

27 by 242

10-23
(November 1954)

UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

File
NPS-General
D-268

(Area)

FILE CODE:

A HISTORY OF THE
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE MISSION 66 PROGRAM

By: Roy E. Appleman
January 1958

IMPORTANT

This file constitutes a part of the official records of the National Park Service and should not be separated or papers withdrawn without express authority of the official in charge. All Files should be returned promptly to the File Room. Officials and employees will be held responsible for failure to observe these rules, which are necessary to protect the integrity of the official records.

FROM:

TO:

ON MICROFILM

PLEASE RETURN TO:
TECHNICAL INFORMATION CENTER
DENVER SERVICE CENTER
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

101p.

ATTENTION:

Portions of this filmed document are illegible due to the poor quality of the source document.

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

798
FEB 17 1958
~~achler~~

February 15, 1958

MEMORANDUM FOR

Mr. Roy L. Appleman ✓
Staff Historian
National Park Service
Department of Interior

As you requested in your note, I have gone over the draft "History of the Genesis of MISSION 66" and have suggested some changes and inserts.

The section about the Cabinet meeting itself is as accurate as we can recollect. However, you should consider this section PRIVILEGED, since it involves Cabinet and Presidential discussion.

To enable this section to be released from its PRIVILEGED character, Mr. Rabb will need a recommendation to this effect from Mr. Wirth with an indication of how Mr. Wirth plans to use the document itself.

I am grateful for your generous remarks about our help to you; we here still consider the MISSION 66 preparation and presentation one of the most effective Cabinet agenda items we have ever had.



Bradley H. Patterson, Jr.

A HISTORY OF THE
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE MISSION 66 PROGRAM

This is written to preserve a brief narrative record of the origin and development of the MISSION 66 program. Mr. Wirth, the Director of the National Park Service, conceived the idea for a MISSION 66 plan early in 1955, and the plan itself was formulated in the ensuing year. In January of 1956 the plan was presented orally to the President of the United States and his Cabinet in a Cabinet meeting. The President accepted the plan and authorized the Secretary of the Department of the Interior to present it to Congress.

Meanwhile, the two Houses of Congress, through some of their members and certain Committees, had become aware of the plan. Notices of it appeared in the press from time to time. In the preparation of the final plan the Bureau of the Budget was kept informed, and its advice sought on the funding program. The first appropriation for MISSION 66 became available on July 1, 1956, under the 1957 appropriation.

The MISSION 66 Plan proved to be an unusually successful way of getting Park problems before the country and of formulating

a method of receiving Administration and Congressional action to support and implement a proposed solution. Because this plan promises to be the basis for National Park Service work during the next ten years, and will undoubtedly influence policy and development far into the future beyond even that time, it has been considered desirable to leave in the records of the Service an account of how it developed.

Origin of the Idea

As with most movements that lead to important and successful action in dealing with public problems, there is a background in the case of MISSION 66. For forty years the United States had had a rapidly growing population. It was a period when the automobile, over ever-expanding and improving public roads, carried more and more people yearly to the scenic and wilderness areas of North America. Prominent among these places were the National Parks and Historic Sites. A problem never solved was the need of obtaining funds adequate to finance park development to serve the increasing visitation, and yet to protect for the long future the charms, attractions, and special values of these parks.

Every Director of the National Park Service from the first one, Stephen T. Mather, on down to Mr. Conrad L. Wirth, had wrestled with this problem. To all of them--Mather, Albright, Cammerer, Drury, Demaray, and Wirth, it was the same thing--trying

in the annual budget and appropriation bills to get funds on a yearly basis which would enable them to discharge their responsibilities. The yearly basis was the old accustomed and accepted way of getting funds from the Congress for the discharge of public business. In the years of the early 1950's after he assumed the Directorship, Mr. Wirth found in this method frustration after frustration. Although Congress granted certain increases, these seemed always to fall behind the pace of mounting public use and needs in the parks, partly because of the falling purchasing power of the funds appropriated due to ever-increasing inflation.

Mr. Wirth discussed this situation at different times over the years with officials of the American Automobile Association, leaders of several conservation and recreation groups, and the Department's Advisory Board on Historic Sites, Buildings, and Monuments. At the same time there were increased pressures to give up the parks because they were not being developed and maintained properly, and he had to persuade the Governors of several states that land in the National Park System was an asset to the state and did not constitute a depletion of the State's resources. Protecting the National Parks, and at the same time providing for their proper development for the use of an expanding population, were related problems ever present in Mr. Wirth's mind.

