OPERATIONS FORMULATION SYSTEM
USER MANUAL

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OPERATIONS FORMULATION SYSTEM
USER MANUAL

The Operations Formulation System (OFS) is a web-based system designed to meet the needs of parks and regions, offices and directorates and the headquarters office in the identification of unfunded, recurring budgetary requirements. These include funding needs such as park base increases and regional and Servicewide program increases. OFS directly supports the formulation of the annual budget submissions of the National Park Service (NPS). OFS is one module of Budget Formulation Data System; another module is the Project Management Information System (PMIS), which is the repository of identified non-recurring project needs. OFS also provides a historical record of funding enacted for NPS.

Purpose

OFS serves as the sole source for formulating the three formal NPS budget requests: to the Department of the Interior (DOI), to the Office of Management and Budget (OMB), and to the Congress. In addition, the information in OFS serves as the official NPS response to all internal and external inquiries about NPS unfunded budgetary needs. Information contained in OFS also allows analysis of funding trends to support budget documents and formulation strategies to address unfunded budgetary requirements.

System Requirements

OFS is an internal NPS database. For security reasons OFS can only be accessed on computers which have an NPS IP address. As a web-based system, no software is required; access is through the Internet. Computers must have access to the Internet.

How to Access OFS

OFS can be reached using either Internet Explorer 5.0 or Netscape Communicator 6.2 or higher versions. The OFS URL address is http://www.nps.gov/ofs. OFS can also be reached by going to the InsideNPS home page. Go to the Reference Desk section and select NPS Budget, then Budget Systems, and then click on the link to OFS.

Schedule

OFS is part of the Servicewide Comprehensive Call (SCC) for funding requests which runs from late fall through early spring. During this time, the regions/directorates review and prioritize requests. The WASO Division of Budget Formulation coordinates the Servicewide review and the budget is formulated per guidance from the Secretary and the Director. The budget formulation process usually runs from March through early May. Dates for the current year's budget formulation process can be found in the SCC guidance, including deadlines established by the Regions and Associate Directorates and due dates established by the Washington Budget Office.

OFS is available throughout the year (not only during the SCC) to add and edit funding requests. However, the overall record locking feature and the approval function lock feature are employed during the Region/Directorate review period in February and the Servicewide review period from March to May. At any other time during the year, the only locked records in OFS will be those that support one of the three official budget submissions of the NPS.

Content of OFS

OFS is designed to contain all unfunded, recurring requirements that could reasonably be accommodated over the next five years should funding be provided. It is not recommended that needs beyond five years be included in the database. If identified, these requests should not be approved or prioritized at the Park/Office or Region/Directorate level.

- All requests for funding should have a direct relationship to the NPS Five-Year Strategic Plan goals as identified in PMDS.

- All requests for funding should reflect needs identified in your park's business plan and Law Enforcement Needs Assessments, as applicable. A consistent story of NPS needs is the key to credibility.

- Requests for funding should reflect needs that would result if project funding requests submitted in PMIS are funded. That is, if a project is likely to be funded during the next five years, any operational need that would result from the completion of this project should be identified in OFS and linked to the appropriate project(s) in PMIS. For example, if there is a project in PMIS to build a visitor center or museum facility, there should be OFS records for additional staffing, utilities and other operating costs.

Some types of funding needs should appear in OFS as completely separate requests. That is, not in combination with other funded needs. In recent years funding requests to meet operational needs for Vanishing Treasures, Anti-terrorism activities, Coral Reef management, and Law Enforcement were required to have separate requests. Please refer to OFS Guidance under the Budget Call tab on the *NPS Budget Webpage* (www.nps.gov/budget).

Central offices should allow individual offices and programs to enter separate increases. Problems can arise when WASO offices attempt to lump together several similar types of increases into one record, presenting an all-encompassing increase. Separate requests can be easily combined once approval is given to include them in a formal budget submission.

Remember that all budgetary needs for parks, regions and WASO offices MUST be entered in OFS to be considered for funding.

Appropriations Included in OFS

OFS is the repository of most, but not all, unfunded needs of NPS. Funding requests related to the following appropriations (with responsible parties) appear in OFS:

- Operation of the National Park System (may be entered by Parks, Regional Offices or WASO offices)
- U.S. Park Police (USPP offices only)

National Recreation and Preservation (WASO offices only, with the exception of Statutory Assistance and Heritage Area items, which are to be entered by the Statutory Assistance area, Heritage Area, or by the park/region acting as the agent for the area. Note: If parks/regional offices provide technical assistance to Heritage Areas and need to request funding to cover this assistance, the request for funding should be entered under the Heritage Area alpha codes in OFS and the "Park Base" request type should be selected. If a Heritage Commission needs funding, this request for funding should be entered in OFS under the Heritage Area alpha code and marked with a request type of "Heritage Area".)

- Urban Park and Recreation Fund (WASO offices)
- Historic Preservation Fund (WASO offices only)
- Land Acquisition Administration, State Grants Administration, and State Grants (WASO offices only)
- Construction:
  - Housing Rehabilitation, Dam Safety, General Management Planning (WASO offices only)
  - Equipment Replacement (regions for regular equipment replacement or, in the case of radios and computers, WASO offices only)
  - Construction Program Management (WASO offices - either Associate Director of Professional Services or DSC - or Regional Offices).

