

# URBAN SUPERINTENDENTS' CONFERENCE REPORT

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New York City



William Penn Mott, Jr.  
Director, National Park Service

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# INTRODUCTION

Early in 1987, William Penn Mott, Director of the National Park Service, identified the need for a unique conference to define and examine the special opportunities and responsibilities associated with managing the National Park Service's urban parks and recreation areas and to make specific recommendations relative to the National Park Service's obligations in fulfilling urban park and recreational needs in the 21st century.

Director Mott called upon his Special Assistant for Park Initiatives, Robert Nunn, and North Atlantic Regional Director, Herbert S. Cables, to provide the leadership required to develop and organize the Service's first Urban Superintendents' Conference. Under their leadership, a conference task force was assembled which included superintendents, as well as regional office and Washington Office staff members. The task force formulated the basic objectives and agenda for the conference. Six objectives were ultimately defined:

1. Identify ways of utilizing urban national park sites both as educational centers within the community and as a means to introduce visitors to the National Park Service and the national park idea.
2. Identify specific skills and competencies needed by urban park managers and their staffs to work in a complex urban environment.
3. Identify and list alternative and non-traditional management strategies and approaches that may be employed in urban park settings; and successful human, financial and physical resource options which can aid park managers in reaching goals and objectives.
4. Identify human resource management issues common to urban park areas and develop strategies to address these issues within the context of the Service as a whole.
5. Identify elements of a comprehensive communication/marketing program that, when implemented, would enable the park manager and staff to better manage and share information requirements; build a stronger base of constituent support; strengthen both internal and external networks, and generate improved awareness and support of the park and Service within the community.
6. Identify strategies for enhancing park visitation by all users, and the requisite skills needed to reduce conflict and crises in urban parks between traditional and non-traditional users, organizations, interest groups, and concerned neighbors and constituents.

The objectives became the foundation and focus for the Urban Superintendents' Conference. Throughout the conference, they were examined, discussed, questioned and refined. They guided conference participants as they sought to identify new ways in which to successfully provide quality educational and recreational opportunities to the nation's increasingly urban population of the 21st century.

# I. MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR



As a result of my extensive travels to all of the units of the National Park Service which are distributed throughout the nation, I have become increasingly convinced that the future and security of our national parks is greatly dependent upon our ability, not only to understand and to respond to the needs of a predominately urban population, but upon our ability to communicate more effectively with our urban citizens so that the ideals and the mission of the National Park Service will become an integral part of their lives and thinking. The urban population will provide the public constituency and support which is essential to our parks in a democratic society. In order to carry out our mission, we must, as always, have the strong support of the people . . . and the people are in the nation's cities.

Those units of the National Park Service which are located within or close to urban areas are, therefore, the Service's "front line". In spite of the fact that these areas must often contend with the difficult problems of

social malaise and environmental degradation, they are, nonetheless, poised to seize a very real opportunity. They can actively demonstrate the vitality of the National Park idea in spite of the adverse conditions that may prevail in their immediate environment. In our urban areas, the National Park Service can function as an agent of change (not only as a preservation agent) retrieving a sense of environmental harmony for lands entrusted to our care and providing opportunities for individual regeneration and recreation where none previously existed.

Because I believe that a strong and unified National Park Service is critical to the future of our nation and the world and, because I also believe that our people will continue to become more urban in their orientation (and, therefore, more in need of access to the resources we protect), I convened the National Park Service's first Urban Superintendents' Conference. We are facing serious challenges as we look forward to the 21st century, and we all share a heavy responsibility to the American people and to the natural and cultural treasures for which we are temporary stewards. We must work together to define our problems and to craft innovative solutions to them. We must avoid the temptation to become an insular agency focused on a simpler past. We must reach out, make new connections and weld new bonds in order to ensure that the values of the National Park Service will remain a vital part of our national agenda into the 21st century.

## II. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The National Park Service's first Urban Superintendents' Conference was opened by Director William Penn Mott at the Sheraton Center in New York City on the evening of June 8, 1987. More than 120 participants were in attendance for the opening of the five-day conference, which included an all day field trip to Gateway National Recreation Area. The conference closed on Friday, the 12th. Superintendents from the Service's urban park areas, Regional Directors, representatives of the Washington Directorate, and other National Park Service officials were in attendance. They were joined by representatives of federal, state, county and municipal agencies, academic institutions and the private sector.

During the course of the week, conference participants served on various panels that focused on individual conference objectives. Evening sessions complemented the daily programs and, at the end of the week, small work groups also organized by conference objectives were convened and specific recommendations from participants were developed and recorded.

Director Mott set the tone for the week's sessions when he said, "The areas located in and near our cities will play a critical role in shaping the National Park Service and the system it administers in the future. These parks serve as an advance guard. In them, we have a great responsibility and opportunity to communicate the National Park idea. It is here that we can build and educate constituencies that will support all of the parks, for all of the future."

This report documents the highlights of the panels and sessions and records the specific participant recommendations of this very unique and important conference.

### III. SUMMARY OF CONFERENCE PROCEEDINGS

#### Plenary Session:

#### "Urban Parks' Obligations and Opportunities Into the 21st Century"

**The Keynote Address:** William Lucas, Attorney and former County Executive of Wayne County, Michigan

During his keynote address, Lucas recounted his experiences growing up in New York City, appreciating urban parks as his only contact with nature. While in college, he served as a park director for the New York City Park Department, in charge of parks with swings, basketball courts and ball fields. From his perspective then, the National Park manager was someone far removed from the problems of managing the urban environment. "At that time," Lucas said, "the role of the National Park Service was a mystery yet to be unveiled to me."