Pondering this matter one Saturday evening at his home in early February 1955, Mr. Wirth's thoughts suddenly settled on the idea that perhaps the main cause of past failures was the neglect to deal with the problem on a long-range basis. Why not set up a master plan for the System on the basis of a relatively long period of time-- a period of time that looked beyond the year-to-year appropriation and yet did not carry so far into the future that it would lack reality. If the Congress and the Administration were to grant the funds necessary properly to protect and administer the National Park System, they should know what the present and future use demands were, how much it would cost to provide the necessary personnel and facilities, what would be a reasonable and economical period to complete such a program, and what they would get for the money so expended. Ten years seemed the right length of time to plan between the extreme of the ever-present yearly budget plan and of the distant future. These thoughts ran through Mr. Wirth's mind on the night of February 6, 1955.^{1/}

The next day, Sunday, Mr. Wirth spent at home. He found his mind occupied with and continuing the reflections of the night before. He realized that before any long-range plan could be formulated he would need to know a lot of things that he did not then know. What

^{1/} This account of what caused Mr. Wirth to launch the MISSION 66 study is based on interview, Roy E. Appleman with Mr. Wirth, March 23, 1956.

would be the population of the United States in 1965? What proportion of the population ten years hence would visit the parks? What would their wants and needs be then? How would these differ, if at all, from those of present day park visitors? What changes would occur in the next ten years in the pattern of vacation and tourist travel that might affect the parks? What new and additional accommodations would be needed for overnight and dining accommodations in the next ten years? Would there be an increase in the older and in the younger age brackets of visitors over ^{those of} the present? What new roads would be needed? What new trails? What new camping facilities would be required? With the prospect of new multitudes of people in the parks, how best could one protect their perishable and unique features for the generations of the future? What increases in employee personnel would be needed to administer the parks, provide ranger protection, and supply the interpretive services visitors had come increasingly to expect and want? And what would all this cost?

Mr. Wirth, in contemplating these and other factors, decided that a thoroughgoing, objective, and scientific study of the parks and their prospective future use was basic to the long range plan that had been shaping in his mind.

With these thoughts in mind, he went to his office on Monday, February 8, 1955. As was his custom, he called a "Squad Meeting,

a gathering of his principal advisors in the Washington Office of the National Park Service, made up of the Assistant Directors, Special Assistant to the Director, and the Chiefs or Acting Chiefs of Divisions. Mr. Wirth expounded his idea to this group. He proposed to set up a special staff selected from personnel in the Washington Office, and to put this group in his conference room to work exclusively on a plan. Relieved of all regular duties, they would devote full time to the long-range planning study until it was completed. He did not know just how long a period of time this would take. The group would be selected in such a manner as to be representative of the major functions of the Service. And he said he wanted men on it who would be missed in their regular Divisions.

The reaction of the members of the "Squad" was favorable. They seconded the idea with enthusiasm. The discussion then turned to the question of selecting the persons to comprise the study group. This led to the decision to have two groups--one would be a Steering Committee; the other would be the Working Staff. Before the meeting ended, Mr. Wirth appointed the following membership to these two groups:

Steering Committee

Lemuel A. Garrison, Chairman
Chief, Conservation and
Protection Branch,
Operations Division

Thomas C. Vint
Chief, Division of
Design and Construction

Henry Langley
Chief, Programs and
Plans Control Branch
Operations Division

John E. Doerr
Chief, Natural History Branch
Division of Interpretation

Donald E. Lee
Chief, Branch of
Concessions Management
Operations Division

Keith Neilson
Finance Officer
Administration Division

Jackson E. Price
Chief, Branch of Lands
Operations Division

Working Staff

William G. Carnes, Chairman
Chief Landscape Architect
Division of Design and
Construction

Harold G. Smith
Assistant Chief, Programs
and Plans Control Branch
Operations Division

Robert M. Coates
Chief, Economics and
Statistical Section,
Conservation and Pro-
tection Branch

Howard R. Stagner
Principal Naturalist
Natural History Branch
Division of Interpretation

Jack B. Dodd
Assistant Chief Forester
Conservation and Protection
Branch

Roy E. Appleman
Staff Historian
History Branch
Division of Interpretation

Raymond L. Freeman
Assistant Chief, Branch of
River Basin Studies
Division of Cooperative
Activities
(Added to the Staff on
April 20, 1955.)

The members of the Steering Committee were to review periodically the work of the Staff and help give it direction. The Staff was to give full-time work to the planning task. Mr. Wirth had already thought of the name "MISSION 66" for this effort.

With the "Squad" meeting at an end, Mr. Wirth directed that the members of the Staff be informed of their new assignments, and for them together with the members of the Steering Committee, to meet with him that afternoon at 2:30 in Room 3100, the conference room adjoining his office.

Excitement ran through the Park Service offices just before noon that Monday as word passed around that a special study group had been formed to inquire into possible changes in the Service's policies and to plan for the future. Members of the Staff received news of their selection for the work with a mingled feeling of surprise, uncertainty, and anticipation. But all looked forward to the afternoon meeting when they would learn more about the task ahead.