Requests for the following appropriations should <u>not</u> be entered into OFS:

- FIREPRO
- Construction Planning and Line Item Programs and Emergency and Unscheduled funding
- Federal Land Acquisition Projects

Funding Requests: Limits and Recurring vs. Non-Recurring

Recurring Park or Office Base Requests: There is no upper limit to the amount that can be submitted; however, multi-million dollar requests are not as likely to be proposed as part of the final budget decision when NPS is under a severely tight request cap. For most parks/offices, requests should not exceed $500,000. All requests should be no less than $50,000. Please refer to your Region/Directorate for further specific guidance. Some regions for example limit the total amount of all requests at a park to a percentage of its current budget. (Note: For your convenience, there is now a link to the Regional Budget Office web pages on the NPS Budget Webpage (www.nps.gov/budget), under the Links to Regional Guidance section of the Budget Call tab.)

Recurring Servicewide or Regional Program Base Requests: There is no upper limit to the amount of the request. Again, no single request should be less than $50,000.

Non-recurring requests: This type of request should be avoided as much as possible in OFS. Non-recurring needs are considered project requests and are more appropriately requested through PMIS. There are two types of non-recurring requests that should be entered in OFS:

- Small, one-time start-up costs associated with operational increases are appropriately included as part of a larger otherwise recurring request. If non-recurring needs are met through an OFS request (such as for the costs of a new piece of equipment), a decrease in that Park's/Office's budget may be requested for the non-recurring portion of the request in the succeeding fiscal year.

- One-time operational funding for special events such as the Presidential Inauguration should also be entered into OFS.

Non-recurring requests should be marked as such in the Funding Component detail.

Historical Archives

Enacted budget requests are marked as funded and remain in OFS. These records, which are locked and can not be altered, comprise the historical record of NPS funded increases. The database contains funded increases from FY 1994 to present.

Who Can Use the System?

OFS is accessed through the NPS Intranet, and therefore, it is only accessible by NPS employees using an NPS computer. The OFS search and report functions are available to all users, regardless of whether or not they are registered. To add requests and otherwise manage records users must register. Park and office managers determine who can be registered OFS users at the park and office level. The system is designed to allow any number of users at each park or office. In some parks only a limited number of users enter OFS records. Other parks allow each park division to enter its own requests which are then approved or consolidated by the administrative officer for park superintendent review and approval.

All Registered OFS users can add requests. The user who enters a request is assigned editing responsibility. That means the request can only be edited by the assigned user, the Park/Office OFS administrator, or OFS administrators at higher level. OFS administrators can add and edit requests as well as prioritize and approve records at the level they administrate, either Park/Office, Region/Directorate or Servicewide. Region/Directorate OFS administrators can lock requests so they cannot be edited by Parks/Offices. Servicewide OFS administrators can lock requests so they cannot be edited by Parks/Offices or Regions/Directorates.

For the security and integrity of the system, it is important for OFS Administrators to monitor user accounts and delete those users who have retired or have left the park or office. Requests "assigned" to departed users should be reassigned to another user in the unit. This is accomplished in the Edit function. Call your OFS Administrator if you have questions about this. A list of OFS Administrators can be found in the OFS Help section under the Budget Call tab on the *NPS Budget Webpage* (www.nps.gov/budget).

User Access Scope, Access Rights, and Administrator Rights

OFS is hierarchical, containing three "access scopes" or levels: Unit, Region, and All. The access scope determines the requests to which the user has access for adding and editing. The access scope also determines the requests to which the user has access for approving and prioritizing, assuming the user has Approval rights (as discussed below). Remember, the search and report functions are available to any user, regardless of whether the user is registered.

- The "Unit" access scope designation gives the user access to the requests of his/her own unit. The terms "unit," "park," and "office" are interchangeable for this purpose. A park or a WASO Office (Ranger Activities, for example) or a regional office (either the system office or the entire regional office) would be considered a "unit."
- The "Region" access scope designation gives the user access to the requests of all units within their particular region. The terms "region" and "directorate" are considered interchangeable for this purpose.
- The "All" access scope designation gives the user access to all the requests in OFS.

In OFS, what a user can do with the records accessed is determined by the "access rights," or level of authority, assigned to that person's position. When users first register, they user will have "normal" access rights. Those with normal access rights can create OFS requests and can modify and delete any unlocked funding request that they create. At the discretion of the Park/Office, one or more users will be designated with "approve" access rights. Users with "approve" rights can approve and prioritize increase requests.

Users designated as OFS Administrators can manage user rights within their scope. Users having an "All" access scope that are also designated as OFS Administrators automatically have budget formulation rights in OFS (this feature is reserved for the WASO Budget Formulation Office).

How to Get Help: Park/Office, Region/Directorate, and Servicewide Administrators

Besides this User Manual, OFS has help bars for each screen to guide users through the program. If the help bar doesn't answer your questions, each Park/Office, each Region/Directorate, and the Director's Office/Comptroller all have an OFS Administrator. There is also a Servicewide OFS Administrator. The responsibility of each OFS Administrator is to establish "approval rights" for requests managed by that organization. They facilitate adding, editing, approving, prioritizing, and locking requests

and can provide information about OFS policies, procedures, and deadlines. They are the initial contact for troubleshooting.

- Unit users without approval rights should contact their Park/Office OFS Administrator.
- Park/Office OFS Administrators should contact their Region/Directorate OFS Administrator.
- Region/Directorate OFS Administrators should contact the Servicewide OFS Administrator.
- Unit OFS users can contact their superintendent or program manager to find out who is the Park/Office OFS administrator. Please refer to the list of OFS Administrators to find Region/Directorate and Servicewide OFS Administrators as well as OFS help desk information. The list of OFS Administrators can be found in the OFS Help section under the Budget Call tab on the *NPS Budget Webpage* (www.nps.gov/budget).

Several regions have offered a variety of OFS training opportunities. The Washington Budget Formulation Office supports and encourages these activities and has been privileged to be a part of training when available. Please contact your Region/Directorate OFS Administrator about the possibility for OFS training in your region or office.