For Lucas, the key challenges for the urban national park manager are to bring skills and experiences gained from a pastoral setting into the urban one, and to transfer a love of nature to those who need it most: inner-city youth. "Urban park managers must reach out and let people know what the National Park Service is all about," he said. For example, as a recent appointee of the Bicentennial of the Constitution Committee, Lucas was surprised to discover that the Park Service was sponsoring the Bicentennial play *Four Little Pages*. "It occurred to me that if I, an educated, political leader wasn't aware of the diverse programs offered by the Park Service, how could inner-city youths, or any urban constituency, be expected to know?"

Lucas recounted his success in turning Detroit's urban parks from areas of waste and neglect to greater community use. "The key to our success," he said, "was twofold: in reaching out to the county and state, and in the personal sacrifice made by those employees involved." Specifically, Lucas discussed a horse-mounted patrol unit that was established with donated animals and feed." Because the program worked, the people regained control of their parks from vandals, drug addicts and other felons. As a result of the initial sacrifice, the program is now fully funded.

Finally, Lucas pointed out that any civil organization that does its job well increases its reputation even though the budgeting doesn't always follow. Successful development of urban constituencies opens many doors, including those to more dollars. He cited an example of an urban legislator who was heading up the state agricultural committee. Knowing that the needs of the inner city were not that much different from those of the farmers, the legislator successfully matched the two constituencies. At voting time, the state budget targeted more for these two groups than ever before in the state's history.

With shrinking municipal budgets, legislators will look increasingly to the federal park system for help. The National Park Service may be unaware of Congressional intent to continue to increase the Service's urban responsibilities, but Lucas believes it exists. The key to supporting the whole system will be through selling it to the urban dweller. Accept the challenge. Reach out. Instilling an understanding of nature, involving volunteers, training new park managers can be very rewarding. When your tour of duty in the city is ended, possibly you may choose to stay. Your success and individual commitment will make a tremendous difference to the nation.

## Panel Discussion

**Moderator:** Robert L. Nunn, Special Assistant to the Director, Park Initiatives, National Park Service.

**Panel Members:** Henry J. Stern, Commissioner, New York City Department of Parks and Recreation; Dr. Jessyna McDonald, Chariman, Recreation Studies Program, Purdue University; Nash Casto, Executive Director, The Palisades Interstate Park Commission; William Bird, Director, Dade County Park and Recreation Department.

Henry J. Stern stated his belief that the first issue that parks of the future will have to face is land acquisition and the creation of new parks. Developments are taking over potential park land and we are now turning the country into cities. Cities must allocate land for parks. In the 19th century, land was available or free for parks. In the middle of the 19th century, Central Park was purchased for 14 million dollars. That amount would buy very little land today.

In New York City, out of a bond issue of 1.2 billion dollars, only 250 million dollars were allocated for parks. We must encourage our elected officials to provide more money for our parks. We must impress upon them the value of parks to our society. If legislators can see their worth perhaps they would be more receptive to providing additional money for them.

One of the problems we have now and must deal with in the future is the problem of misbehavior in our parks. Officials are less prone to request money for parks if they feel that they are not safe for the visitors. Many times bad behavior is swept under the rug in our parks. We fail to report misbehavior because of how we feel the public will react to this information. If we are to have any success in dealing with the problem, we must report it. If we do this and deal with the problem, we will have a better chance of making our parks safe for those wishing to use them.

Dr. Jessyna McDonald observed that the impact of rapid change in various social institutions is a cause for great concern throughout our nation and the world. In an article prepared for the President's Commission on Americans Outdoors, the following mandate was recommended to administrators of public recreation, park and leisure services:

"Public recreation and parks must meet the needs of the change in demographic compositions of the public; financing public leisure services will require a careful balancing of the need for economic restraint with the social needs of a more vulnerable population; and public leisure service agencies must increasingly monitor trends of the population they serve."



There has been much progress in the delivery of recreational services in urban areas. However, while there has been progress, problems still remain. Disadvantaged blacks, for example, and other minorities living in urban areas are especially at risk because of their health and leisure lifestyles. Superintendents and managers of urban parks have the challenge of serving the needs of these vulnerable groups who, because of various socioeconomic barriers, are often locked-in to destructive lifestyles and locked-out of recreation opportunities.

A variety of socio-demographic, economic and industrial trends will influence the design and delivery of urban park service resources during the 21st century. In the future, urban parks may be utilized as teaching, lifestyle and cultural centers in the following areas: historical, environmental, recreation interchanges, trans-cultural awareness and grassroot entrepreneurship.

Nash Castro, in his opening remarks, noted that the Urban Superintendents' Conference had more people in attendance than the first National Park Service Conference held in 1948 and there was much concern on the part of the early park directors as to whether or not urban parks should be a part of the Service.

Urban park land is getting very scarce and it is essential that our public officials know the value of our parks. We need to work toward the development of an outdoor ethic. We now have a population of over 250 million in this country and we are still growing. This growth will put increasing pressure on our urban parks. With land getting harder to come by, we are faced with additional problems as we strive to have parks available for all our citizens. In planning for the 21st century, we must re-examine our policies, methods of staffing, funding and land acquisition, and other relevant factors.

William Bird emphasized that every park should have a theme that can be developed. If park managers are to be successful, they cannot waste time feeling sorry for themselves. They must be planners. When he first came to Dade County ten years ago, the parks were in bad shape. Since then, they have been able to find answers to many of their problems. Managers must accept the facts of where they are and create their own Bibles.

