

Correspondence Manual

Washington Office, National Park Service

Introduction

One of the many ways that the National Park Service (NPS) connects with the American people is through our official correspondence. Taking the time to respond when members of the public contact us to ask questions or share their thoughts, experiences and ideas with us is an important priority; not just for the NPS, but also across the Department of the Interior (DOI) and government-wide.

This manual contains instructions and information related to correspondence that is prepared for the signature of the DOI Secretary, Deputy Secretary, Assistant Secretary, NPS Director or Deputy Director. All correspondence that is prepared for signature at these levels must adhere to the standards that follow. We also encourage NPS regions and directorates to use the guidance in this manual for letters, memoranda and electronic mail that are prepared for signature at the directorate or regional level as well.

This manual is maintained and updated by the National Park Service's Controlled Correspondence Unit (CCU).

1. Correspondence Policy

Timely responses to Administration, Congressional and gubernatorial communications is personally important to the Secretary, the Director and other senior officials. Correspondence is a vital component of efficient NPS operations and supports our working relations within the Administration and with Congress and governors. Timely responses to communications from these sources should be considered an important part of fulfilling the NPS mission and should be included in the performance standards of NPS leaders and all appropriate personnel.

The **White House** has now directed bureaus to respond to correspondence they've assigned within 15 calendar days. If a response cannot be finalized during that time, **an interim response to the person writing the letter must be sent** that acknowledges that their letter to the President was routed to DOI and that an official response will be sent to them promptly. The interim and final response letters must be uploaded in DTS, routed to the Chief of Staff, and mailed out by the drafting office promptly. We will forward a copy of the response letter to the Department who will then route it to the White House.

Correspondence that the Department of the Interior assigns to NPS for response also must be completed in 15 calendar days. The 15 day deadline starts on the date that the correspondence is routed to the Department, not on the date when it is received by your office. **Delay beyond 30 days in providing a non-courtesy response is unacceptable to Department policy.**

The 10-day response timeline and any tracking and reporting measures equally apply to all Administration, Congressional and gubernatorial communications for which it is determined the

response should be signed by a senior management official other than the Secretary.

Internally-generated communications requiring Secretarial signature (for example, charter renewals, commission member appointments or re-appointments) must also be submitted for signature in a timely manner. Last minute requests for Secretarial signature are unacceptable to Department policy.

In general, communications from Administration officials, House and Senate majority leadership, and chairs and ranking members of committees and subcommittees having issue/policy and appropriations oversight of the Department of the Interior and its agencies are presumed to have the highest priority in terms of timeliness of response.

In most cases, responses to correspondence should be no more than 1-2 pages in length. Staff assigned to draft responses to correspondence should first discuss the appropriate points to include in the responses, if they have any questions as to what to include in their draft response.

2. File Codes and File Copies

File codes and file copies are a critical part of the NPS records management system. The file code links a piece of correspondence to the NPS records schedule, which states whether or not the correspondence will be kept permanently, or disposed of according to the NPS Records Disposition Schedule. All correspondence must contain an official NPS file code on the top left hand side, followed by the organization code (org code) of the originating office in parenthesis (<http://inside.nps.gov/waso/waso.cfm?prg=835&lv=4>).

The file code should be drawn from the official National Park Service Records Disposition Schedule. File codes contained in an approved park, regional, or other customized file code system may also be used. The file code is customarily shown on yellow paper and is known as the “yellow copy.” However, it is acceptable to use white paper with hand notation of “yellow” or “official file copy” on the top. This copy should be the one with original surnames on the right side. Other file copies may be created and maintained in other locations as determined necessary or prudent by the originating office.

3. Enclosures, Attachments and Attached Files

Any paper materials accompanying a paper letter should be identified as “Enclosures.” Paper materials accompanying a paper memorandum should be identified as an “Attachments.” Electronic files accompanying a piece of electronic correspondence should be identified as “Attached Files.”

The words “Enclosure,” “Attachment” or “Attached File” should be typed at the bottom of a letter or memorandum, below the signature and above the list of people receiving copies of the letter. Attached files on email correspondence sent within the NPS should be in the current NPS standard for document transfer. Attached files on email correspondence sent outside the NPS should be in a format mutually agreed upon by the sender and recipient.