Locking Requests

OFS records may be locked at either the regional or WASO level, or at both levels. If a record is locked at the regional level, a park will not be able to edit the record. If a record is locked at the WASO level, neither the park nor the regional office will be able to edit the record in any way. Records are locked during the budget formulation process to create a stable universe as requests are considered for funding. Requests are unlocked as decisions are made for the three successive budget submissions. If your request is locked it is under consideration for funding. *Troubleshooting: Some requests appear to be locked because they cannot be edited when, in fact, the request cannot be edited because the user trying to have access to the request has no rights to edit the request. Contact your OFS Administrator if you need help figuring out why a request cannot be edited.*

Structure of Review, Approval and Prioritization Process

Requests are initiated at the Park/Office level. Until an authorized park official approves a request, the request is considered to be in “draft.” Once approved at the Park/Office level, the request is eligible to be approved and prioritized at the Region/Directorate level. After approval at the Region/Directorate level, the request is reviewed at the Servicewide level for consideration when the budget is being formulated.

During the review and approval process at the Region/Directorate and Servicewide levels, the requests will be locked at all lower levels. For example, during the Region/Directorate review and approval period, all park- and office-approved requests

will be regionally locked and parks and offices will not be able to make changes unless the Regional OFS Administrator unlocks an individual request. During the Servicewide review and approval period, all Region/Directorate approved requests will be locked and changes will be unable to be made unless the Servicewide OFS Administrator unlocks the individual requests.

In addition, OFS contains a lock on the approval function, which can be activated at either the Region/Directorate or the Servicewide level. While new requests can be entered (as draft) at any time, this precludes parks or Regional offices from approving these new requests and, thus, "destabilizing" the request universe under review. Should a special need arise and a park or region wishes to "submit" a critical new request for consideration during the times when the system is locked, the submitting organization should contact the OFS Administrator at the level above them to request such an action.

The system is designed to allow updates as required. Both the overall record locking feature and the approval function lock feature should only be employed during the Region/Directorate review period in February and the Servicewide review period from March through May. At any other time during the year, the only locked records in OFS will be those that support one of the three official budget submissions of the NPS.

The Editing Process

At the Regional and Servicewide levels, the *Needs Edit* function (located in the Notes section of the OFS Request Detail Sheet) permits reviewers to identify the need to edit a request. The *Needs Edit* function is only functional when the request is locked at the Regional or Servicewide level. When the *Needs Edit* function is used, it automatically generates an electronic mail message to all OFS Administrators at the level below the reviewer.

If the *Needs Edit* requirement is originated at the Servicewide level, the request will be unlocked automatically at the Servicewide level. It will be left to the Regional OFS Administrator to determine whether the request should be unlocked at the Regional level so the request for the edit can be passed along the to the Park/Office. If the *Needs Edit* requirement is originated at the Regional level, the request will be unlocked automatically at the regional level.

The *Edits Complete* function is the reverse of the Needs Edit function. The Park should add a comment in the Notes section and select *Edits Complete* when the request has been updated. The system will automatically re-lock the request at the Regional level and will notify the Region that the edits were completed. If the request for the edit originated from the WASO Budget Office, the Region should add a comment in the Notes section and select *Edits Complete* when the request has been updated. The system will automatically re-lock the request at the WASO level and will notify the WASO Budget Office that the edits were completed.

Numbering of Regional Priorities and Park Priorities

In prior years, the Region/Directorate process worked such that if the last enacted budget funded regional priorities 1-14 and the current President's Request proposes regional priorities 15-24 for funding, your current regional list started with regional priority 25.

From now on, Region/Directorate priorities should be renumbered, beginning with 1.0 and running sequentially in whole numbers. Use whole numbers in prioritization and do not duplicate priorities. "Locked" records must be taken into account when developing sequential Region/Directorate priorities.

All park-approved records MUST have a sequential Park/Office priority (other than 999.9). Renumber your Park/Office priorities, beginning with 1.0 and running sequentially in whole numbers. Use whole numbers in prioritization and do not duplicate priorities. "Locked" records must be taken into account when developing sequential Park/Office priorities. See Region/Directorate specific guidance for instructions on the re-ranking and reprioritization of Park/Office priorities, as their individual needs and preferences dictate.

Many parks/offices have already undergone a Core Operations Analysis or will be going through a similar analysis in the future. As a result of the Core Operations Analysis process, parks/offices are being asked to analyze their OFS requests in order to reprioritize requests, delete requests which are no longer relevant, and/or determine whether requests can be funded through reallocation of base funds. The WASO Budget Formulation Office is working on programming that will allow parks/offices to keep a history of OFS records that are funded through reallocation of base funds. Until this programming is in place, parks/offices and regions should re-assign a Park/Office Priority & Regional Priority = 700.0 to those OFS records that are funded through reallocation of base funds.

Accountability

The superintendent, regional director, or associate director is accountable for the information provided in OFS. While these officials have approval authority in OFS, we recognize the difficulty in maintaining accountability with complex electronic systems. Each OFS Administrator at the Park/Office, Regional and Associate Director level also has approval authority. In order to permit maximum flexibility in managing the OFS database, the system will recognize these approvals as equally legitimate. Therefore, it is imperative that each level of the organization establishes internal delegations for how requests are approved, and that each individual has clear and unambiguous direction as to what role they play in the approval process. Regardless of the internal methodology created for approval of these requests, the Superintendent, Regional Director, or Associate Director will remain totally accountable for the data in the system.