Because salaries in the private sector were 30% above those in the parks, it was necessary to be innovative. Dade County Park System has a total of 920 permanent full-time employees. In order to get the job done, they use contractors, part-time employees, labor-assistance contracts and other options.

Parks should be run like businesses and should conduct their own audits. Cross-training is important to the development of a well trained, flexible staff. User surveys can help us to understand what people want from the parks. If the parks meet their needs, they will be more supportive and willing to pay for services.

We must be innovative. An example is Disney World. Their success is in providing people with what they want. Some concessions are run by the system and some are leased. No one method is best all the time. Graphics and signing are important. They create a good image. Advertising and marketing are also important. Public events can help you make money and publicize your park. Fairs can also be used for this purpose. In today's changing world, you must learn to do things in different ways.

The private sector will work with you if you let them. Communication is important. Dade County Parks are getting a good share of the budget because they communicate well with the general public and public officials.

Urban National Parks should help to take the pressure off of local parks. Parks should be places where people enjoy themselves. They will then take pride in the park and support it.

## Luncheon Address

William P. Horn, Assistant Secretary for Fish, Wildlife and Parks, U.S. Department of the Interior

In his address to the conferees, Assistant Secretary Horn expressed his belief that the challenge the National Park Service faces in the 21st century will have three parts:

1. How to carry out the National Park Service's dual mission of preservation of resources and provision for the public's use and enjoyment of them. It is a difficult task to balance these two charges today, and it will become increasingly difficult in the future.
2. How to foster and expand the environmental ethic through educational programs. Accomplishment of this task will be critical to the future of our parks and of the environment beyond our boundaries. The National Park Service is the key point of contact with nature for many urban dwellers.
3. How to deal with new management issues. The National Park Service has traditionally dealt effectively with resource management issues. The more difficult issues for the future will be "amenity issues." Increasingly, the parks will need to balance and integrate conflicting demands for the use of park resources: airplanes vs. hikers, for example. The National Park Service must also protect resources so that their integrity will be preserved. This will involve separating uses in time and space, and guiding various activities so that they are "resource compatible."

Following his address, Assistant Secretary Horn, assisted by Peggy Venable, presented a "Take Pride in America" certificate to WABC-TV, Channel 7, in recognition of the station's consistent support of the National Park Service and its Metropolitan New York programs. For the past five years, Channel 7 has held an education field trip for 400 New York area high school valedictorians in order to promote higher education and the wise use of public lands.

## Serving the Urban Visitor

**Moderator:** James Carroll, Science Support Staff, Washington Office, National Park Service.



**Panel Members:** Dr. William Kornblum, Director of the National Park Service's Cooperative Park Studies Unit at City University of New York; Vernon Boggs, Assistant Professor of Sociology, City University of New York; Terry Williams, Columbia University and Harlem high school students: Akemi Kochiyama, Kahlil Hicks, Kahlil Williams and Shawn Smith.

Dr. William Kornblum: The role of park sociologists is not unlike that of J. Alfred Prufrock, a character from a T.S. Eliot poem, who said of himself: "No, I am not a Prince, nor was meant to be. Am an attendant lord, one that will do to swell a progress, start a scene or two". Commenting on the conference's objectives from a social scientist's perspective, Kornblum emphasized the importance of interaction between park managers and social

scientists. While the great parks of the West have offered the National Park Service the opportunity to preserve grandiose natural attractions, urban parks offer the opportunity to restore nature where it has been damaged and, therefore, "to complete the National Park vision." Kornblum stressed the need to view urban and non-urban parks, not as separate phenomena, but rather as entities bound closely together on a continuum.

Dr. Vernon Boggs presented a video tape on urban youth. The video tape was followed by a youth panel led by Terry Williams. The youth panelists--Akemi Kochiyama, Kahlil Hicks, Kahlil Williams, and Shawn Smith--were "high achievers" from Harlem high schools. The four young people stole the show as they described inner city lifestyle and its relationship to the national park ideal. "Some of my friends," one panelist commented to the audience, "make as much money dealing crack as you do."



Although the youths indicated that they were aiming for careers with salaries higher than the federal government offers, two of them were recently hired for summer jobs in the National Park Service. This was an early success for the conference, even though the young panelists indicated that much work is still necessary for the National Park Service to make inroads into the inner city.

## City Parks and Open Space

**Moderator:** John P. Keith, President, Regional Plan Association



**Panel Members:** Ronald Cianciulli, Deputy Central Park Administrator, New York City Department of Parks and Recreation; Hooper L. Brooks, Director, Regional Open Space Program for the Regional Plan Association; Tom Fox, Director, Neighborhood Open Space Coalition, New York.

During the course of this session, Mr. Cianciulli spoke specifically about operating the city park and outlined the main components of Central Park's management. Special attention was given to the budgeting process,

special events, and cooperation of the Central Park Conservancy.

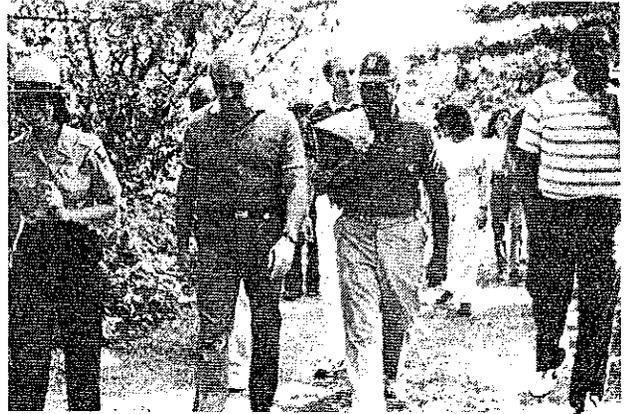
Mr. Brooks presented some thoughts regarding the resurgent movement for open space and highlighted the goals, objectives, and preliminary findings of the Regional Open Space Study currently underway. This study, done for the President's Commission on Americans Outdoors, emphasizes open space opportunities, greenways, and operational issues.

