

# SUPERINTENDENTS LEADERSHIP ROUNDTABLE

Managed by NPS Conservation Study Institute

The NPS Conservation Study Institute in partnership with the Learning and Development Office manages the Superintendents Leadership Roundtable (SLR) program as part of the national portfolio of leadership development opportunities. The SLR enables superintendents, and deputy and assistant superintendents to create mutual support networks that build their capacity to more effectively negotiate complicated issues, embrace innovation, and sustain relationships with colleagues, the workforce, partners, and communities.



One superintendent called the SLR “The single best opportunity for really honing in on key leadership, management, and supervisory issues that we all deal with as superintendents. It’s the best forum I’ve seen for using case studies from our individual parks to actually work through those issues and come up with a strategy for resolving problems and issues.”

Across the country, National Park Service superintendents share many similar challenges: high levels of responsibility, community relationships, and leadership issues --- often with a sense of isolation at the top. SLR directly addresses these and other challenges and opportunities frequently faced by park managers today.

Ten groups of 14 meet yearly to participate in facilitated peer-to-peer discussions about contemporary challenges and complex leadership responsibilities. SLR uses a continuous learning model to enable participants to build a high level of interpersonal trust that fosters deeper learning. Participants provide support to each other throughout the year in communities of practice.

“As superintendents we’re pretty isolated, both geographically and in a bureaucratic sense,” explained a recent participant. “Roundtable is the one place where you feel part of a larger group of people who understand the issues you’re grappling with. It has given me a cohort in the National Park Service that I didn’t have before.”

SLR sessions benefit greatly from a mix of experience of newer, midlevel, and senior superintendents in each group. “It’s an opportunity to learn from each other,” said one participant. “The group is comprised of a variety of individuals from new superintendents to more seasoned superintendents, small parks, big parks – so you get a broad perspective and quite a large variety of personality types. To me, it provides a much better way of learning directly from people that have the experience.” According to another superintendent, “As long as we continue to discuss things that are relevant to the group, it doesn’t matter where you are in your career. We all face challenges at different points in our careers, and there are opportunities for continuous learning.”

The Institute works closely with the SLR program facilitators who are organizational development professionals with extensive experience in working with public land managers on leadership challenges. One participant noted “We get so hung up in daily management that it’s easy for us to lose sight of the fact that leadership is really critical to what we do. Roundtable gives us an opportunity to pull back and to really take a look at ourselves as National Park Service leaders. It gives us time to do a lot of self-analysis and self-reflection.”

For additional information contact: Virginia Farley, Director of Leadership Programs, Conservation Study Institute, [virginia\\_farley@nps.gov](mailto:virginia_farley@nps.gov), 802-223-0870.

Note: Quotes used in this announcement are from “Final Report on the Qualitative Evaluation of the Superintendents Leadership Roundtable” (forthcoming) prepared by Jennifer Jewiss, Ed.D, University of Vermont, in cooperation with the NPS Conservation Study Institute. Overall the findings were extremely positive. The full report discusses the strengths, as well as limitations and challenges, of the SLR Program and will be available soon at [www.nps.gov/csi](http://www.nps.gov/csi)