Consistency = Credibility

While it is the intention of the NPS to allow as much flexibility as possible to incorporate changing needs, the top of your region's priority list should remain relatively constant for reasons of credibility. This is necessary because the Service may be asked at any time to provide a list of its highest unfunded priorities. Certainly, a new set of circumstances could cause a new increase proposal to surface, or a change in situation could cause an increase to jump in the priority ranking on occasion. However, under normal circumstances, your list as identified the previous year should show only minimal changes for the highest priorities.

For reasons of credibility, when you provide budget information, please use or update OFS to ensure compatibility with budget needs officially articulated by the Service. For example, as more parks initiate business plans, the needs identified in the business plan must correspond to data in OFS. Likewise, as Law Enforcement Needs Assessments (LENAs) are completed, please ensure that the needs are reflected in OFS. It is critical that any budget information provided to interested parties outside the NPS be drawn from and reflected in the two budget formulation systems, OFS and PMIS. Also, please use OFS as the basis for your response to Congressional and other inquiries to ensure consistency.

Status of Data in OFS

Immediately upon official transmittal of the three primary budget submissions (DOI, OMB, and President's Request), the OFS increase requests that have been selected for inclusion in each are annotated to reflect this, and this information becomes available for OFS users to view in the "Status" field on OFS detail sheets. Please be aware, however, that inclusion at one level does not guarantee acceptance at the next highest, level. Lists of the OFS entries at each of the budget levels for a given fiscal year may be generated using the "Formulation Status" fields under Advance Search Options on the OFS Search screen, once the budget submission has been officially transmitted.

An example of a normal budget year: During the formulation of the FY 2007 Budget Request to the Department in March, April, and May 2005, the Servicewide OFS Administrator locked and approved all records in the database that were submitted to WASO as regionally approved. When the budget was officially transmitted to the DOI, the Servicewide OFS Administrator unlocked and unapproved increase requests considered, but not submitted, to DOI as part of the request. When the NPS Budget Request to OMB further pared down the list of included requests in September 2005, the Servicewide OFS Administrator unlocked and unapproved those requests not likely to be included in the subsequent request to Congress. When the President's Request is officially submitted in February 2006, all records not submitted will be unlocked and unapproved for editing.

Sometimes NPS is asked for a list of its next highest park priorities for funding as part of the follow-up questions to the House Appropriations Hearing on the President's Budget Request. In this case, the Regions/Directorates will be contacted to confirm its highest remaining priorities so that this information may be provided to the Committees. For this

reason, and for reasons of credibility, the top of each Region/Directorate's priority list should remain relatively constant, as currently identified in OFS. Certainly, circumstances could cause a new increase proposal to surface, or a change in situation could cause an increase to jump in the priority ranking on occasion. However, under normal circumstances, priorities at the highest levels as identified the previous year should show only minimal changes.

Linkages to Other Systems

OFS has been linked with one other NPS web-based system, PMIS. A request for recurring, operational funding in OFS may be linked to a nonrecurring project identified in PMIS. Any project in PMIS that will ultimately require additional operational funding may have a corresponding record established in OFS. Any project in the current Five-Year Maintenance and Capital Improvement Plan that will ultimately require additional operational funding MUST have a corresponding record in OFS, which MUST be linked to the PMIS record. The link to PMIS is established via a selection in Step 1 on the add request or search/edit screens. If, because of a system error, you are unable to create the link, please specify the PMIS record under "Supporting Information." Once the link to a PMIS record has been made, the PMIS project can be accessed using a hyperlink provided when viewing the OFS request detail sheet. Linking OFS funding requests to related PMIS projects will become increasingly important as the NPS is required to include an estimate of outyear funding implications for maintenance and operations in the justifications for Line-Item Construction projects.

OFS is also now pulling GPRA data from the Performance Management Data System (PMDS) so the GPRA goals in OFS reflect the current Strategic Plan and draws data. The purpose is to provide more accurate and comprehensive GPRA goal data, so park base increases can be better linked to performance.

Information for Responding to Inquiries on Unfunded Operational Needs

A "snapshot" of approved, unfunded requests will be taken of the OFS database at the end of the WASO Budget Office review in late-March/early-April. This snapshot becomes the official NPS response in the ensuing year to answer inquiries concerning unfunded operational needs of NPS.

Quality of Data in OFS

The usefulness of the data contained in OFS is only as good as the quality of the data therein. The NPS needs to present high quality, well-conceived and well-written requests linked to the goals of the organization in order to demonstrate that we have a plan and know how to implement it.

Specific Instructions for Certain OFS Fields

OFS has Help Bars for each screen to guide users through the program. The following expands slightly on the information available in the help bars. It is not inclusive of all fields, only those that generate repeat questions. If you have questions about other fields that are not answered by the help bars, contact your OFS administrator.

Title

Remember the title is the first thing seen by the reviewer. It always helps the reviewer understand the basic premise of the request. The title can draw someone into the request. Make it say something of substance. This field should begin with a verb and explain clearly and succinctly the general purpose of the requested funding. The title

should eschew such intangible statements as “meet NPS standards” or “increase operational base.” Additionally, adjectives such as “basic,” “required,” or “essential” should be avoided, as they beg the question as to why these actions are not currently being undertaken. In no case should abbreviations be used in the title. The title should be entered using initial capitals, punctuation should be limited, and the field should not contain a series of slashes separating unconnected items. Your (and the Service's) worst title nightmare would be as follows: ENHANCE PK RES MGMT/MNTC/LE CAPABILIY TO MEET MTN DNR STAND/COMP. An example of a good title would be: Enhance Law Enforcement to Protect Resources, Visitors and Employees.

Request Type

Funding requests should be categorized by using one of the request types listed below. Request Types are very useful for performing searches and formulating the three formal NPS budget requests.