At 2:30 in the afternoon in Room 3100, where they were joined by Mr. Wirth and the Assistant Directors, Mr. Wirth proceeded at once to lay before the Staff his idea of the task it was to perform. He said, in effect, that there was a pressure of public steam criticizing conditions in the parks. It was not enough to think of bringing the National Park Service out of the muck to high ground. The habit of going to the PCP's and pulling out from them a yearly program must be changed. Since 1946 there had been more money for the Service than before, but it purchased less. Travel was increasing. Funds appropriated were actually on the basis of serving 21,000,000 visits to the parks; now there were about 46,000,000 visits yearly, and this number would increase. The Service was confronted with

the possible destruction in the parks, he said, of what it was charged with saving. His desire was to lay before Congress a program designed to secure a reasonable protection of the parks and yet provide for increased public use in such a way as not to wear them out. He thought there was danger of them being "loved to death."

Mr. Wirth said he wanted two things resolved in the course of the study: 1. A reasoned objective for the Service over a long period of time; (2) A program to accomplish that objective. He said the solution would not be in the books and in regulations; perhaps it could not be found within the terms of existing legislation. But whatever was required, he wanted to know it. He wanted the Staff to come up with answers. In an analogy to a poker game, he said the Service was being "called". Now it had to show its hand. And he wanted it to be a good hand.

He stressed finally that any development recommended must be for the purpose of protecting the Nation's heritage - scenic, scientific, and historical - in the national parks. He wanted the plan to be completed in time so that he could present it to the General Service Conference of Park Service Superintendents to be convened at Great Smoky Mountains National Park on September 18. He wanted the first result of the new program to show in the 1957 budget. He ended his comments by saying that he wanted a memorandum prepared and ready for

distribution to the Washington Office staff and to the field by Thursday next, February 11, informing all members of the Service of the MISSION 66 study he had just launched and what he hoped to accomplish with it. *

* The writer kept an informal diary of the proceedings of the Staff during work on the MISSION 66 Report, from Feb. 8, 1955 to Feb. 8, 1956. He made notes at the time discussions were in progress and often took down literally verbatim the words spoken by various persons. He has drawn heavily on these contemporary notes in preparing this account. Almost nothing herein is based on unsupported memory.

After Mr. Wirth left the meeting, Mr. Garrison discussed the task ahead of the group and said that it would have 90 days in which to complete it.

The Staff Begins Work

The staff members settled down for work in Room 3100, the Director's conference room between his own and Mr. Tolson's offices. There they talked about how they should start on their new job. This room was to be their work shop for the next year, although none of the group realized it at the time. The first series of discussions seemed to point at finishing the task within three or four months.

There was a great convenience and advantage to the staff in working in this room. Mr. Wirth had only to open the side door of his office and he could step in and discuss any topic with the staff. As

time passed, all members came to know that the Director's time was very valuable, and that it was hard for him to give as much as half an hour to any discussion without being called away on some important and urgent matter. The arrangement worked well, however, for Mr. Wirth did find time to consult frequently with the staff.

A few of the division heads at first continued to assign work to some of the staff members detailed from their divisions. It was hard for everyone to believe at first that this Staff was to work on the new task assigned by the Director, and on nothing else. But the Director soon made it clear that no one, for any purpose whatsoever, was to request or expect Division work from any member of the Staff. Each and every member of the Staff had been relieved of his regular duties until the newly assigned MISSION 66 task was finished. There was no more trouble on that score.

The first official act of the Staff was to draft a memorandum announcing to all offices and members of the Service the establishment of the MISSION 66 Staff and its purpose. The Steering Committee reviewed the draft before it went to Mr. Wirth for approval. In this memorandum to the Washington and All Field Offices, dated February 18, 1955, Mr. Wirth officially announced his MISSION 66 project to the Service. It said in part:

"The year 1966 will mark the Golden Anniversary of the National Park Service. In an effort to solve, by that time, the difficult problem of protecting the scenic and historic areas of the National Park System from over-use and, at the same time, of providing optimum opportunity for public enjoyment of the parks, I have initiated a project which we are calling MISSION 66

"The purpose of MISSION 65 is to make an intensive study of the problems of protection, public use, interpretation, development, staffing, legislation, financing, and all other phases of park operation, and to produce a comprehensive and integrated program of use and protection that is in harmony with the obligations of the National Park Service under the Act of 1916.

"The immediate objective of the MISSION 66 is the development of a dynamic program to be presented to the Secretary for consideration by the Bureau of the Budget and the Congress beginning with the 1957 fiscal year estimates. The ultimate objective is the complete execution of the program by the time the Service celebrates its Golden Anniversary in 1966.

This memorandum named the members of both the Steering Committee and Staff, and officially relieved the latter from their regular duties. It also set forth the name MISSION 66 as the term that would henceforth be used in referring to this special undertaking. It made clear that all members of the Service would be expected to participate in studies that were to be undertaken in formulating the desired program.

The Staff undertook at the start to review all the basic existing laws that affected the functions and scope of the Service. It also assembled and studied other related documents and statements from prominent individuals who had been associated with the past history of the Service. Among the most important of these documents was the "Statement of National Park Policy" signed by Secretary of the Interior Franklin K. Lane, and dated May 13, 1918. Secretary Lane had sent this document to the first and newly appointed Director of the National Park Service, Stephen T. Mather, as a policy directive to