Mr. Fox, in considering the uses of urban open spaces, outlined the spectrum of urban open spaces from vacant lots to national urban recreation areas. Through a slide presentation, concepts of use, design, maintenance, and community organization were illustrated in a colorful trip around New York City.

## Environmental Education in Urban Parks

This session was one of three held during the course of a full day field trip to the Gateway National Recreation Area.

Upon their arrival at Floyd Bennett Field, participants toured four stations in the Ecology Village Pines Camping Area, the only tent camping program in New York City. The Gateway staff explained that this facility serves school groups during the school year and youth organizations during the summer. Moving from the two-person tents in the Pheasant campsite, the group stopped at the barrier-free lean-tos in the Marsh Hawk site, and at the gardens where a class from the Brooklyn Center for the Multiply Handicapped prepared to harvest vegetables. At the last station, in Building 258, plans for a new Gateway Environmental Study Center were discussed. Presently, the study center, run jointly by the Park Service and the New York City Board of Education, is housed in another location on the field away from the camping complex. The Board of Education, in fiscal year 1987, sponsored workshops for over 13,000 students and 1600 teachers from Gateway resources.



Superintendent Joseph Avery reemphasized the concerns and needs for an urban park like Gateway and Georgia Reilly, Superintendent of Rock Creek Park, gave a presentation which covered environmental education programs throughout the National Capital Region with an emphasis on Rock Creek Park. She highlighted a special Junior Ranger Program at Aquatic Kennelworth Gardens, pointing out that this program targeted youngsters who would not normally have exposure to the National Park Service.

Dale Engquist, Superintendent of the Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore, described some of the park's environmental education programs which include the Maple Sugar Time event at the Chellberg Farm and discovering the secrets of a dune system at Mt. Baldy. Mr. Engquist then described the construction of the Paul H. Douglas Center for Environmental Education, noting that exhibit work and experimentation are still continuing.

Ruth Eilenberg, Coordinator of the Gateway Environmental Study Center, emphasized that partnerships are important to any environmental education program and spoke of the value of the eleven year partnership between the National Park Service and the New York City Board of Education. She described further the many programs, teacher workshops and camping courses and the impact they have on the lives of urban students and teachers. Patti Reilly, Gateway's Environmental Education Specialist, told participants about some of the other environmental education programs available at Gateway: the Sandy Hook Discovery Program, a two and a half day residential experience; Art and the Outdoors; and Operation Explore, a unique collaboration between several New York agencies that gives kids a trip to Gateway, a farm visit, and two and a half days at a New York State Park.

The morning's activities concluded with a presentation by fifth and sixth grade students from Brooklyn's Public School 251. Through creative dance and musical composition, the students recounted their outdoor adventures at Gateway as participants in Operation Explore.

## **Historic Preservation: Public and Private Partnership**

This session, which included a tour of Hangar Row, Floyd Bennett Field and Riis Park, was part of the Gateway field trip.

The National Park Service, particularly in its urban units, is responsible for a vast number of structures and landscapes listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Because many of these structures or landscapes are in need of extensive rehabilitation, and not all of them have uses that require direct Park Service management, they are leased for private use given specific reconstruction constraints. The objective is to maintain their existence as part of the country's historic scene. Other structures provide direct service to the National Park Service and the public. Here, options still exist for public-private partnership. Three case studies, Cuyahoga Valley National Recreation Area, Lowell National Historical Park, and Gateway National Recreation Area, documented some experiences in this area.

Lewis S. Albert, Superintendent, Cuyahoga Valley National Recreation Area, pointed out that much of our experience and training is in using our own funding and personnel to preserve and protect park resources. This often includes limiting or excluding their private use and development. The leasing program, however, has caused us to rethink our traditional role in resource management, and to encourage non-National Park Service use of our historic structures. Private use is often the only way to preserve these resources. In addition, these leases preserve the option for future National Park Service use. We must continue to take the long-term view in resource management by using the leasing program to preserve buildings which we are unable to preserve alone.

Sandy Walter, Superintendent, Lowell National Historical Park, Larry Gall, Assistant Superintendent and Peter Aucella, Director of the Lowell Historic Preservation Commission, presented highlights of Lowell's successes. The key to these successes has been the cooperation of public and private sectors in developing and managing the park. To date, the park's 40 million dollar development program is nearly complete. Key elements in the program's success include the following:

1. Minimizing direct Federal ownership of property by providing the technical assistance, grants and loans to property owners for historic preservation;
2. Developing and implementing design controls, and creating the Lowell Historic Board to enforce those controls and to assure the highest standards of preservation;
3. Developing an innovative program of tours, festivals, and special events through a variety of cooperative arrangements to make maximum use of the community's own resources and energies;
4. Enhancing the quality and impact of interpretation by nurturing ties to higher education in the field of industrial history. Examples include the annual Lowell Conference on Industrial History, and the code-development, with the University of Lowell, of the Tsongas Industrial History Center.

