

From: ----- 02/20/04 01:00 PM EST

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Subject: Identifying and Communicating Park Operational Cutbacks

Superintendents:

By now, you have received the official notification of your FY04 Base Operating funding levels from Alexa (see excel chart below). Although a few parks were fortunate to receive a base operating increase in the FY04 appropriation, the majority of Northeast Region Parks are beginning this fiscal year with fewer operating dollars than in FY03. Additionally, the absorption of pay costs, necessary assessments and other rising, fixed costs have further eroded operating dollars. It is now time to inform Marie and I of your plans for FY04 operations. We must soon send to Washington what services, hours & days of operation, park facilities and/or park programs we plan to make "service level adjustments" to before the summer season begins. Many of you have communicated what you would do to stay within your estimated allocation in your Recovery Plans. It is now time to revisit the **FY04 portion of your Recovery Plan** and determine what actually has to happen to stay within the funds you have been allocated. Please send us a bulleted list of "service level adjustments" you plan to make such as:

Close the visitor center on all federal holidays
Eliminate life guard services at 1 of the park's 3 guarded beaches

Eliminate all guided ranger tours
Let the manicured grasslands grow all summer
Turn 1 of our 4 campgrounds over to a concession permittee
Close the park every Sunday and Monday
Close the visitor center for the months of November, January & February

These are just examples but as you can see they identify services, facilities and/or resources you will not be able to maintain at the same level as in FY03. A statement about cutting 10 seasonal positions does tell us how that affects the visitor so you must put it into words that describe service level adjustments to visitors, resource protection, facility operations, etc.

The DRDs had an opportunity to discuss this very issue with Deputy Director Randy Jones on our teleconference on Tuesday. He has asked each region to review the "service level adjustments" of each of their parks and then communicate to him those that are the most sensitive. We will need to be sure that adjustments are taken from as many areas as is possible so that it won't cause public or political controversy. If you think that some of your specific plans will cause a public or political controversy, Marie and I need to know which ones are likely to end up in the media or result in a congressional inquiry.

We also discussed how each park would **communicate with and inform your local constituents** about your plans. Randy felt that the issuance of a press release was the most problematic. He suggested that if you feel you must inform the public through a press release on this year's hours or days of operation for example, that you state what the park's plans are and not to directly indicate that "this is a cut" in comparison to last year's operation. If you are personally pressed by the media in an interview, we all agreed to use the terminology of "service level adjustment" due to fiscal constraints as a means of describing what actions we are taking.

You will soon be receiving guidelines on applying to the regional **Park Support Fund**. Your Cluster Leaders have been very instrumental in developing tight criteria for what requests will be funded. They of course will serve as the overseers of this fund. If you need to adjust the level of service beyond an expectable level or may even be in a position that would not allow you to cover permanent salaries you should apply to the Park Support Fund.

Please send to me by March 15th a bulleted list of "service level adjustments" you plan to make between now and the end of the fiscal year so Marie and I can review and send on to Washington those we feel will get media or congressional attention. If you will not need to make any adjustments a negative response is also required. If we see any items that are of particular concern, we will contact you by phone immediately following our review. If you don't hear from us you are to assume that you should implement your plans.