Park Base – used by Parks to requests Park base funding increases.

Regional Office Base – used by Regions to request Regional Office operational funding increases.

WASO Base – used by Directorates to request Servicewide Program operational funding increases.

Regional Program – used by Regional personnel to request lump sum increases for Programs managed by the Regions (i.e. Repair/Rehab Program funding, which is distributed by the Regions).

Servicewide Program – used by WASO personnel to request lump sum increases for Programs managed by WASO (i.e. Grant Program funding, which is distributed by WASO).

Heritage Area – used for a Congressionally designated National Heritage Area that receives funding through the Heritage Partnership Program.

Statutory Aid Area – used for an area that receives funding through Statutory or Contractual Aid (does not include technical assistance received through ONPS).

Uncontrollable Costs – for WASO Budget Formulation Office use only.

GSA Space-Park – used by Parks to request GSA Space funding at individual or collective Parks. (Please use the OFS-specific PWE for GSA space rental, ESW, when using this request type.)

GSA Space-Reg/WASO – used by Regional and Central Offices to request GSA Space funding for regional and servicewide offices. GSA Space. (Please use the OFS-specific PWE for GSA space rental, ESW, when using this request type.)

Concise Description and Justification

This field is an abstract for the funding request and is limited to 1,250 characters. The information contained in this field is put directly into the budget submission to justify proposed increases. It is recommended that you create or edit the narrative in Microsoft Word, spell check it there, obtain character count with spaces (in MS Word, see Tools/Word Count), and then cut and paste the narrative into OFS. More importantly, follow the following five-step approach listed here when developing your concise description and justification. For a more in-depth description of this five-step approach, refer to the Tips for Writing Effective Funding Requests found in the OFS Help section under the Budget Call tab on the *NPS Budget Webpage* (www.nps.gov/budget).

1. State the operational need
2. Indicate why the operational need exists
3. Explain how funding would be used
4. Quantify outputs allowed by funding
5. Project resulting outcomes

The data in the Concise Description and Justification field is crucial if the NPS is to establish credibility in its requests for increased funding. The FY 2006 budget process included significant editing of requests to conform to the five-step approach, add substance and clarity, and correct any factual misstatements. Accordingly, you could use the park increases in the FY 2006 Green Book as models for a sound justification. The NPS budget formulation team's goal is to always have a sizable number of well-written and soundly justified increases available for review by interested parties.

Again, don't forget to observe the 1,250-character limitation of that field. Descriptions are truncated at 1,250 characters (including spaces.) You would not want your justification to go off into nothingness and have it read: "This increase would demonstrably affect the". Some readers may never know what comes next.

Here are 10 helpful hints for writing a good OFS justification:

1. Speak to actions, not positions being filled. Do not say funding would be used to hire a maintenance laborer; instead, say that funding would be used to better maintain trails in order to eliminate safety hazards.
2. Avoid cataclysmic predictions. Try not to use words "irreversible", "irreplaceable" or "critical". If you say the park will totally disintegrate without this funding, by gosh, this better happen. The worst thing we can see is a park with a $20,000,000 budget saying a cut of $50,000 will result in fatalities. We certainly hope not.
3. Similarly, if you paint a desperate picture, with dire consequences of non-funding, remember that someone may ask why you are not taking care of the problem within your base instead of, for example, attending a lot of meetings (which some of our critics find problematic). Anyone can find "waste" in anyone's budget; it's a matter of perception. So if you are raising the issue, make sure you can answer the questions that might accompany the sudden visibility. Remember that while OFS is an internal

system, it is the basis for answering queries from outside parties and public documents.

4. Avoid the trap of requesting funds because simply because it will restore programs that were once funded. Presumably, a park, regional and servicewide managers make informed decisions and would not have cut back something that was not the lowest priority or less valuable than other activities. Tell us what, other than "tradition" has been lost.
5. Don not trot out the old "meet NPS standards" line. Operating at NPS standards is admirable; however, without context or definition, it tells the reader nothing. It is better to prevent deterioration, correct safety hazards or educate additional visitors than to meet standards.
6. Be quantifiable, use performance measures, outputs and outcomes but don't overload the Concise Description and Justification field with too many numbers. Walk the fine line. If you must swamp us with numbers put them in Supporting Information field.
7. Avoid jargon, abbreviations and acronyms. Remember that it is important for the reader to understand the prose. The members of Congress are your eventual audience—will they understand your request as written?
8. Use the conditional "This request would" rather than the simple future "This request will." This is purely a convention, is arbitrary and capricious, and is not subject to debate.
9. Write clearly. This can not be stressed enough. In the Elements of Style by Strunk and White, they say, "Vigorous writing is concise. A sentence should contain no unnecessary words, a paragraph no unnecessary sentences, for the same reason that a drawing should contain no unnecessary lines or a machine no unnecessary parts." This does not require that the writer make the sentence short, but that every word tell. Winston Churchill once remarked, "I did not say: ‘Hostilities will be engaged with the opposing forces near the proximity of the coastal perimeter’; the message was much more effective as simply ‘we will fight them on the beaches’."
10. Put yourself in the position of the person reading the narrative. Would you understand the issues being discussed if you did not know anything about the park or program? What questions does the request raise in your mind? Does the narrative tell you enough that you would make the decision to fund the request? Can you tell what the money would be used for? Is the increase really clear, or does it beg more questions?

Supporting Information

This field is optional. While it has no maximum length, be reasonable in how much information you enter. This field continues and/or expands the concise description and should not contain material duplicative of the concise description. Use this field to provide background material and supporting statistics and information.