Large electronic files (100K or more) may present challenges for intended recipients. Many parks and offices rely on dial-up connections that may fail when faced with an oversized file. Many workers with high speed connections have limited storage capacity in their email accounts, causing large files to bounce. Please check with recipients before attempting to send email correspondence with large files attached. Remember that *pdf* attachments, while clearer than most other formats may result in oversized file capacities. Using current, NPS-approved software can also minimize this problem.

4. Copy List (cc and bcc)

The copy list is the list of people who receive official copies of correspondence. The notation “cc” stands for “carbon copy” and appears on the original outgoing correspondence. The notation “bcc” stands for “blind carbon copy” and does not appear on the original outgoing correspondence, only on file copies.

The copy list can contain the names of individual persons, outside organizations, internal NPS offices listed by name or those listed by org code or alpha code. A “cc” copy list should show the recipients aligned vertically. For recipients outside the NPS, titles or business affiliations should be shown. A “bcc” copy list may have all the recipients on one line of text.

5. Credit Line (Identification Information)

The credit line does not appear on original outgoing correspondence, but it can be included on file copies and should be typed below the copy list. It includes the following information separated by colons: bureau, author, typist initials, date prepared, telephone number (with area code), controlled correspondence tracking number (if appropriate).

Example - FNP:Jhaubert:mn:8/10/09:202-208-4290:DTS-2222

The credit line is repeated when correspondence is revised or rewritten. In this case, credit line is preceded by the words “revised” or “rewritten.”

Example - Revised: FNP:Jhaubert:mn:8/10/09:202-208-4290:DTS-2222:

6. Inside Address, Salutation, Closings, and Titles

The following are offered as general guidelines. When in doubt about a recipient’s preferred form of address, you may call the addressee's office and ask their preference.

The Honorable - Use “The Honorable” when addressing all Presidential appointees, Federal and State elected officials, U.S. Attorneys, U.S. Magistrates, and Mayors.

Former officials - Persons once entitled to be addressed as: Governor, Judge, Senator, General, The Honorable, His/Her Excellency, or similar distinctive titles, may retain the title throughout their lifetimes.

Persons designated for office - If a person has been designated for an office but does not yet hold the position, address the person as (full title)-designate, for example, Secretary of Transportation-designate.

Private citizens - Dear Mr. or Ms., Mrs., Miss or Dr. (surname): should be used in the salutation unless given other instructions. If the incoming letter is co-signed by two or more persons with different surnames, address each by title (Mr.) and the respective surname (Smith).

Closings - "Sincerely" is used as the close for all letters except those addressed to the current President or Vice President, which are closed with "Respectfully."

Standard Salutation for a Senator - The Honorable (full name)
United States Senator
Attn: (Name of staff member)

Standard Salutation for a Representative – The Honorable (full name)
Member, United States House of Representatives
Attn: (Name of staff member)

Gender Issues - If it is known, always address a woman in the manner she prefers, even though it may not follow the general guidelines below. For example, some women prefer Madam Chairman while others may not.

Ms., Mrs., or Miss - Address a woman with the same title that is used on the incoming correspondence. If no title is used, use Ms.

Female Members of Congress - Use the title Senator for a woman member of the Senate and Representative for a woman member of the House of Representatives.

Using "Madam" - Use Madam for a woman occupies a high-level position such as President, Vice President, Chairman (or equivalent), Secretary, Ambassador, or Minister unless she prefers something else.

Sex unknown - If it is not known whether the addressee is a man or a woman, try to find out. Otherwise, omit the title. For example, use Leslie Doe.

Common Models of Address, Salutation, and Close: Common models of address may be found in attachment 4.

7. Surnames

Surnaming is a process that indicates concurrence with the content of a document. It ensures that managers are provided an opportunity to participate in actions affecting their office and ensures that all written materials signed by the Director or Secretary reflect that NPS and the Department are speaking with one consistent voice.

Surnames should be placed on the top right hand corner of the official file copy (yellow copy), and should be dated. Offices preparing correspondence for signature at a higher level than their immediate office should route it through all higher management levels within NPS. For correspondence that is being signed by the Secretary or elsewhere in the Department, the NPS Front Hall staff will obtain the departmental surnames. If coordination or clearance with other agencies or departments is required, the organization that prepares the letter should notify the Controlled Correspondence Unit, if assistance is needed.