Robert W. MacIntosh, Superintendent, Gateway National Recreation Area identified four historic areas within Gateway (Fort Hancock at Sandy Hook, New Jersey; Battery Weed at Fort Wadsworth, Staten Island; Floyd Bennett Field in Brooklyn; and Jacob Riis Park in Queens, New York) where a variety of efforts are underway relative to public/private partnerships. An RFP for the rehabilitation and adaptive reuse of the Jacob Riis Park was released in May, 1986. At the time of the conference, one developer's proposal appeared to best serve the National Park Service's needs. It called for the rehabilitation of the bathhouse and the restoration of the restaurant on the second floor. The 60,000 square ft. courtyard will be rehabilitated with swimming pools and a garden courtyard and landscaped areas along the beach will be renovated to include picnic space. In order to make the project financially feasible, the existing golf course will be relocated to an undeveloped parcel of land on the eastern edge of Riis park. This aspect of the plan will utilize National Park Service concession authority. In its place, the developer proposes a performing arts center and an aquatic park. Operation of the 8,700 car parking lot will also contribute revenues to the project.

## Urban Natural Resource Management

This was the final field session; it included a tour of the Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge.

Mike Finley, Superintendent of the Everglades National Park, presented a slide show covering the Everglades in relation to its wetlands preservation issues and to its role in the Biosphere Reserve Program, administered by the National Park Service. Several restoration projects involving threatened or endangered species within the park were also discussed. "The relationship of Everglades to its surrounding public and private interests makes this a challenging job; urban encroachment is impacting this park both directly and indirectly," Mr. Finley said.



Richard Ding, Superintendent from the Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area, stressed the importance of interpreting the park's natural resource program and hands-on natural resource management. "Urban impacts are felt at every level of this recreation area," Mr. Ding said. "Basically, it is a job of educating your visitor to the mandates of the National Park Service as they relate to the bigger picture: protecting our natural and cultural resources for future generations."

Gateway's Chief of Natural Resource and Compliance Office, John T. Tanacredi, discussed Gateway's management zones in the context of a LANDSAT satellite photo of the "Gateway to the United States" in New York Harbor. "The primary resource management actions," Tanacredi said, "revolve around knowledge of the dynamic nature of coastal park systems; whether it's piping plover and endangered species, or the management of hazardous materials in abandoned landfills. Habitat restoration should play a more important role in the future of urban national parks since the National Park Service inherits remnant parcels of open space that need to be protected and, in many instances, restored to their previous vegetative and faunal diversity."

In his dinner address to conference participants at the end of the field day, Stephen M. McPherson, Chairman, Board of Trustees, National Parks and Conservation Association, expressed his approval of the conference which will focus attention on National Parks in urban areas. Many types of threats now face the urban National Parks and all kinds of challenges lie before the Service. Among the major issues faced by urban parks are: urban encroachment (i.e. development); adequate funding; fee collection for park support; constituency building and aggressive advocacy by NPS managers for urban parks.

## Marketing and Communication

**Moderator:** Manny Strumpf, Gateway National Recreation Area, National Park Service

**Panel Members:** Dr. Alan Hogenauer, President of CHECKLIST; David Dunlop, Urban Reporter, New York Times

The Marketing and Communication panel provided a diverse look at communicating with the public, and with media and support groups. Dr. Alan Hogenauer, a marketing expert and President of CHECKLIST, challenged the government's traditional, "non-marketing" stance as "hogwash or its equivalent. Marketing is an alien concept for the park system. That is something long overdue for correction." Dr. Hogenauer is believed to be the only individual to have visited 780 designated National Park Service areas.

David Dunlop urged park superintendents and staff to be available to the press, to have answers and information when contacted, and to study the media vehicle before sending a release or suggesting a feature story. "I am turned off by envelopes addressed with stick-on labels," he said, referring to his personal style, "they eliminate the feeling of personalization. What reporters acknowledge and respect is credibility."

National Park Service Superintendents participating in the panel included Brian O'Neill of Golden Gate NRA, Jerry Schober of Jefferson National Expansion Memorial, and Warren Beach from Chattahoochee River NRA. They offered their thoughts, inspiration and ideas on marketing for public awareness and support, and for promoting a public image.

### **Alternative and Non-Traditional Management Strategies**

**Moderator:** Reginald Hagood, Chief, Division of Employee Development, National Park Service

**Panel Members:** Elizabeth Barlow Rogers, Central Park Administrator; Ann Toole, Outdoor Recreation Planner, National Park Service; Jerry L. Schober, Superintendent, Jefferson National Expansion Memorial; Dr. Ann McDonald, Management consultant for parks and recreation.

These four panelists have made valuable improvements in other service careers as a result of personal management styles. In every case, these individuals used alternative methods to: improve productivity and employee morale; obtain a specific project result or service and eliminate critical or unacceptable situations.

They agreed that whatever the size and importance of a particular project--whether to rehabilitate New York's Central Park, to obtain millions of dollars for a new transportation system, or to develop joint employee training ventures with the local community--there are certain principles to establish before success is achieved:

1. **Commitment:** A sense of mission is essential before advocates for a cause will join. Many projects for which cooperation is sought are not new, although the intensity with which volunteers are needed or funds raised must be maintained. Our role is often that of facilitator after it is determined the project can be done.
2. **Planning:** Often, what we are trying to accomplish is not clearly defined, and the goals are not understood by those working on the project. Planning is only the beginning. Eighty percent of park costs are operation-related, so getting beyond planning to performance, training and service, is critical to success.
3. **Responsibility:** Take it. Get things done and know when to delegate authority. Give clear, specific instructions when delegating. To accomplish anything, it is not the technology, but the people who are the producers.

