

National Park Service

U.S. Department of the Interior



Briefing Statement

Bureau: National Park Service
Issue: Natural Resource Career Field Academy
Date: June 2010

Background:

In May, 2008, the National Park Service Director and National Leadership Council signed the *NPS Learning and Development Report (L&D Report)*, prepared by a Training and Development Steering Committee. The Associate Director, Natural Resource Stewardship and Science, was represented on the steering committee. To provide the foundation competencies for entry to full performance natural resource professionals, the *L&D Report* proposed a Natural Resource Academy (one of 7 NPS career field academies). Development of the Career Field Academy concept has been undertaken by NPS Learning and Development (L&D). Recently, direction and funding has been provided by L&D for career field training managers to begin individual development of the academies.

The Career Academy is a developmental pathway for employees to acquire and refine their skills in meeting job requirements, position competencies, the NPS mission, and personal development goals; the Career Academy is not a place or period of time. The Career Academy will create an environment of excellence and provide access and lateral movement of employees through the content of other career fields to meet their specific job needs (such as leadership development). The Career Academy will be utilized by employees at any point in their career to assist in career planning and professional development, but will also build on the NPS Fundamentals program. A new employee will see the logical progression from Fundamentals into the Academy for entry, developmental, and full performance levels to continue their career development. The core offerings of each Academy will address career-specific processes, content, and competency needs.

The Natural Resource Academy will incorporate a wide variety of instructional methods, taking advantage of an expanding array of e-learning technologies, coaching, mentoring, detail opportunities, and face-to-face experiences depending on which method best serves the desired developmental outcomes. Program information will be accessible on the internet, and constantly monitored for currency and connectivity. The Natural Resource Academy will foster rigor and assessment, enabling both employee and supervisor to monitor progress and adjust learning strategies to help meet the mission of the National Park Service. Components of the Academy will be designed through a deliberative process including subject matter experts, program managers, field practitioners, and training managers. The Natural Resource Career Field Needs Assessment and competencies will be used as a basis for the design.

Current Status:

Members of the Natural Resource Advisory Group, sub-committee on training, worked to plan a subject matter expert workshop to design the initial framework of the academy. The first meeting was held in April 2010 and focused on the "Big Picture" and the defined competencies for the GS-7, 9, 11 & 12 natural resource specialist and program manager positions. The 20 workgroup representatives were each nominated by their region to participate, along with representatives from the Assoc. Director, NRSS program offices. The workshop resulted in the development of a draft blended learning course of study that designed developmental opportunities for core competencies at the entry/ developmental, full performance, and advanced level. Continued work is occurring to refine the framework so that development of individual modules can begin in 2011. The goal is to have the framework and course of study designed in 2010 and be able to begin limited delivery in 2011. Anyone interested in helping should call the contact below.

The NRS training manger is requesting information on any existing courses that are being delivered so that they can be considered by the workgroup for incorporation in the course of study. The goal is to utilize existing courses where possible. Please provide any information you may have to the following contact.

Contact:

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