8. Electronic mail (email)

As electronic mail (email) is considered official Government records, all laws, regulations and NPS policies and procedures pertaining to records apply to email as well. File codes should always be used on electronic mail that is used for official correspondence or when the message has potential long-term importance.

The format for email is shown in Attachment 3. Director's Order #5 contains the official NPS policy on use of email. In general, the following applies:

Incoming correspondence that is received via email may receive a response by email. Email may be used for routine correspondence with organizations and partners with whom the NPS maintains very close relationships and with whom formal electronic mail interchanges have been established and are routinely used. It should not be used for replies to correspondence received on paper or via fax, unless it is specifically requested by the author. Email must not be used to subvert or avoid standard routing procedures or signature protocols. The sender of any official memorandum or other official document by email should not transmit it until it has been signed, and he or she has the signed and dated original copy in hand.

Email sent via Internet or through other mail services or gateways to external organizations must make it clear that it is from the NPS, and should always include the sender's full name, title, affiliation, and address in the closing signature block.

Official copies of memoranda and correspondence on email do not need to include a scanned version of the NPS letterhead. It should include a typed date (instead of a date stamp) and the words "Via Electronic Mail, No Hard Copy to Follow."

A typed version of the signature, such as "/s/ Betty Jones" should appear where the original was signed, along with the words "Signed original on file." If correspondence is large or must use special features, use a cover message and send the material as an attached file, using current standard format for transmission of word processing files.

9. Spelling, Hyphenation and Punctuation

Spelling and hyphenation standards used by Microsoft Word's spelling and grammar check functions are accepted as standard for NPS correspondence. Please review all correspondence carefully for spelling errors and composition. It is the responsibility of each regional office and directorate to ensure that draft correspondence is well-written and accurate.

For punctuation, abbreviations, capitalization and use of numbers, any common style manual may be used, such as the Government Printing Office Style Manual or the Chicago Manual of Style.

Standard spelling for specialized NPS nomenclature is as follows: *Servicewide* and *Directorate* (Field Directorate, Washington Directorate). Please verify that names of NPS units addressed or referenced in correspondence are correctly spelled. Likewise, always use *concessioner* and not *concessionaire* and *National Historical Park*, and not *National Historic Park*.

10. Use of Initials and Other Short Forms

Initials such as NPS or WASO, where the initials represent an organization, should be written out the first time they appear. Avoid using initials that are not commonly used outside NPS, particularly in external correspondence. For example, the four-letter *alpha* codes that refer to NPS park units are suitable for use in correspondence within NPS, but they should not be used in official correspondence addressed to others. When using the initials NPS in correspondence, they do not need to appear in parentheses or within quotation marks. After making the first reference to the National Park Service in a letter, the reader can be expected to understand any later reference to NPS. The same is true with using the word Department as an abbreviation for the Department of the Interior, and the word Service as an abbreviation for the National Park Service. This is commonly used among all bureaus and offices.

Instructions for Specific Correspondence Types

11. Director's Correspondence (in draft)

For controlled correspondence, a region or park unit may be asked to prepare a draft of a letter that will be prepared for final signature in the Washington Office (in the Controlled Correspondence Unit). Attachment 5, (Controlled Correspondence Process), describes the process in detail. The following instructions apply to draft replies:

Draft responses should always be uploaded into DTS. Drafts include proper formatting for the address and signature blocks. Surnames and dates that the document was surnamed should be included at the top of the file. The name and phone number of the draft's author should be provided, in case there are questions.

12. Director's Correspondence (in final)

The following rules apply to all paper correspondence signed by the Director or Deputy Directors:

Formatting for letters and memoranda as shown in Attachments 1 and 2 must be followed. The document must be prepared using NPS letterhead. Use plain white bond for continuation pages. Use the first person plural (we) or "the National Park Service" rather than the first person singular (I). The signature block on letters (not used on memoranda) is left justified and follows the style:

Sincerely,

(four blank lines)

(Director's name typed)
Director

If the incoming correspondence was originally addressed to the Secretary, another bureau, or other non-NPS office, replies should be phrased as follows: "I am responding to your letter on behalf of (name)" or "Your letter to (name) has been referred to the National Park Service for reply."

13. Secretary, Deputy Secretary and Assistant Secretary for Fish and Wildlife and Parks Correspondence (in final)

Correspondence that is prepared for the signature of the Secretary or Deputy Secretary must be prepared as shown in Attachment 1. This format must be followed and prepared for signature on the Secretary of the Interior letterhead. Use the same bond as letterhead for continuation pages. Use "I" or "the Department" as subject nouns.

