

2. GMP PROGRAM MANAGEMENT

2.1 PROGRAM LEADERSHIP

2.1.1 Park Planning and Special Studies Division (PPSS), Washington Office

The associate director for park planning, facilities, and lands in the Washington office (WASO) is responsible for providing direction and oversight of general management planning activities in the Park Service. The park planning and special studies division program manager, under the associate director, has the leadership role and responsibility for NPS planning. The primary functions of the Washington office that pertain to GMPs are

- establishing policies and coordinating activities related to general management planning for all units of the National Park System, NPS divisions, regional offices, and program centers
- establishing NPS criteria, priorities and funding allocations for GMP, SRS, and Rivers and Trails planning projects
- conducting WASO policy review of plans and study reports submitted by the regional directors and
- developing park planning guidelines and conducting training on planning related subjects in concert with the seven regional planning offices, the Denver Service Center (DSC), and the Planning Leadership Group (PLG) and
- coordinating planning activities with other NPS divisions, parks, regional offices

There is no end to the adventures we can have if only we seek them with our eyes open.

—Jawaharlal Nehru

2.1.2 Planning Leadership Group

The PLG is the national level committee that provides advice on general management planning policies, program standards, and other guidance to the WASO program manager.

The PLG is chaired by the WASO program manager for park planning and special studies and includes

- the associate regional director who oversee planning in each region
- the regional planning program manager for each region
- the DSC manager
- the DSC chief of planning

- representatives from the WASO Division of Natural Resource Stewardship and Science, WASO Cultural Resources, the Harpers Ferry Center (HFC), the Environmental Quality Division (EQD), the National Center for Recreation and Conservation, WASO Transportation Planning representative, and the Strategic Planning Office,
- planner stationed in a park

The PLG usually meets annually to consider issues of national interest to the planning community and to address program policy direction and fiscal and staffing needs. The PLG also conducts business through telephone conference calls and e-mails throughout the year.

2.1.3 Program Advisory Committee

The Planning Program Advisory Committee is a subcommittee of the PLG and is composed of the WASO program manager and the seven associate regional directors with responsibilities for the general management planning program. This subgroup often provides advice to the WASO program manager and biannually makes recommendations about major policy or funding issues as well as updates to the biannual NPS priority list. This is also the group that decides on appeals for requests for more funding for a project.

2.1.4 Regional Offices

The seven regional offices (Northeast, National Capital, Southeast, Midwest, Intermountain, Pacific West, and Alaska) play major roles in the development of GMPs. They are involved with requesting funds for GMP projects within their regions, and in reviews of draft documents for quality. They also produce GMPs. The regional directors are the signature authorities for the GMP/NEPA documents.

2.1.5 Denver Service Center

The DSC Planning Division is significantly involved in the development of GMPs. Its primary role is in the production of GMPs, as requested by the regional offices. It also provides technical assistance to parks and regions that are preparing GMPs, and assists the Washington office in preparing guidance, such as this sourcebook, and in performing other program support tasks as needed.

2.1.6 Office Roles and Responsibilities

As noted above, the key offices that are primarily involved with GMPs are the parks, regional offices, the Washington office, and frequently the Denver Service Center. The roles and responsibilities of the key offices involved in a GMP are identified in the project agreement and may vary slightly depending on the GMP. The primary roles are defined in Table 2.1.

TABLE 2.1: OFFICE ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES IN PREPARING A GMP

