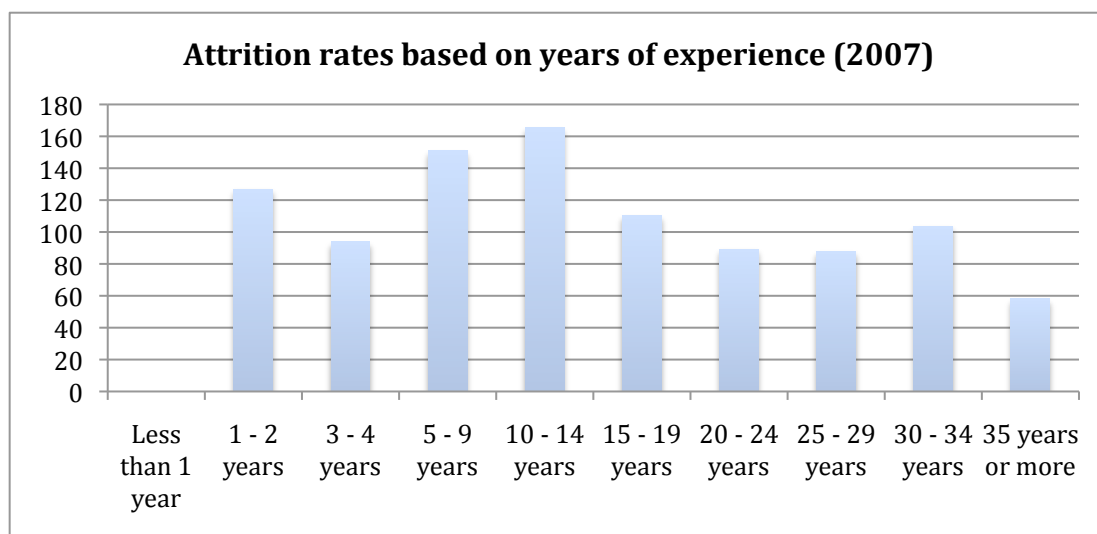
To conduct NPS performance evaluations, Staff will need to be trained in data collection, research, and evaluation.

Recommendations for human resource development to meet goals

Workforce planning is imperative to ensure that an organization has the necessary people and skills to accomplish its goals and fulfill its mission (K. Naff, SFSU PA 725 lecture, September 17, 2008). Through conducting the Markov Chain analysis, NPS can determine an approximate attrition projection (see Appendix A for analysis assumptions). The attrition projection for 2008 is 986 employees. Chart 1 below illustrates the attrition rates based on years of experience.

A primary strategy for workforce planning is to involve everyone in the planning process (Ricucci and Naff 2008, 151). By talking with managers about their needs, NPS can appropriately plan to acquire, develop, or retain specific skills to fulfill its goals. To fulfill the agency's mission, NPS needs to prioritize workforce objectives, develop or acquire needed competencies, and monitor and evaluate changes in the environment that may impact the current plan.

Chart 1. Attrition rates based on years of experience



Outsourcing announcement impact

In the case that Bush announces the need for federal agencies to increase competitive sourcing up to 70% of the workforce, NPS will need to be ready for an employee reaction to the announcement and provide the appropriate supports to ensure retention of high performing staff. Transitional probabilities will be affected by this

announcement (see Chart 2&3). Newer employees with one or two years of experience are estimated to be twice (x2) as likely as last year's transitional probability to leave for fear of being laid off and therefore wanting to ensure more stable work. NPS can afford to let many of these employees go as the first step to reducing staff. The two most experienced groups will also be more likely to retire if provided with an early retirement bonus because they may be ready to retire or do not want to have the burden of workforce changes. NPS will need to work hard to support and retain the remaining Staff at last year's transitional probability levels; however, at this time it is essential that NPS maintain expected levels to maintain Staff morale and hold onto necessary workforce competencies. NPS can provide additional training or other benefits to allow for a more gradual transition to outsourcing. NPS will also need to freeze or limit new recruitment only to essential gaps in workforce competency.

Chart 2. Experiencing

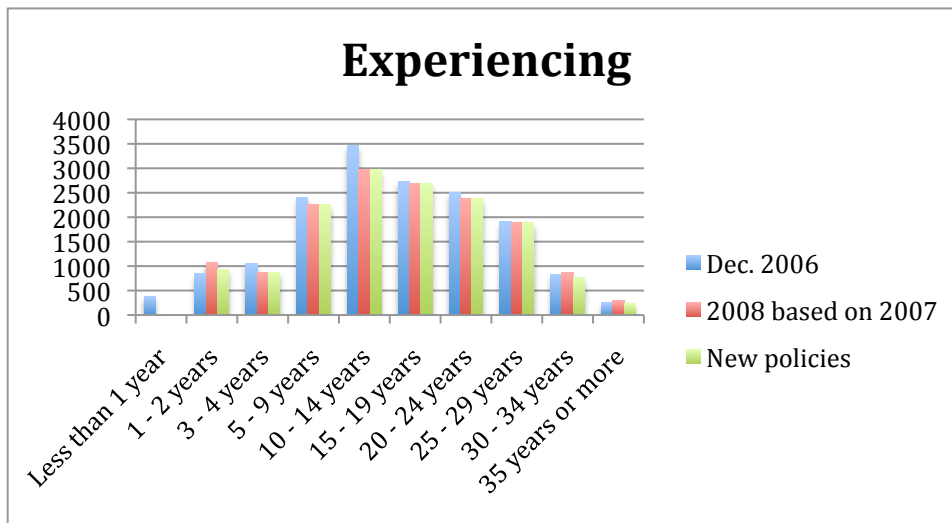
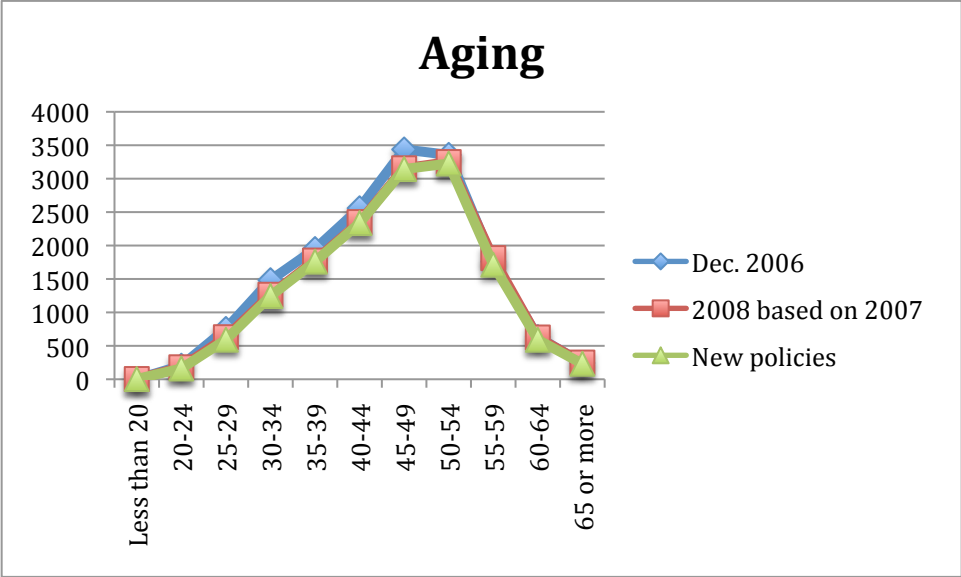


Chart 3. Aging



Appendix A

Markov Chain analysis workforce projection assumptions

Assumption 1 (Aging): To determine how the NPS workforce will age, employees are grouped into five-year age brackets, with the exception of the youngest group (“less than 20”) and the oldest group (“65 or more”). To estimate workforce aging, 20% of each age group is estimated to move to the next age category because roughly one-fifth of each category will be at the highest age of their category and age into the next category; however for the “less than 20” group, 50% is estimated to move into the next age bracket because only 18 and 19-year-olds would be working for NPS. No one will age out of the “65 or more” category.

Assumption 2 (Increasing Experience): To determine future changes in work experience of NPS employees, the workforce is grouped into experience categories. 100% of employees who were in “less than a 1 year” group will move into the next category. The next two categories are two years in length each, so approximately 50% of each will graduate into the next category. The subsequent experience categories encompass 5 years of experience each, therefore approximately 20% will graduate to the next experience level each year.

Assumption 3 (Attrition): To determine the future attrition rate, the previous separation rate from 2007 is used. The 2007 rates project that 986 employees will leave in 2008. The 2007 rates do not take into account the current global economic slowdown, which will likely have an impact on attrition.

Assumption 4 (Attrition #2): In reaction to a potential Bush announcement to increasing competitive sourcing, the attrition rates are adjusted based on employee reaction to the announcement and management policies aimed at affecting attrition in particular groups.

Appendix B
President's Management Agenda (PMA)
(NPS 2008)

1. Budget and Performance Integration
2. Strategic Management of Human Capital
3. Competitive Sourcing
4. Improved Financial Performance
5. Expanding E-Government
6. Asset Management
7. Research and Development
8. Executive Order 13423 and Energy Management
9. Transportation
10. Environmental Management

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