### **The Role of the Washington Office in Urban Park Programs and Development**

**Panel Moderator:** Robert L. Nunn, Special Assistant to the Director for Park Initiatives, National Park Service

**Panel Members:** Ken Raithel, Assistant Director, Interpretation; Edward L. Davis, Associate Director, Policy, Budget and Administration; Barbara Gillard-Payne, Assistant Director Business and Economic Development; Eugene Hester, Associate Director, National Resources; James W. Stewart, Acting Associate Director, Planning and Development.

Ken Raithel began by observing that people are not always as they seem to be. We in public service need to look around us to see whose needs are really being met. A pitfall of planning is that we often overlook people we are supposed to be serving. Deviant behavior by some park visitors is determined by how we look at



things. All people don't need a solitary experience in a park for it to be a good experience. Every person working in a park is an interpreter. Some who are in special positions need special skills but, we are all role models. Goodwill and harmony are important in our parks. The role of the Washington office is to make sure that we stay in touch with what is happening in our parks and to find ways to help those in the field get the job done. We need to find out what new and positive actions should be taken by our parks and pass this information on to them. We need to maximize communication.

Edward Davis outlined some possible changes in park administration that may occur in the 21st century: 1) Managers will have more power to determine employee salaries; 2) Managers will have a freer hand to manage; 3) Conferences like this one will be done by visual phone hook-up; 4) Managers will have a bigger hand in how they obtain goods and services; and 5) There will be more accurate checks and balances in purchasing procedures. In management, there are three areas: white, grey and black. The white area is the safe area of management. The grey is the area where you are still legal but can take a few more chances. Black is the high-risk area where you are on your own and can get into a lot of trouble. You can get a lot done in the grey area.

Gene Hester stated that every park has its own message and mission, though it is still part of the larger system. Managers of urban parks have a unique opportunity to tell the story of the National Parks to many people. Many things are happening in our parks in relationship to the natural environment. All parks have natural resources. Citizens need to know how to take care of their environment. Ecological health of parks is important. The National Park Service is in the forefront of some very important natural resource issues. Biological and genetic diversity and endangered species are some issues that are being dealt with. Habitat loss is a very serious problem with our wildlife. We are attempting to find solutions to this problem. All of us have a natural resource responsibility.

Jim Stewart expressed his feeling that urban parks should have a good marketing system. The National Park Service is starting to look outward and appreciate what others in the park business are doing, and already we are accepting the role of catalyst for others in parks and recreation. We are leading the way. It should be this way. In the future, we will probably have many more affiliated areas. Then the question will be, "Are these areas of national significance?" We are losing the fear of being "diluted." This is good because it opens the way to expanding our methods of giving park experiences to the public. An issue that must now be faced is, "Can the Service retain the planners and managers that will be needed in the future?"

Barbara Gillard-Payne spoke about the success of the Business & Economic Development Program and about its dependance upon National Park Service managers. One responsibility of this program is to follow how the Service spends its money, and to make sure that small, women and minority businesses get a fair share of Service business. Presently, the National Park Service has a good program with 82% of the procurement business going to small businesses. Nearly 25% goes to minority businesses, with half of this done through "set-asides" and half through competitive bids. Five percent of our business goes to women-owned businesses. Urban parks have a unique opportunity to become involved with minority- and women-owned businesses because many are located in urban areas. By getting involved with local businesses, the urban park can have a better relationship with the local community. If managers use minority entrepreneurs, they become eligible for the leadership award, which has been won by Deputy Director Galvin and Regional Director Cables the last two years.

## Human Resources Management Issues and Strategies

**Moderator:** Herbert S. Cables, Jr.  
Regional Director, North Atlantic Region, National Park Service

**Panel Members:** Donald R. Field, Research Sociologist, Cooperative Park Studies Unit, Oregon State University; Christopher T. Delaporte, Director of Recreation and Parks, City of Baltimore, Maryland; George B. Hartzog, Attorney, former Director of the National Park Service.



Regional Director Cables opened this session by observing that the National Park Service confronts a special challenge in the cities of the country and that we have the opportunity to function as a unifying element among the diverse elements of American society. To do this, however, we must: increase our awareness of the racial and ethnic diversity of our urban constituents; develop innovative programs to serve various populations; increase our sensitivity to, and understanding of, urban park visitors; and fully integrate all elements of our own work force, and pursue, relentlessly, the quality personnel necessary to maintain our success in the cities.

Donald Field summarized the role that sociologists have played, and could continue to play, as the Service works to accomplish its mission in the cities. With the overwhelming majority of National Park Service areas lying within a day's drive of our urban centers, all of us must deal with and contemplate the issues facing urban parks.

The National Park Service already deals formally with Cultural Resource and Natural Resource Management planning through the vehicle of the General Management Plan and other management documents. In response to the Director's Social Science Initiative, the issues of Human Resource Management will be explored by developing a prototypical Human Resource Management Plan. Gateway National Recreation Area and Glacier National Park have been selected as the initial study areas.

Christopher Delaporte emphasized the importance of recognizing and understanding the often grim and threatening urban context in which we must work in order to achieve our goal of serving the people in the cities. He challenged superintendents to adopt a city and to go out and find urban constituents. Most often, these constituents, especially the youth, lack the most basic recreation and play skills, as well as any concept of nature and the world beyond: a world of aspiration, hope and opportunity.

For the most part, urban park managers are dealing with "survival issues," and we must aggressively pursue the development of more supervised, active and structured programs for urban youth. The National Park Service and urban park managers should be working more closely together to try and solve these problems.

Former Director, George Hartzog told conference participants that we were meeting in the worst of times and the best of times. While there are many negative factors working against us, he sees the return of an era where compassion will again dominate our nation's thinking. Parks will flourish then because they are places where our citizens can search for answers to humanity's ancient question, "Who am I?" In order for urban parks to fulfill this purpose, we need to develop a strategic plan. And we must start by clarifying "who we are" and what our real business is.

He perceives a lack of consensus within the Service regarding our role in the cities and our responsibility toward urban parks. This is an issue the Service must quickly clarify. In the mean time, we must remain proud of our careers as public servants despite past criticisms. We are in a unique position to genuinely contribute to our society and to change the lives of people.

## IV. CONFERENCE RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations were developed in small Group Work Sessions and are organized by the objectives established for the conference.

**OBJECTIVE I:** Identify ways of utilizing urban National Park sites both as educational centers within the community and as a means to introduce visitors to the National Park Service and the national park idea.

Several steps were recommended to accomplish this objective:

- Identify key urban constituencies;
- Assess the present perception of the National Park idea held by those constituencies;
- Develop programs and strategies to improve or change that perception. These might include:
  - Provision of short-term personnel exchanges between urban and non-urban park areas
  - Recruitment of educational marketing and media specialists through contracts, cooperative agreements, memoranda of understanding, grants and the NPS hiring systems
  - Enlistment of cooperation from the private sector
  - Continued involvement of NPS (through Eastern National Parks and Monuments Associations) in the Tourism Pow-Wow
  - Coordination with local program providers to avoid duplication and to maximize efforts
  - Development of special nationwide media marketing campaigns;
- Implement and evaluate the success of the programs;
- Share the process and results of successful programs internally and with other agencies.

**OBJECTIVE II:** Identify specific skills and competencies needed by urban park managers and their staffs to work in a complex urban environment.

Although the qualities of leadership, sensitivity, flexibility and the ability to communicate well and to take risks are valuable in all National Park Service managers, some of these skills and qualities are more important to urban park managers than to managers of more traditional parks. Variations in management responsibilities result from the different constituencies being served. For example, visitors to remote, natural parks are generally transitory, visiting the park for a few hours or days and then moving on. Urban park visitors, however, often live nearby, make frequent visits to the park and have a strong interest in the policies, programs and conditions of the park.

Managers of urban parks may find the following skills and qualities to be particular value:

- Sensitivity to social and cultural trends is crucial because most social trends and recreational fads arise in the urban environment along with significant social problems;
- Skills in dealing with the media are important because the media have greater access to the urban park and the park's activities have a more immediate effect upon their readers and viewers;
- The ability to develop and maintain positive relationships with urban political officials (representing federal, state or local agencies) combined with a thorough knowledge of other governments' jurisdictions and programs is important in enhancing our programs and reducing jurisdictional conflicts;
- The urban park manager, more than his more isolated colleague, needs a high tolerance for stress and a receptivity to people with widely differing needs and views. He may find that non-traditional management skills are those which are most useful;
- The urban park manager needs to have the ability to identify the park's constituencies and to energize them to use the park and to support its programs;

- The capacity to identify the role of the park in meeting the needs of the people in the area and to create programs to meet those needs is crucial;
- The ability to develop a staff that is culturally "aware" and dedicated to equal opportunity in access to jobs and to the development of programs that serve the needs of a multicultural constituency is vital;
- Urban park managers must have a personal commitment to and a contagious enthusiasm for the role that urban parks play as essential elements of the National Park System.

**OBJECTIVE III:** Identify and list alternative and non-traditional management strategies and approaches that may be employed in urban park settings; and successful human, financial and physical resource options which can aid park managers in reaching goals and objectives.

The following approaches and options were suggested:

- A precise definition of "urban parks" would be very difficult, as well as unnecessary; all parks should be seen as part of an inclusive continuum;
- Deal more directly with issues concerning the "proliferation of nomenclature" to build a clearer and less onerous identity for the National Park Service;
- Incorporate modern marketing principles and processes to build a more unified national identity and an awareness of our parks and services among the American public (including park users and non-users). Training of National Park Service staff to communicate these messages is a critical need;
- Accept the full spectrum of strategies for dealing with issues. It is more useful to think in terms of appropriate or inappropriate strategies than in terms of traditional or non-traditional strategies. Greater latitude should be granted for innovative approaches;
- Emphasize the importance of utilizing funds generated by user fees for the benefit and improvement of parks and explore new ways to achieve reimbursement arrangements whenever possible (i.e., through special use permits or court collecting);
- Establish closer ties with state offices of tourism, local Chambers of Commerce, and visitor/convention bureaus to foster the dissemination of information about the National Parks and to develop cooperative ventures;
- Continue to promote employment and outreach programs for young people and other special populations such as the Junior Ranger Program and locally-based conservation corps;
- Strengthen cooperative ventures between National Park Service units and education institutions.
- Expand National Park Service information dissemination activities and give more attention to promoting other units and the National Park System as a whole;
- Re-examine, on a national basis, the National Park Service information networking efforts to determine the best ways to utilize resources.

**OBJECTIVE IV:** Identify human resource management issues common to urban park areas and develop strategies to address these issues within the context of the Service as a whole.

Human resource management and the attraction and retention of high quality employees are particularly important in urban parks. The Service must make firm commitments at the highest levels to ensure that these issues are adequately addressed.

