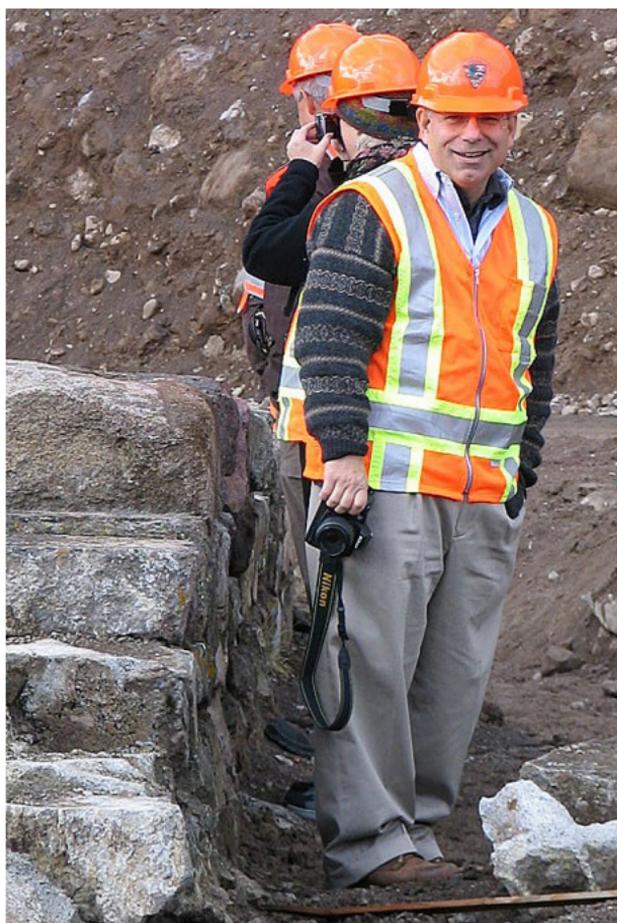




Meet The Team: Mark Hartsoe

Mark Hartsoe plays a centralized role in the National Park Service's transportation program. As the Transportation Branch Chief of the Federal Lands Highway Program (FLTP), he serves as a liaison with the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) in the day-to-day administration of a \$240 million dollar transportation construction program.

“My primary tasks involve advocating for the continuation of the Federal Lands Transportation Program and the legislative changes supported in the Grow America



Mark Hartsoe

Act,” says Mark. “ I work closely with Vic Knox, Associate Director, Park Planning, Facilities and Lands, and Jim Evans, Transportation Planner, Department of Interior and Federal Highway Administration, in this effort. The team I work with also includes Captain Mark Anderson (PHS), the regional transportation coordinators such as Paul Schrooten, and the FLH Division contacts such as Anita Gebbie-Deisch. Together we provide program leadership and insight, educating senior managers about the direction the transportation program should be moving and about the challenges that need to be addressed.”

Mark is no newcomer to the world of the national parks. “I had a childhood friend whose aunt owned a cabin adjacent to the Shenandoah National Park,” Mark said. “We would regularly visit and camp, and hike trails such as White Oak Canyon and Old Rag.”

Mark dreamed of being a park ranger one day, but says his family didn’t really visit the parks much. “My father has often looked back and wished he had packed the four children in the car and driven cross-country to see the National Parks,” Mark said. “But time and money seemed to be the main hurdles. I did not get a chance to enjoy the beauty and grandeur of the western parks until a college friend invited me along to tour Yosemite National Park.”

Other than being a park ranger, Mark’s early ambitions were to be an architect. “I was exploring a career as an architect, and had the opportunity to meet and discuss this notion with the father of a good friend,” said Mark. “He expressed the importance of being able to quickly draw ideas on paper for the customer to see and make a sale. Unfortunately, I did not have that skill. But civil engineering seemed closely related to architecture.”

Mark felt he was strong in the sciences and math, so he pursued civil engineering, and graduated with a degree from North Carolina State University in Raleigh in 1982. “While in college I was lucky to work as an aide to the Office of Special Assistance, Military Traffic Command under the Department of the Army, so I had a job waiting for me when I graduated,” Mark said.

The office was the Department of Defense executive agency responsible for integrating Defense needs into the civil and private transportation communities. “My mentors at this

time included Mr. Allen Dowd (civilian Senior Executive Service) and very senior level Department of Defense engineers,” said Mark. “This allowed me to work for some of the best minds in transportation at the time, and provided me an excellent foundation as I started out my career.”

Mark said that the office in which he worked was responsible for the deployment of the armed forces by land, sea, and air to anywhere in the world for the defense of the United States and its allies. “Our office was the DOD spokesman to coordinate defense needs with state, local, and county transportation officials, private industry, and rail carriers,” he said. “We worked very closely with the United States Department of Transportation, the Federal Railroads Administration, and the Federal Highway Administration in the integration of defense requirements and emergency operations during natural or manmade disasters across the United States.”