For the Secretary's signature, the signature block should be centered on the page and formatted as follows:

Sincerely, (return)
(4 returns)
(4 to 6 spaces in from the center of the document) Secretary's Name

For Assistant Secretary for Fish and Wildlife and Parks signature, the letter must be on Office of the Secretary letterhead using the same bond and letterhead for continuation pages. The signature block should be formatted as follows:

(5 tabs in – where each tab = 5 spaces) Sincerely, (return)
(4 returns)

(5 tabs in – where each tab = 5 spaces) Assistant Secretary’s name
(5 tabs in – where each tab = 5 spaces) Assistant Secretary for Fish and Wildlife and
Parks

For the final signature package, the Secretary’s File copy is designated as the official file copy and contains the official surname ladder printed on the right side. All original surnames must be maintained with this copy.

14. Congressional Correspondence in Final

When replying to Members of Congress or to Congressional Committees, the following procedures apply:

The Washington Office of Legislative and Congressional Affairs must review prior to sending:
1) all correspondence sent to the Washington offices of Members of Congress and all Congressional Committees; and 2) correspondence with a Member’s district office that involves substantive policy or controversial issues.

The Washington Office of Legislative and Congressional Affairs must be sent a courtesy copy of any Congressional correspondence that they did not review prior to sending.

When writing to the field office of a Member of Congress, a copy should be sent to the Member’s Washington office, and a notation “Copy to your Washington, DC, office” placed on the bottom of the field office original.

If a letter from a Member of Congress has been signed by a staff member, address the reply to the Member of Congress, as if he or she had made the initial inquiry. If an “attention” notation is needed, place it on the envelope and letter.

If a letter is received that is signed by more than one Member of Congress, address an original reply to each member, state in the opening or closing paragraph that an identical letter is being sent to each cosigner, and make only one set of file copies with distribution copies and notation as follows: “SIMILAR LETTERS SENT TO:”

Some Congressional correspondence consists of a letter initially addressed to the Member of Congress from a constituent, which is then forwarded to NPS or the Department. In this situation, thank the Member for the inquiry on behalf of the constituent in regard to the specific issue. Address the reply to the Member of Congress rather than to the constituent unless specifically requested otherwise.

Attachment 1 – Sample Letter



United States Department of the Interior

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

Font
Courier 10 or
Times New Roman 11 or
12

No typed date
Date will be stamped after
signature.

Ragged edge
Do not justify

Margins
1" on left and right
1" on top and bottom

File code (orgcode)

Does not appear on
original for letter
to be signed by the
Secretary

REF TO:
A3815 (2605)

Four blank lines

Inside Address

No line longer than
4"

Honorable Bill Bailey
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

One blank line

Salutation

Dear Senator Bailey:

Paragraphs

Single spaced
Blank space
between
paragraphs

Thank you for your letter of June 8, 2009, from Ms. Carol Jackson expressing concerns regarding a Wilderness Plan for the designated wilderness area within Cumberland Island National Seashore.

**Complimentary
Close**

I am enclosing a copy of a letter to Ms. Jackson from Robert M. Baker, Field Director, Southeast Area dated March 8, 2009, which addresses some of the concerns set forth in the Letters Ms. Jackson sent to you.

Signature Block

Rolland Swain, the current superintendent, has been at Cumberland Island 4 years and has directed the completion of a Resources Management Plan, a Sea Turtle Management Plan and Fire Management Plan, which is in final draft form. A management plan for the feral horses within the seashore is also in the final stages of preparation.

Enclosure

Superintendent Swain will initiate development of a Wilderness Management Plan for the Seashore this fall. Your continued interest in and support of the National Park Service is appreciated.

Sincerely,

One blank line

Four blank lines

James Young
Director

One blank line

Enclosure

Bcc: Secy's RF(2) 3152-FW 7221-ES 6024-SOL 5413-RMR 6248-OCL F/D-SERA
AID-760 170-Roberts 001-RF 2605-Young)
FNP:NSikes:912/882-4338:8/14/09:DTS-1111:

The second page of a two-page letter is shown below.

No page number. Continuing pages do not need a page number.

There must be at least two lines of text on the second page.

