



Park Staff Meeting
National Association of State Park Directors
2023

Next Steps

Three groups of three volunteers have come together to form committees to tackle critical topics.

They are the...

Adaptive Mgmt Group

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Maintenance Group

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Recruitment Group

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Adaptive Management Strategies Brainstorm

Field Goals and Values:

Accountability
Communication & Feedback
Empowerment on the Field Level
Lead By Example
Realistic
Trust
Training

Actions:

- Utilize Base Camp to Empower Informal Influencers
- Host Quarterly Meetings on Current Challenges

Opportunities:

- **Advise Across Parks.** Use Basecamp to collaborate with peers in similar and different spaces and share new ideas, develop advisory group to pull together a discussion when issues arise, put together goals and objectives, share resources
- **Cross-Support.** Department operations center, sub-groups for different areas of skill, 360 performance reviews of co-workers, promote friendly competitive programs
- **Do Good, Not Perfect.** Avoid meeting fatigue, build change until it is normalized, identify tangible benefits and positives as they arise
- **Empower Decision Making.** Encourage autonomy and empowerment, listen to the field to identify what the challenge is and what needs to be trained, in-state leadership training, empower and delegate decision making to field, define expectation for levels of authority (e.g., Park Manager needs to independently manage operations and emergencies for 24–48 hrs)
- **Experience Other Roles.** Allow job shadowing, “acting” roles across classes, “job for a day” exchanges.
- **Feedback Loop.** Create formal feedback loop for when new ideas are implemented, review past successes and failures, define intervals for communications

- **Learning and Training.** Training/conference opportunities, regional meetings with different levels of staff to sharpen leadership skills, learning outside the org, more robust onboarding, foster a learning culture
- **Reward Innovation.** Encourage creativity, develop unique rewards and incentives for innovation (spend a day with the Park Naturalist, visit another park for an overnight, monthly recognition with team building activities)

Maintenance Management Systems Brainstorm

BaseCamp Actions:

- Share benefits/success of existing systems and describe current challenges on BaseCamp for others to weigh in on, perhaps in a quarterly collaborative space
- Use BaseCamp to establish best practices for preventative maintenance including checklists and other guidelines
- Create basic maintenance online tutorials

Opportunities:

- **Communications and Collaboration.** Keep historic information, create workflow schedules with deadlines, build collaborative work teams, isolate problems to work smarter not harder, use photos to share park issues and progress, share benefits/success of existing systems and describe current challenges on BaseCamp for others to weigh in on, define near term and long term goals and objectives, maintenance manuals, develop accurate facility/equipment inventory management calendar, start with a master calendar for regular and seasonal tasks
- **Standardization.** Better sharing of equipment between parks/agencies, set up reminders, use Outlook/calendar to plan future work, design standard gates, signs, and kiosks, conduct regular asset inventory for routine maintenance needs, create checklist of routine tasks, document replacement schedules for equipment and systems, track snippings of construction docs.
- **Software Solutions.** Share system and asset management software across divisions or even states, deploy work request software statewide, utilize apps to stay up to date on trainings and solutions, utilize software that can translate to common schemas, depository for processes and ideas, project management software, City Works, Dude Solutions, connecting existing maintenance and reservation systems using open API, use geospatial

software to track maintenance tasks better, build a database with all assets that utilizes GIS, Esri asset locations (i.e. shutoff valves), ShareFile to provide information to field staff, use BaseCamp to establish best practices for preventative maintenance including checklists and other guidelines

- **Training and Planning.** Maintenance training and certification for staff, regional meeting on training, virtual monthly maintenance trainings to discuss issues statewide, create basic maintenance online tutorials, quarterly collaborative virtual space (like Zoom), weekly reviews and goal setting with staff, collective work calendar, statewide system for short and long term maintenance planning, learn from municipalities and universities, utilize retired volunteers to train in parks, forecast opportunities to plan for maintenance

Recruiting New Employees Brainstorm

BaseCamp Actions:

- Share position descriptions
- Share monetary and non-monetary employee incentives
- Share internship opportunities
- Share promotional materials
- Share persuasive recruitment ideas
- Jobs board on Base Camp
- Share seasonal availability to other parks and communities

Other Collaboration:

- Collaborate on regional or nationwide “why I love working for state parks” social media campaign
- Co-develop conservation/parks extracurricular curriculum for high schools with state ed agencies
- Create state parks employees book
- Have NASPD use AIX to publish average salaries and utilize that to advocate for higher nationwide salaries

Opportunities:

- **Benefits.** Have four-day work weeks, provide workforce housing adjacent to parks, bunkhouses for seasonal staff, or airstream trailers onsite, more dedicated funds to parks, partner with other sites to “swap” employees for a month, more travel/conference opportunities, offer child care services,

provide paid time to regularly exercise in the park, collaborate on interstate strategies to raise pay or have NASPD use AIX to publish average salaries and utilize that to advocate for higher nationwide salaries, increase pay and maybe even meet salary scales of the private sector, implement bonuses, offer benefits for wage/seasonal staff, offer hybrid in office/field flexibility, develop nontraditional scheduling to empower employees, share monetary and non-monetary employee incentives on Base Camp