Both the concise description and the supplemental information fields appear on the standard request detail sheet reviewed by the Park/Office and Region/Directorates and WASO but only the concise description is forwarded in the President's Request.

OFS Number

Numbers are automatically generated by the system. The numbers are sequential Servicewide and include the letter A at the end of the number. Records created through the Split function maintain the same set of integers but replace the letter with the next sequential letter from the alphabet. All such records are considered to be “related” and are so indicated on the request detail sheet.

During each budget process, a few records are “split” into “A” and “B” records so that a portion of the request could be fit within allowance levels for a particular submission. If both of the “split’ records remain unfunded and not in the President’s request in February, you should consider, at that time, rejoining those records back into one request.

Earliest Year of Funding

When requests are added to OFS, most will be marked with the current budget call year as the earliest year to be funded. However, if an increase is linked to a project that may not be completed in the current budget call year then it should reflect when the project will be completed and when operational funds are needed. For example, if a new facility will not be completed until FY 2010 then the earliest year of funding for operating the new facility should be FY 2010 or possibly FY 2011. The earliest year of funding does not have to be changed to be considered in subsequent years; unless the circumstances have changed such that the need for funding is delayed (i.e. a construction project or land acquisition is delayed, so the related operational funding need is delayed).

Budget Drivers

The Budget Driver attempts to categorize the reason behind the increase. Entries are made as percentages of the whole increase; for example an increase may indicate the request is a result of threats to resources (50%) and deteriorating infrastructure (50%). No entry should be less than 25 percent and entries must be in increments of 5 percent. Also, an increase should reflect only one to three budget drivers. Many increases are acceptable with only one budget driver. While many factors influence the need for increased funding, only one or two “drive” the particular need. (Note: Programming was recently added to the system to restrict the number of budget drivers to three or less and to restrict the entry for each budget driver to be no less than 25 percent.)

<u>Threats to Resources:</u> Increases using this budget driver must be related to protecting or preserving resources for which the park has been established. A preventive maintenance program to preserve a deteriorated historic building is more appropriate to this category than “Deteriorated Infrastructure.” Interpretive efforts aimed at educating visitors who are unaware of the fragility of the park’s resources would also clearly fit this

category, as would ranger patrols aimed at protecting the resource rather than the visitor.

Health and Safety: This budget driver is optimally used for increases that provide for protecting the life, health or safety of the visitor or the employee. Enhancing the park's capability to provide for law enforcement patrols or emergency medical situations would fall under this category. In addition, the proper maintenance of trails, the distribution of safety information at visitor centers, or the presence of life guards at swimming areas. Steps taken to ensure proper water quality might also properly fall here, although a case could be made to include such actions under the budget driver for "Compliance Issues."

Physical Security: This category is designed to focus on actions taken to protect the security of employees, visitors and government facilities from threats posed by terrorist or criminal activities. Clearly such activities could involve "Health and Safety" concerns; however, this budget driver is preferable for anti-terrorism measures. In addition, law enforcement activities that protect against theft of government property should also be designated using this budget driver.

Deteriorated Infrastructure: This budget driver should represent only those maintenance actions designed to correct deterioration of public use structures and facilities (docks, roads, trails, utility systems, etc.), and administrative or other buildings used by NPS employees. An increase for an historic home that requires preventive maintenance is more aptly entered under "Threats to Resources."

Compliance Issues: Compliance issues represent the most difficult increased need to categorize. To ensure consistency, it is recommended that issues dealing with NEPA, Section 106 of the Historic Preservation Act, or the Disabilities Act be entered under the "Compliance Issue" Budget Driver. An increase related to the assurance of clean, safe water for visitors and employees may be better suited to the budget driver "Health and Safety" even though the completion of NEPA or Section 106 compliance activities also seem to fall under the category of "Threats to Resources", and providing for a safe and enjoyable experience for physically-challenged could be categorized as "Health and Safety" or "Compliance".

Address Mandates: Increases which fulfill Congressional and Presidential mandates or Departmental policies fall under this budget driver. This category will be more frequently used by central offices than by parks. This budget driver should be used as a last resort; and if requests relate to other budget drivers, those drivers should be used instead. For example, Congress may issue a mandate about museum collections management and the WASO Cultural Resources Program is requesting funding to enhance museum collections management in parks. This request would be better suited with the budget driver for "Threats to Resources", rather than "Address Mandates". A Departmentally-driven request for improving Servicewide information technology security does not fall under any other budget driver so the "Address Mandates" would be applicable to this request.

New Area: Increases for "recently" authorized park units fall under this budget driver. When initially requesting funding increases, a "new area" should code 100 percent of

the increase against the new area budget driver. While there is no standard rule for what timeframe constitutes a “new” area; a good rule of thumb is probably within the last ten years. Of course, this categorization would also depend on how quickly a park has established an adequate base budget. A park with a minimal budget and operation might be considered “new” after 15 years. A park that has a more established operation level and significant funding might “lose” that designation after five to seven years.

New Facilities: This budget driver should reflect increased operational needs caused by the construction, rehabilitation or acquisition of facilities (historic, public use, or administrative). Generally, if this budget driver is used and relates to new construction or rehabilitation work, there should be a corresponding project identified in the Project Management Information System (PMIS). This OFS increase should be linked to the PMIS project.

New Lands: The acquisition of new lands, whether through donation, exchange, or fee purchase, brings new responsibilities for operational upkeep. This budget driver represents increases, which accrue new responsibilities by adding to the land base managed by the NPS. This is not be confused with “new area” (which obviously also results in new lands) or “new facilities” which deals more with the built environment rather than land base.