Your continued interest in and support of the programs of the National Park Service is greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,

Robert Smith
Director

Enclosure

cc: Mr. Don Young
Chairman, Committee on Resources
House of Representatives

Mr. George Miller
Ranking Minority Members
Committee on Resources
House of Representatives

Mr. Eni F. H. Faleomavaega
Ranking Minority Member
Subcommittee on National Parks
and Public Lands
Committee on Resources
House of Representatives

“Acting” Signature

Signature block has Director’s name typed; acting Director signs own name and handwrites “for” to side.

Copies sent to these persons. List the names and addresses vertically on the page.

Attachment 2 - Sample Memorandum



Alignment

Names and subject should line up vertically (use tab key, not spaces)

United States Department of the Interior

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

File code followed by (orgcode)

IN REPLY REFER TO:
H32(2200)

Two blank lines

Memorandum Line is left justified .

Memorandum

One blank line

“To:” line

Complete title of addressee used
Multiple addresses listed vertically within each new title beginning on a new line

To: Director

“From:” line

Do not use “the” before titles

From: Associate Director, Cultural Resources

“Through:” line

Used when sending a memo through an intermediate office for approval.
Typed below the To: line

Subject: Fiscal Year 2009, American Battlefield Protection Program, Partnership Funding Awards

I attach for your information, summary material on the Service’s award of competition FY 2009, American Battlefield Protection Program, Partnership Funding. We will proceed to notify the successful applicant organizations identified in this memorandum (Attachment 1) within the next week unless I hear from you instructing me otherwise.

The Service is joined by law from awarding these monies for construction or development activities or for acquisition of property in fee or interest. ABPP awards are made for such activities as research and documentation, land use or protection planning, interpretation, heritage education, and community consensus building.

Funds are awarded either through targeted initiatives or through competitive cooperative projects such as these. Potential applicant organizations are notified through direct mailings and general advertisements. Eligible sites are limited to Priority 1 battlefields identified by the Civil War Sites Advisory Commission (Attachment 2).

A summary of this year’s application process, selection criteria, and selection process is included as Attachment 3. This year, we will award 26 projects totaling \$375,325. Since these awards are made through cooperative agreements with the Service and are not grant apportionments requiring approval by the Assistant Secretary for Fish and Wildlife and Parks, final award decisions rest at the Division level in the Interagency Resources Division.

If I may be of further assistance to you or may answer any questions on this matter, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Attachments

← **No signature block**
Signature should be next to “From” line

No typed date

Date will be stamped after memo has been signed

Paragraphs

Single spaced
Blank space between paragraphs

Font

Courier 10 or
Times New Roman 11, 12

Margins

1” left and right
1” top and bottom

Attachment 3 – Sample Electronic Mail Message

Style should generally follow the guidelines for letter with the following exceptions:

	Author: Roger Smith Date: 2/2/09 Priority: Normal TO: Bill Bradley@Senate.gov Subject: response to letter from Ms. Ruckdeschel	←	Software Email header Generated automatically by email software.
Typed Email Header “VIA ELECTRONIC MAIL: NO HARD COPY TO FOLLOW” typed at top of message	VIA ELECTRONIC MAIL: NO HARD COPY TO FOLLOW IN REPLY REFER TO: A3815 (2612)	2/2/09 ←	Date Typed where stamp would normally be used
Do NOT use scanned letterhead logo	United States Department of the Interior National Park Service P.O. Box 37127 Washington, DC 20013-7127		Body of Message Simple layout No bolds, underlines, special fonts, tables, etc. (these do not translate well to other software applications) Does not use more than one screen color—this distinction cannot be kept when printed
File Code (orgcode) Needed on email & paper	Honorable Bill Bailey United States Senate Washington, D.C. 20510		
Office address Typed in lieu of printed address on stationary	Dear Senator Bailey: Thank you for your letter of June 8, 2009, from Ms. Carol Davis expressing concerns regarding a Wilderness Plan for the designated wilderness area within Cumberland Island National Seashore. I am enclosing a copy of a letter to Ms. Davis from Robert M. Baker, Field Director, Southeast Area dated March 8, 2009, which addresses some of the concerns set forth in the Letters Ms. Davis sent to you. Rolland Swain, the current superintendent, has been at Cumberland Island 4 years and has directed the completion of a Resources Management Plan, a Sea Turtle Management Plan and a Fire Management Plan, which is in final draft form. A management plan for the feral horses within the seashore is also in the final stages of preparation. Superintendent Swain will initiate development of a Wilderness Management Plan for the Seashore this fall. We appreciate your continued interest in and support of the National Park Service.		
Signature /s/ or /s/ACTING: followed by typed name in place of signature “SIGNED ORIGINAL ON FILE” placed immediately below	Sincerely, /s/ Roger Smith SIGNED ORIGINAL ON FILE Roger O. Smith Director bcc: Reg. SER) 001-RF 2605-Young) FNP:NSikes:912/882-4338:2/14/09:DTS-2222:		