Key human resource management issues for urban parks, and suggested strategies, include:

- Higher Cost of living - The National Park Service should provide cost of living adjustments that reflect the increased costs of living in urban areas for people performing comparable jobs. These adjustments might be similar to the wage grade scale or cost of living allowances in Alaska;
- Housing - Urban housing is very scarce and costs are extremely high. Some subsidy is needed. Housing cost comparability must reflect the employee's "ability to pay";
- Urban Park Orientation - Training should be provided for new employees assigned to urban parks which would make them aware of the issues and opportunities they might be expected to encounter. Pre-assignment orientation should also be provided for current employees transferring to "urban" positions. Sponsors or mentors should be assigned to new or "non-urban" employees when they transfer to urban park areas;
- Servicewide Perceptions of Urban Parks - Supervisors have the critical role of training their employees and inculcating in them the National Park Service philosophy. They must foster an appreciation for *all* units within the system and an understanding of the unique and valuable role each unit has within the Service;
- The "National Park Service Family" - The concept of the National Park Service family should be nurtured but not imposed. The concept is person-dependent and may not always be appropriate in 21st Century urban parks. Opportunities for diverse social contacts are abundant in our urban areas.
- Career Mobility and Training - High level performance should be the basis for short-term assignments in related or higher positions which would enhance an individual's professional experience. Employees should have strong agency support in gaining urban park experience for terms of 2-3 years if that is part of the employee's career development plan;
- Retention of Personnel - New urban park employees must spend productive time in the park beyond the 90-day "probationary period". Urban areas are *the* place where employees gain permanent status within the system because most entry level jobs are in large urban park units. Urban parks receive new employees, invest heavily in their initial training, uniforms, etc., and then frequently lose them within one year to more traditional parks. Occasionally, employees have unwritten agreements with other National Park Service units that they will be hired as soon as they receive permanent status. These problems must be addressed by the Washington Office on a Servicewide basis. Consideration should be given to reinstating the former urban intake program, to establishing minimum training and tenure periods and to working with OPM to improve the congested register problem in other parts of the country.

**OBJECTIVE V:** Identify elements of a comprehensive communication/marketing program that, when implemented, would enable the park manager and staff to better manage and share information requirements; build a stronger base of constituent support; strengthen both internal and external networks; and generate improved awareness and support of the park and Service within the community.

Before developing a marketing/communication program, the Service should clarify why the communication of park ideals is important. With improved marketing communication, the Service will be able to:

- increase our effectiveness in the area of overall park protection;
- better protect endangered species and existing gene pool;
- encourage an appreciation of diverse heritages and provide a vehicle for the display, integration and sharing of the nation's various cultures;
- influence lifestyles and social values;
- encourage and inspire use of National Parks by various ethnic and cultural groups;
- increase the education functions of our parks and expand the public's knowledge of available park resources and their significance;
- transmit the ideals of the National Park Service to other countries;
- assist new Americans in understanding and appreciating the Service and the nation;
- educate and foster support among America's younger generations to ensure that the resources we protect will be available for the enjoyment of future generations;
- ensure the survival of the National Park System by expanding the number of people deeply committed to the protection of the parks.

All of the following marketing devices could be used to further these ends:

- Utilization of electronic media: video, computer games, etc.;
- Publication of children's books, trivia games;
- Promotion of the National Park Service logo;
- Expansion of the Service's commercial permits for advertising and promotion;
- Establishment of a toll-free National Park Service information number (employees should be trained to utilize it);
- Production of public service announcements and distribution to all parks and media; utilize these means to promote parks before school groups, civic associations, etc.;
- Utilization of social science studies to identify target groups and how to reach them.

**OBJECTIVE VI:** Identify strategies for enhancing park visitation by all users and the requisite skills needed to reduce conflict and crises in urban parks between traditional and non-traditional users, organizations, interest groups and concerned neighbors and constituents.

It is recommended that the National Park Service develop a nationwide process to systematically gather profile information on park users so park managers can: anticipate potential problems and needs, meet Congressional mandates, and exercise leadership in providing alternative solutions for non-compatible uses.

Other recommendations for enhancing park visitation include the following:

- Develop a market survey in order to determine needs, wants, issues, problems and solutions;
- Diversify park development, programs and management to meet the variety of public needs;

- Solicit public involvement in the management of individual parks;
- Involve neighborhoods surrounding the park;
- Build staff competency by hiring from a diversity of ethnic groups (multi-lingual);
- Designate certain areas for non-traditional uses and dedicate specific days and areas for special uses;
- Actively mediate conflicting user groups;
- Develop a promotional strategy which involves all available resources.

## V. CONCLUSION

On Friday afternoon, June 12, Deputy Director Denis Galvin delivered the closing remarks for the conference and thanked the participants for having worked so hard over the course of the week. He also acknowledged the participants' recommendations and urged that they be prioritized and focused as soon as possible so that the Director and the Washington office could begin taking definitive action.

Participants left the conference with new ideas, exciting professional contacts, and a renewed sense of unity and purpose. There was a general sense of enthusiasm and an eagerness to share the lessons of this conference with the entire Park Service, and to reassert the conviction that the future of traditional parks and of urban parks are intimately linked, and that the success of that future depends upon us all. As North Atlantic Regional Director Cables observed, "If we succeed, the Park Service will be greatly strengthened. If we fail, through apathy or opposition, to develop our urban parks aggressively, we will miss an unparalleled opportunity and weaken the entire National Park System."

Director Mott's keynote message delivered on the first day of the conference seemed even more appropriate as the conference adjourned and urban park professionals returned to their parks and cities. He said: "You may avoid thinking about the future by ignoring it. You may feel you have no control over it and so take no special action. You may spend your time dreading it because of the inevitable adaptations you'll be forced to make. I, for one, don't believe we can afford to avoid, ignore or be frightened by the future - our responsibilities to preserve and improve the System are too great. We must face the future head-on and prepare ourselves to make the most of the opportunities that are forthcoming. If we don't prepare today for tomorrow, we will end up preparing ourselves for the past."