New Programs: Increases that represent the initiation of new activities not currently undertaken are reflected in this category. An example would be the development of an interpretive program that had not previously been available to the public. Some new programs are implemented to address “threats to resources” or as result of “increasing visitation,” so this budget driver should be used carefully. More specific causes for the increase may likely be found elsewhere in the list of budget drivers.

Increased Visitation: Increases resulting from a rise in the volume of visitors are represented in this category. If this budget driver is chosen, be sure to indicate the visitation growth in either the concise description or the supporting information. Be sure to use Report #4 in the Park Profile Reports section of OFS to verify the visitation increase. When reviewing OFS records for the FY 2006 budget request, the budget driver “increased visitation” and the narrative were quite often not supported by the “official” NPS visitation figures contained in the database.

Visitation Pattern Changes: Increases necessitated by the change in the pattern of visitation – such as a trend toward shoulder season visits or a busy winter season – are represented by this budget driver. The trend toward the spreading out of visitation to March, April, and October, from the more traditional May through September use, may result in the need for extending seasonal staff or providing utility costs for a longer period of time. Such increases would fall under this category. If this budget driver is chosen, be sure to indicate the visitation pattern change in either the concise description or the supporting information.

Expand Basic Visitor Services: This budget driver should be used for requests that restore basic visitor services in parks (interpretive programs, orientation services, etc.). Requests that address the restoration of basic visitor services that have been cut should

be marked with the “Expand Basic Visitor Services” budget driver. However, more specific budget drivers should be used if they are applicable (i.e. if the services being restored address “Threats to Resources”, “Health and Safety”, or “Deteriorated Infrastructure”).

Special Events: This budget driver concerns one-time operational requirements necessitated due to events such as the celebration of the Lewis and Clark Bicentennial, commemoration of the 100th Anniversary of Manned Flight, the 400th anniversary of the founding of Jamestown, the Presidential Inaugural, or the Olympics. These operational increases may or may not become part of the permanent base, after the event has concluded. For example, the celebration of the 400th anniversary of the founding of Jamestown or the centennial of the Wright Brothers’ flight may lead to a sustained increase in visitation at the site(s) in question.

Increased Workload: This category is intended to reflect operational increases required by administrative or managerial offices. If the workload of the maintenance staff or interpreters has increased, it is not enough to cite “increased workload.” Rather, the reason for the increased workload may be the acquisition of new facilities, the start of a new program, a threat to a specific resource, or a significant jump in the visitation at an area. These more specific budget drivers are more appropriately used in these cases. However, if the workload of the administrative office has increased and more frequent reports are required, this could be correctly categorized through use of the budget driver “increased workload.”

Accountability: This budget driver should be used if funding is requested to provide greater oversight of or better information on NPS programs and resources. This category will be more frequently used by central offices than by parks. Examples in recent years that might have appropriately been entered under this category include increased information management and telecommunications funding, additional funding to conduct condition assessments, or financial, budget, maintenance and resource management system development. Increases in the Servicewide Inventory and Monitoring Program might have been split between “threats to resources” and “accountability,” as the information needed for better management decisions will be obtained through this program.

Servicewide Initiatives

This field allows the NPS to designate an increase as part of a special Servicewide initiative. Generally, an increase would relate to only one initiative, although in unusual cases more than one initiative would be appropriate (for example, the NPS Law Enforcement Initiative and the National Security/Anti-Terrorism Initiative are often used in combination).

The entire OFS record must apply to the initiative(s). When needs for initiatives are combined with other core mission responsibilities as base increases are developed, it becomes difficult to separate this program component from the rest of the increase request; and the request for an increase will likely be skipped.

Initiatives can be initially marked at the park/office level rather than by program managers. However, the data field should be used judiciously and regional offices/associate directors must review all entries with care. Please help ensure that the data contained in OFS is as accurate as possible. Program managers will be the final arbiters in all cases.

Only the following special initiatives are approved at this time for use with unfunded OFS records. Records from previous years marked funded in OFS may show valid past initiatives.

Collaborative Effort: Operational activities that reflect a collaborative effort among parks (this does not apply to partnerships or regional office/program requests).

Interpretation and Education Renaissance: Includes both park base and Servicewide program components. Servicewide programs must have been identified in the Interpretation & Education (I&E) Renaissance Action Plan document in order to be included as part of this initiative. Funding components for parks would contain either a Program Work Element (PWE) beginning with "I" (for Interpretation activities) or the PWE "SVC" (for Volunteers in Parks). Servicewide programs and regions may also use the training PWE's of S*****T.

The I&E Renaissance Action Plan, which is based on the results of the 2004 Interpretation and Education Business Plan, lays out a forward looking set of actions that will greatly improve the practice and delivery of interpretation and education services over the next five years from FY 2008 to FY 2012. The goal of the NPS I&E Renaissance initiative is to take the best of what is known about the practice of interpretation and education and move it into its next metamorphosis, reclaiming its classical roots and reinvigorating its sometimes forgotten power.

The work to be conducted in the I&E Renaissance Action Plan is based on five major tenets. Increases will be selected from among requests that meet one or more of the needs described below:

> **Engage People to Make Enduring Connections to America's Special Places:** In order to connect all Americans to the recreational, educational, and inspirational power of national parks, we must equip interpreters and educators with knowledge, skills, and approaches necessary for community and civic engagement. Programs must be created in collaboration *with* communities and partners rather than *for* them.
>
> **Use New Technologies:** Technology offers new and tremendous opportunities—not to replace place-based national park experiences, but to make intangible meanings available in ways never before imagined. To remain relevant to today's visitor, the NPS must be a leader in the use of technology applied to informal learning.
>
> **Embrace Interpretation and Education Partners:** As many as 70,000 volunteers, concessionaires, and other partners provide interpretive services. The NPS ranger must increasingly facilitate partners in the attainment of

interpretive service excellence.