Attachment 4 – Common Addresses

The following models of address cover common NPS addressees and are reproduced for convenience. These have been adopted from the standards used by the General Services Administration. For other models, see GSA’s website at <http://www.gsa.gov/staffi.c/ca/corres.htm>.

Title	Inside Address	Salutation
The President	The President	Dear Mr./Madam President:
Spouse of the President	Mr./Mrs. (full name)	Dear Mr./Mrs. (surname):
Former President	The Honorable (full name)	Dear President (surname):
The Vice President	The Honorable (full name)	Dear Mr./Madam (surname):
Former Vice President	The Honorable (full name)	Dear Mr./Madam (surname):
United States Senator	The Honorable (full name) United States Senate	Dear Senator (surname):
United States Representative	The Honorable (full name) House of Representatives or The Honorable (full name) Member, United States House of Representatives	Dear Mr./Ms. (surname):
Committee Chairman	The Honorable (full name) Chairman, Committee on (name) United States Senate	Dear Mr./Ms./Madam Chairman:
Subcommittee Chairman	The Honorable (full name) Chairman, Subcommittee on (name) (Name of parent Committee) United States Senate or House of Representatives	Dear Senator (surname): or Mr./Ms. (surname):
Speaker of the House of Representatives	The Honorable (full name) Speaker of the House of Representatives	Dear Mr./Madam Speaker:
Cabinet Members	The Honorable (full name) Secretary of (name of Department)	Dear Mr./Madam. Secretary:
Deputy Secretaries, Assistants, or Under Secretaries	The Honorable (full name) Deputy (or Assistant or Under Secretary of (name of Department)	Dear Mr./Ms. (surname):

Title	Inside Address	Salutation
Heads of Independent Offices and Agencies	The Honorable (full name) Comptroller General of the United States General Accounting Office or The Honorable (full name) Chairman, (name of Commission) or The Honorable (full name) Director, Office of Management and Budget	Dear Mr./Ms. (surname): Dear Mr./Madam Chairman:
Librarian of Congress	Honorable (full name) Librarian of Congress	Dear Mr./Ms. (surname):
Governor of State	Honorable (full name) Governor of (name of State)	Dear Governor (surname):
Lieutenant Governor	Honorable (full name) Lieutenant Governor of (name of State)	Dear Mr./Ms. (surname):
State legislator	Honorable (full name) (name of State) Senate or House of Representatives (or Assembly or House of Delegates)	Dear Mr./Ms. (surname):
Mayor	Honorable (full name) Mayor of (name of City)	Dear Mayor (surname):
Service Personnel	(grade, name, and abbreviation of service designation) (Retired is added, if applicable) (title and organization)	Dear (grade) (surname):

Attachment 5 - Controlled Correspondence Process

What is controlled correspondence?

“Controlled correspondence” is any letter, memorandum or email received in the NPS that has been designated by the Secretary or the Director as important enough to warrant tracking through reply. The NPS Controlled Correspondence Unit (CCU) tracks the progress of the response and issues weekly reports via email on the status of all controlled correspondence.

How is the mail sorted and who does it?

The CCU receives all mail addressed to the NPS Director. It also receives mail from the Executive Secretariat (Exec Sec) in the Office of the Secretary. Exec Sec assigns the signature level for any correspondence that is controlled by that office.

What mail becomes controlled correspondence?

All correspondence from Members of Congress, Congressional committees and subcommittees, the White House, including the offices of the President and Vice President is controlled. Correspondence from Federal Government Agencies, State Government Agencies, Local Governments, and letters of inquiry from the general public **if directed to the Director or the Secretary** are all controlled.

Mail that is routed to NPS by Exec Sec has already been sorted into controlled and “action as appropriate” categories before it is sent to NPS.

What mail does not get controlled?

General letters of comment from the public that do not ask a question are not controlled. Issue-specific mass mailings, such as tear-off postcards or form letters are not controlled. All of these are sent to the appropriate program office or park for their information and appropriate action. Program offices or parks may respond to inquiries of this nature, if they wish to do so.

Mail to the Director that is of a social nature, such as invitations, routine ceremonial mail (such as requests for Eagle Scout congratulatory letters) are forwarded to the Director’s administrative assistant or the appropriate action office for response as needed.

What happens to controlled correspondence in Washington?

Washington Office (WASO) staff in the Controlled Correspondence Unit (CCU) and Office of Legislative and Congressional Affairs (OLCA) enter all controlled correspondence into the Data Tracking System (DTS).

DTS is a system that provides authorized users in programs, regions and park units with access to the correspondence and the ability to track progress on its response at any time.

The DTS manual can be viewed at <http://dts.fws.net>, and training can be provided to new staff

using the program as part of their duties.

The CCU and OLCA staff review incoming correspondence, upload it into DTS, and create the routing list for reviews of those draft responses. CCU and OLCA staff then send the correspondence to the appropriate regional or WASO directorate correspondence contact for action. The office receiving the correspondence is designated as the “action office” and is responsible for drafting the response and sending it for review in a timely manner.

Who answers controlled correspondence?

All offices and parks across the Service may be asked to answer correspondence, depending on the subject. The NPS Controlled Correspondence Unit and regional correspondence coordinators distribute correspondence to the office that has the most expertise about the subject of the correspondence to ensure the best response. The action office may answer the correspondence directly or draft a response for signature at a higher management level, depending on the assignment.

What if the correspondence doesn't belong in my office?

First, make sure that your office is not the right one! Often, questions arise about programs or activities that have been closed down or don't exist. Your office may be the best (or only) office that can provide a strong statement if no such program or activity exists in the NPS and possibly to advise the correspondent about other organizations that may be better able to assist. Often correspondents may include several different questions in the same letter; your office may be the best one to coordinate a response, with input from other regions or directorates.

If you believe sure that the correspondence has been misrouted, contact the CCU right away. Provide the name and phone number of the person in the office who reviewed the correspondence and determined that it had been misrouted. The CCU staff may need to contact this person for help in finding the right office. Returning the correspondence with no explanation and no contact person is not acceptable!

Does all controlled correspondence require a written response?

No, depending on the type of correspondence, some controlled correspondence will be designated as “action as appropriate” and may be answered with a written response, phone call, meeting, or not answered, at the discretion of the action office.

How much time do I have to respond to controlled correspondence?

Due dates are assigned on the DTS system and control sheet. In general, drafts for responses from the Secretary and Deputy Secretary should be completed in two days, and those for the Director's signature in four days. For most correspondence sent for response by the action office, the response time is fifteen calendar days.

I can't put together a full response in time. Should I use an interim reply?

YES. Offices should utilize an interim reply when delays more than fifteen working days are anticipated. Interim replies should include the following; acknowledgment of receipt of the incoming letter, statement of why the mail response will be delayed, and information about when the formal response may be expected

Interim replies do not require surnames, but they should be uploaded into DTS. All interim replies to correspondence that will eventually be signed at the Secretarial or Assistant Secretarial level should be sent forward for the signature of the Assistant Secretary.

I've been assigned to prepare a draft response for the Secretary's signature. What do I do?

Compose the body of the letter, making certain to address all of the points in the correspondence. Include the greeting and signature portions of the letter, using the proper format provided in attachment 1. Route the draft response to the correspondence analyst shown on the tasking profile through DTS.

Who is responsible for proofreading outgoing correspondence?

The action office is responsible for proofreading all correspondence for content, grammar, punctuation, and spelling. This is an important responsibility, and each office should identify a point of contact with excellent writing skills to review all draft correspondence before it enters the surname process.

How does Secretarial correspondence get signed (and why does it take so long)?

Correspondence to be signed by the Secretary and the Deputy Secretary comes to the CCU as a draft. The draft response is uploaded into DTS and goes through the standard surname process, through the Director. It is then sent back to CCU, which obtains Departmental surnames.

What if my correspondence needs to be coordinated with or surnamed by another bureau or agency?

If coordination or clearance with other agencies or departments is required, the action office should notify the correspondence analyst in CCU.