Park Role	Region Role	WASO Role	DSC Role (if applicable)
	Request funds to prepare a plan	Establish GMP policy and guidance	Provide program support to WASO Planning/
Initiate request to prepare a plan.	Identify parks in need of plans.	Prioritize, coordinate, and distribute funds for GMPs.	
Assemble resource, visitor use, and other data prior to starting GMP.	Conduct planning or contracts with DSC and/or external contractors.	Provide and coordinate WASO policy review.	
Assign staff to serve as team members and subject matter experts.	Potentially assign staff to serve as team members and subject matter experts.		Provide project manager and other subject matter experts as appropriate; provide graphic and editing assistance.
	Provide quality control and quality assurance.		May provide technical assistance to the park, the region, and their partners.
Set direction for the GMP.	Set direction for the GMP.	Set direction for the GMP.	Assist in setting direction for the GMP, but primarily assume responsibility for quality, schedule, and cost.
	Prepare selected GMPs or oversee contractors.		Prepare GMPs requested by regions.
Host public involvement; lead interactions with communities and partners;	Advise and assist with public involvement.	Communicate systemwide public involvement processes and activities with external parties.	Assist park staff in public involvement.
Review draft GMP.	Monitor and review GMP for policy consistency and quality control.	Review draft GMP documents, including project agreements, for policy consistency.	Review draft GMPs for quality control.
Recommend (by superintendent) GMP approval to the regional director.	Approve (by regional director) the GMP.	Provide clearance for printing public documents.	
Implement the approved GMP.	Promote and monitor implementation of approved GMP.		

Other offices that may be involved in the development of a GMP or a portion include the Natural Resource Program Center, WASO Cultural Resource Program Office, Harpers Ferry Center, and the National Wilderness and Recreation Program Office, Commercial Services Planning, and Transportation Planning, among others.

2.2 PROGRAM GUIDANCE

The Washington Office has prepared consultation and coordination guidance for GMP project agreements, *Federal Register* notices, steps for posting a planning document for WASO review in PEPC, and WASO procedures for printing public draft and final GMPs. This guidance is included in Appendix A.

2.3 PROGRAM FUNDING

2.3.1 Overview

The National Park Service receives a specific appropriation by Congress as part of the Construction account to fund the preparation of GMPs for parks and to prepare GMPs or similar comprehensive plans for other areas, such as national trails, when directed by Congress. In FY 2006 the appropriation for general management planning was \$7.2 million. As part of the construction program, GMP funds are “no year” funds, which means they carry over if not obligated. However, if all the funds allotted to a specific project for a specific year are not obligated in that year, the unobligated balances are returned to the program for reallocation to individual projects in future years.

GMP funds are “project” funds and, consistent with NPS policies regarding the use of all project funds, are not available to support salaries of permanent employees outside the Denver Service Center or Harpers Ferry Center. Generally, GMP funds are used to assist a park staff in its general management planning process by enlisting experienced planners (from DSC, the regional office, or a private contractor) to be responsible for most of the plan production elements, including NEPA document development. Park managers and staff are expected to contribute time and effort to the GMP process as part of their normal responsibilities, especially related to leading or participating in civic engagement and public involvement activities.

The GMP program operates primarily on the basis of a NPS priority list (described in greater detail, below). Projects compete for a place on the NPS list by submitting project statements through the Project Management Information System (PMIS) in accordance with the schedule for the Servicewide Combined Call.



A small percentage of the annual appropriation for the GMP program is allocated by the Washington office among the regional offices for the purpose of GMP program mission support. These regionally directed funds are often used for plan amendments and work on foundation statements.

2.3.2 GMP Servicewide Priority List

The GMP Servicewide Priority List is developed for a five-year time frame. Projects are evaluated and prioritized by a panel representing each region and program area in the PLG, using the “Choosing by Advantages” (CBA) methodology. Five factors are used to evaluate the advantages of the projects:

- need for fundamental direction, or change in direction, for management of the park
- specific resource management issues
- specific visitor use issues
- specific park operational issues
- other advantages to the National Park Service (e.g., projects that will be a prototype for other NPS plans illustrating creativity and innovation, potential

for the project to address issues in several NPS units that are geographically or thematically linked)

The CBA process produces a list in order of the advantage/cost ratio for each project. Regional priorities are not part of the system for determining the Servicewide Priority List.

The priority list is usually divided into three bands of small, medium, and large projects so that a mix of different types of parks can be served. Although the list provides the basis for setting priorities, decisions about the sequencing of projects allow for consideration of other factors, such as readiness of park staff, availability of data, coordination with other agencies, and local interests. This means that in any year the top 5 or 10 projects in each band might be eligible for funding, and that project 6 might proceed before project 4. However, project 20 would not be allowed to proceed before the higher priority jobs had an opportunity to begin.

Notes: