



# United States Department of the Interior

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE  
1849 C Street, N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20240

IN REPLY REFER TO:

## DIRECTOR'S ORDER #4: DIVING MANAGEMENT

Approved:

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Donald W. Murphy". Below the signature, the word "Director" is printed in a smaller, sans-serif font.

Effective Date: May 4, 2003

Sunset Date: This Order will remain in effect until amended or rescinded.

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This is an updated version of Director's Order #4, which was first approved May 3, 1999. As was the case with the previous version, this Director's Order must be used in conjunction with Reference Manual 4 (RM-4).

### **I. Background**

The National Park Service (NPS) manages many areas requiring underwater diving operations. In most of the waters administered by the NPS, diving is an appropriate management function and recreational activity. Dives by NPS personnel are conducted to protect submerged natural and cultural resources; for purposes of enhancing visitor enjoyment of such resources; and to provide visitor protection services. Recreational and commercial diving by others is permitted only where compatible with other park uses and may be limited in time and/or area by the superintendent. Public safety is of utmost importance.

## **II. Purpose and Scope**

The purpose of this Director's Order is to set forth the policy and required procedures for managing a safe NPS diving program, so as to maximize protection of NPS divers from accidental injury and/or illness.

Recreational and commercial diving in NPS waters is beyond the scope of this Director's Order. Basic guidance for their proper management is provided in *NPS Management Policies*, 36 CFR Parts 1 and 3, and Reference Manual 48: Concessions Program Management.

NPS diving activities will conform with all procedures and requirements imposed by higher authorities such as the Department of the Interior and the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA). This Director's Order, however, is not intended to document all those procedures and requirements; for a comprehensive compilation, employees must refer to RM-4.

## **III. Authorities**

Authority to issue this Director's Order is contained in the NPS Organic Act (16 USC 1 through 4), and Part 245 of the Department of the Interior Manual (DM). Other specific authorities and requirements governing NPS diving operations are found in the Occupational Safety and Health Act (see, 29 CFR 1910, subpart T (Commercial Diving Operations)) and 485 DM 28.

## **IV. Instructions/Requirements/Responsibilities**

### Park Diving Programs

4.1 Each manager who utilizes diving activities is responsible for implementing a safe and effective diving management program. Personal safety is of primary importance and will not be compromised for any reason. In addition, resource related statutory provisions must be understood and adhered to.

4.2 All NPS diving activities will be conducted in accordance with 29 CFR 1910, subpart T, 485 DM 28 and RM-4 to ensure a safe and efficient diving program.

4.3 NPS diving activities will not be permitted in any park which does not have an approved Safe Practices Manual (Dive Safety Plan). Such manual or plan will be prepared by the Park Dive Officer (PDO) appointed by the superintendent, and will include, at a minimum, the information specified in Section III.J.1. of RM-4.

4.4 Prospective candidates for the NPS diving program will notify the PDO of their interest after first obtaining the written concurrence of their supervisor. The PDO will then compile the requisite information specified in RM-4 and forward it to the Regional Dive Officer (RDO) through the park superintendent.

### Contractors

4.5 Contracted diving services will be conducted in accordance with 29 CFR 1910, subpart T, and any applicable state and local regulations. The PDO, or RDO if the contracting park does not have a PDO, will be the contact person for dealings with the contractor(s).

#### Diver Training and Certification

4.6 All NPS employees engaged in diving activities must meet the training and certification requirements specified in RM-4.

4.7 During any twelve-month period, NPS divers must make a minimum of twelve (12) dives in order to retain certification. No two-month period is to pass without a diver making at least one dive, unless a variance for extenuating circumstances is approved by the RDO.

4.8 Diving skills must also be maintained through periodic training. Regional Directors and park managers will ensure that NPS divers receive a minimum of 40 hours of diving-related training during any 3-year period.

#### Safety Considerations

4.9 Diving is physically demanding. Divers and park managers must recognize the need for an ongoing, aggressive physical fitness program which exceeds basic health maintenance standards. Superintendents are responsible for ensuring that adequate fitness levels are established and met. Divers will complete an annual physical fitness test which will be met by passing the blue card test as detailed in RM-4. Certified NPS divers will be permitted three hours of paid time per week to maintain the necessary conditioning level (see also, Director's Order #57: Employee Health and Fitness).

4.10 All dives must be planned and executed in such manner as outlined in Section III.D.2 of RM-4. In those instances specified in Section III.D.2 where adherence to the buddy system might actually present a major safety problem to the diver, there will be a standby diver ready to render immediate assistance.

4.11 Diving equipment will be used when deemed necessary for the safety and/or health of the diver in accordance with Section III.G of RM-4. All equipment used by a diver must be professionally inspected on an annual basis. Any inspection, modification, repair, calibration, or maintenance of such equipment will conform to the requirements of RM-4.

4.12 Individual NPS divers are responsible for their own safety. A diver may refuse to dive if, in the diver's judgment, conditions are unsafe or unfavorable, the diver is unprepared mentally or physically, or diving would violate the dictates of training or RM-4. Similarly, it is the responsibility of the diver to terminate a dive, without fear of penalty, whenever he/she feels it is unsafe to continue, unless such termination would compromise the safety of another diver already in the water.

## Administration

4.13 Each Regional Director will determine the most effective organizational structure by which the region's diving management responsibilities can be met. Regional Directors will designate a full-time or collateral-duty RDO, who will serve as the region's representative on the NPS Diving Control Board (DCB). Regional Directors and park managers will provide the RDO with information necessary to meet Departmental and Service-wide reporting requirements.

4.14 The DCB is charged with administrative oversight of the diving safety program and will ensure compliance with OSHA, Departmental, and NPS policies and procedures. The DCB will ensure proper training and certification of all NPS diving programs, adjudicate appeals from revocations of certification in accordance with Section III.B.10 of RM-4, and develop and maintain a diving information management system. Authority is hereby delegated to the DCB to review and revise RM-4 as appropriate, for issuance by the Associate Director for Resource and Visitor Protection.

4.15 RDOs will review and forward significant regional diving information, and provide annual summaries of regional diving activities, to the DCB.

4.16 Park diving programs will be evaluated annually as outlined in RM-4.

-----*End of Director's Order*-----