Mark noted that the Highways and Railroads for National Defense Program and the Transportation Mobility office had the unique challenge of influencing equipment design—such as tanks and personnel carriers—to be transported across US highways as well as fit into US transport planes and container ships. This work in turn influenced the design of the lane widths on the Interstate system.

During a reorganization of the Special Assistance Office, Mark received encouragement from a senior manager in the Federal Highway Administration, Allen Burden to join the National Park Service. “Allen suggested they were looking for someone with my background to coordinate with the Federal Highway Administration’s Park Roads and Parkways Program (PRPP),” Mark said. “Don Herring, John Gingles, and Kip Hagen interviewed me, and hired me to help with the roads, parkways, trails, and signs program and to help manage the PRPP. I thought it a great honor to work for such a prestigious organization. I still do.”

Mark says that the tasks and the scope of the program have changed quite a bit over the years. “When I started with Kip Hagen as my initial supervisor some 23 years ago, the PRPP was only a \$50 million a year program capable of being managed on a single spreadsheet,” he said. “The Denver Service Center technical engineer branch supported the program in the areas of planning, traffic counts, and the highway safety program, as well as landscape architecture

and environmental assessments. The Federal Highway Administration completed all the construction contract administration coupled with the support of the DSC Landscape Architects per the long-standing 1983 NPS/FHWA Agency Agreement.”

One of the biggest changes has been the implementation of the Park Roads and Parkways Transportation Allocation and Tracking System, or PTATS for short. “PTATS, along with Dawn Foy, have changed the way we do business,” Mark says. “For example, I used to approve everyone’s budget request in Washington, DC. All change orders were approved by WASO.”

Mark says that PTATS has facilitated a balanced degree of national program responsibility, leadership, and oversight, while giving those in the field flexibility and accountability through decentralization and implementation of a philosophy of empowerment. “Today’s system is based on a set of policies and procedures driven by law, and we can focus on areas that meet the challenges of the day,” Mark said.



Mark added that this does not mean there are no longer hurdles to be overcome. He listed as an example the burgeoning deferred maintenance backlog for park roads, trails, and bridges, as well as transportation department funding concerns.

“But today, WASO is given more time to be an advocate and

to provide leadership, and depends heavily on the roles and responsibilities of the regions and parks to implement projects, which at one time was very closely held in Washington DC,” he said.

Mark says he most enjoys working with the talented and dedicated professionals at WASO, Budget, the Denver Service Center (DSC), the Federal Highway Administration headquarters and their divisions across the United States. “My role is trying to be aware of the challenges being faced on the ground and empowering these people to do their jobs,” said Mark. “I want to see them motivated to do their best for the reputation of the program.”



A highlight in Mark’s work with WASO (in addition to PTATS) was the transportation group’s involvement in the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA). (See the separate project profile on this web site.) “ARRA showed the transportation program at its best when we were able to work together to deliver \$740 million dollars of construction projects in the span of 18 months,” Mark said. “The best moments are when a group composed of many faces across different agencies work together to meet a common goal such as ARRA. I share my pride in the results with many other contributors.”

In addition to his mentors at the Special Assistance Office, Mark reports that he has been very lucky to work with a number of senior managers who provided a great deal of empowerment and flexibility which has been challenging and rewarding.

“My mentors at the NPS include Kip Hagen, Dale Wilking, and Tim Harvey...they were all great bosses, said Mark. “But there are a number of my staff and peers at the headquarters, region and FHWA from whom I continue to learn; they include Jeff Mann, Dave Kruse, John Chekan, Jack Williams, Tim Hudson, Dave Keough, Jim Evans, Bob Holzhiemer, Marcus Hathoway and Mark Anderson. Each has been a great advocator and mentor for me and the program over many years, and I thank them for that support.”

Mark adds. ““I’ve seen how many of the great leaders and

viewpoints and balance the harmony between landscape and access. I believe the relationships and the many faces behind collaborating on those challenges reflect the product of a legacy that started way before me.”

Mark concludes that he is proud to have been a contributor to the many faces of the program. “I’ve tried to act as an advocate for the field and the parks, and the building of a strong reputation for stewardship, innovation, and leadership that has let the NPS transportation program not only accomplish reauthorization after reauthorization, but to also provide a steady increase in funding over the past two decades.”

It might sound like Mark is so intertwined with the FLTP to be inseparable from it, but he in fact enjoys many other pursuits with his family. “I love to travel with my family,” Mark says. “I was most fortunate to meet my wife, Sara, a daughter of a Mexican diplomat who works for the World Bank. She has shown my children and me the world; we have had many great journeys together to Germany, England, Scotland, Ireland, France, Italy and Mexico. All of these trips have opened my eyes towards understanding that there are many ways to solve the problems of the day.”

Mark added that although he loves to sail, take photos, and play soccer, his hobbies today are his children. “I love to be with them and watch them grow.”