- **Job Posting.** Re-write job postings to exclude “park jargon”, think “outside the box” and be creative in job postings, push the benefits of wellness associated with working in parks, utilize strong visuals/photos in job descriptions, develop an interpretive theme for conservation careers, question/rewrite unnecessary minimum qualifications, more explicitly list duties, assignments, and responsibilities by classification with pay and benefits, utilize paid placement of opening, share position descriptions on Base Camp
- **Marketing.** Sell the brand and the lifestyle, utilize Tik Tok and other social media platforms to recruit younger generation, create social media videos sharing our work, staff testimonials “why I love my job”, develop promotional materials, poster boards in park entrance, “what is a ranger” videos, show people working for state parks, video promotion (see Wyoming as an example), build a slogan and tagline, create a social media plan, focus on positive park benefits, create a state parks employee book, share promotional materials on Base Camp, collaborate on regional or nationwide “why I love working for state parks” social media campaign
- **Recruitment.** Evaluate and prioritize attention on positions that are most challenging to fill, share persuasive recruitment ideas via Base Camp, create a job fair strategy or host a career fair, place up-and-comers in higher interim roles, offer sign-on, recruitment, retention, and referral bonuses, recruit university park & recs majors and survey what they want, build partnerships with employment specialists, demonstration parks, job fairs in parks, develop a plan to target and recruit park visitors, target youth organizations, share mailing lists, include inclusion, diversity, and equity in recruitment strategies, share templates for inclusive hiring plans across parks and systems, college visits, jobs board on Base Camp or utilize Base Camp specifically to share seasonal availability to other parks and communities, utilize platforms like Handshake and LinkedIn, build a recruitment and marketing team
- **Training.** Plan ahead for longevity and understand that change starts with youth and is part of a longer process: apprenticeships, professional trainees



(non-degree requirement), create Manager in Training and internship opportunities, college partnerships, job shadow or "shadow a ranger" program, expose students to careers through service learning partnerships, HS youth interns to learn about careers, co-develop conservation/parks extracurricular curriculum for high schools with state ed agencies, outdoor exposure programs, work with local agencies for rehab work program, share internship opportunities via Base Camp, mentor programs for refugees and underserved populations, build out trades programs apprenticeships

Deputy Directors Meeting
National Association of State Park Directors
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What would it be helpful to have available, know, or hear from other deputy directors?

- Recruiting new employees
- Seasonal housing solutions
- Organizational structures from other states
- Reservation programs
- Distributed teams and remote work and how that effects the field
- How other sites are coping with staffing crisis
- Maintenance management practices
- Budget structure – revenue/fee driven or high appropriations
- Technology challenges
- More diverse workforce within agency
- Training models and programs
- Salary structures and how they are funded
- Society changing faster than how policy can keep up – how to keep up with changing concepts like
- Going green – alternate energy, equipment
- EV charging system
- Social media – putting it out and controlling the narrative
- Managing visitor overcapacity issues
- Visitor safety with limited law enforcement support
- Cottage key systems – traditional keys, codes, cards and challenges with key code system
- Forecasting and foreshadowing conversation instead of responding to current issues and challenges – work together to be proactive
- How are you dealing with e-bikes, scooters, and hoverboards

- Commercial use and special activity – what do you allow, and how do you say no
- Unable to bring people in for unpaid internships
- Adaptive management strategies
- Funding programs that have been effective and made its way through legislation – one-time appropriations vs. ongoing
- Successes with programming, interpretive work, and how its integrated into their operations
- The dynamic of the fulltime RVerS

What would it be helpful to collaborate on more closely with other deputy directors?

- Collaborate on grants management
- Policy consistency within state parks as a whole, so if you travel from one state to another it changes less
- Regional planning with those nearby
- Collaborating on trends we are starting to see
- Collaborating on being prepared for future emergencies like COVID-19
- Project management best practices on corps of engineers
- Some collaboration on fee structure generation
- Shadow and exchange program to exchange best practices
- Responsiveness to houselessness crisis
- Looking at single-stall restrooms and facilities

How might we better exchange ideas, best practices, and information to provide additional support for our peers across the field outside of NASPD?

- Wiki-style crowd-sourced resource drive
- Working group with all six regions across the nation with two reps in each region who then can be your conduit/contact – important to have people manage them and then make the positions rotating – feeds expansion of

NASPD as a whole (this could be the deputy director board under the directors to help prepare for the conference)

- Job exchange/job shadow to go to a neighboring state or one that may have already gone through your issues
- Replicating what is at the national level for NASPD in terms of a board of directors at the regional level
- Networking capabilities – dep. director email list, regional meetings, and document sharing
- Embracing virtual components where they can have open conversations and identify targeted issues
- Electronic solution for information sharing – closed messaging group or resource hub
- Annual deputy director meeting to set aside more time for it
- Regional field meetings and site visits and sessions to go along with it
- Email distribution list
- Directory of staff with topics, projects, and specialties
- NASPD basecamp-style resource
- need to figure out how to propose this to directors (and need volunteers to do this)
- big topics generated were not discussed at the conference
- schedule quarterly organic teams style meeting for people to dial-in quarterly – need to lock down an hour and a half every three months – make sure to record it
- follow-up with individuals in the meeting (so make contact information clear)
- need to have a place where information is housed so that when there is a personnel change
- growth of NASPD and America State Parks
- make sure this is a standing conversation at NASPD and focused-breakout sessions (a Deputy Director track of sessions)
- identifying topics should be a request far before the conference – even if this is twice a year

- NASPD does virtual webinars, and Deputy Director topics could work their way in
- Pick a topic that bridges political divides like looking at single-stall restrooms and facilities