Develop and Implement Professional Standards: In the last decade, the NPS has begun to develop professional standards, but their use has been inconsistent. Now is the time to apply these standards to all who deliver Interpretation and Education services.

Create a Culture of Evaluation: We have very little scientifically valid information about the direct outcomes and impact of interpretation and education programs. Evaluation must become an integral part of program design and delivery to ensure ongoing program improvement, effectiveness, and efficiency.

Invasive Species Management: Operational activities that monitor and mitigate invasive and exotic plant and animal species disturbances on park lands and restore native species.

Lincoln Bicentennial: Operational activities that provide support for the events and activities that will surround the bicentennial of the birth of Abraham Lincoln, which will take place on February 12, 2009. Abraham Lincoln Birthplace National Historic Site, in Kentucky in the Southeast Region, will be the site of the kickoff to the bicentennial events on February 12, 2008, and a rededication event at the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, D.C. in the National Capital Region will mark Lincoln's 200th birthday. In addition to these sites of major planned events for the bicentennial, there are many other NPS sites throughout the country that have both major and secondary connections to Lincoln and could qualify under the Lincoln Bicentennial initiative.

National Security/Anti-Terrorism: Operational activities directly related to combating the threats posed by groups or individuals to the protection and safety of park visitors, park employees, and Federal facilities. Non-recurring project requirements should be entered in PMIS by individual parks. Increases tagged under this initiative must also be marked as part of the NPS Law Enforcement Initiative. In the "Concise Description and Justification" field, please indicate the level of threat that would be supported by the increase (i.e. yellow, elevated yellow, orange).

National Trails Initiative: Operational support for national scenic and historic trails administered by the NPS.

NPS Law Enforcement Initiative: Operational activities involving commissioned law enforcement rangers or the United States Park Police performing "law enforcement activities not related to "resource protection." Funding components would contain only the Program Work Elements (PWE) of L**, AP* and CP*. Individual non-recurring, project needs identified in the law enforcement report mandated by Public Law 105-391 should be entered in PMIS. Operational needs identified through Law Enforcement Needs Assessments (LENAs) should be marked with this initiative. If the need was not identified in the LENA process, you may not use this initiative. (Servicewide prioritization for FY 2006 and FY 2007 included an emphasis on DOI-defined icons, border parks, drug interdiction, and servicewide infrastructure. NPS does not expect to receive definitive guidance on DOI emphasis areas for FY 2008 until after the SCC is

completed. Regardless of your relationship to any past or potential emphasis areas, your requests should reflect your needs within the context of your park and your park's mission.)

Threatened/Endangered Species Management: Operational support to stabilize, improve or reestablish populations of federally listed threatened and endangered species on park lands.

Vanishing Treasures: Operational activities designed to reduce threats to prehistoric and historic sites and structures at specific parks in the Intermountain and Pacific West Regions. Increases may be entered at the park level to rebuild a skilled workforce able to maintain and care for these sites and structures. Increases may also be entered at the regional level for the preservation treatment project program and for management and oversight. Individual projects to support the preservation treatment program should be entered in PMIS. Questions on this initiative may be addressed to Glenn Fulfer, Servicewide Vanishing Treasures Program Coordinator.

Centennial Initiative: Operational activities designed to support the centennial goals and guide the National Park Service toward its 100th anniversary: The five Centennial goals are Stewardship, Environmental Leadership, Recreational Experience, Education, and Professional Excellence. The President's Centennial Commitment states that $100 million per year for 10 years in federal spending will be used to fund new levels of excellence in parks. These funds will be used to hire 3,000 more seasonal national park rangers, guides, and maintenance workers; repair buildings; improve landscapes; and enroll more children in Junior Ranger and Web Ranger programs. Additional information pertaining to the Centennial Initiative can be found at http://classicinside.nps.gov/budget3/scc/FY_2010/FY_2008_Centennial_Initiative_Instructions.pdf.

Safe Borderlands: Operational activities designed to ensure safety for employees, visitors and residents, improve communication, enhance interagency coordination, and mitigate environmental damage at specific parks along the Southwest border in the Intermountain region.

Oceans: Operational support to expand mapping and monitoring, to remove and dispose of marine debris, to asses coral systems, and to partner with states on regional challenges.

Appropriation

If you are unsure about which Appropriation to use, please refer to the updated list of Program Work Elements (PWEs) found in the OFS Help section under the Budget Call tab on the *NPS Budget Webpage* (www.nps.gov/budget).

Funding Components

This field is one of the most critical in OFS. Enter information as "tasks" to be accomplished, not personnel to accomplish them. Begin the description with a verb. The cost estimates (personnel and other) for existing OFS records must be checked during

the SCC to see if they are “old” estimates and must be updated to reflect pay raises or other inflationary circumstances. It is crucial to have the most accurate cost estimate entered at the time your increase is likely to be considered for inclusion in the budget. Do not forget to include benefit costs when calculating personnel costs.

Enter dollar amounts in thousands, dropping the last three zeroes off the dollar amounts. For example, $250,000 would be entered as 250. Make sure the numbers make sense. Don’t ask for $500,000 without any detail on how it would be used. Use common sense. Put yourself in the place of someone reviewing the request. If it seems unusual that $350,000 is needed for "bringing maintenance up to standard" at a small park, assume that the reader will think so too. The request may be valid; you will just need to explain the particular situation very clearly to convince the skeptics.

Do not automatically indicate a need for staff. If an increase can be accomplished without staff, say so. Increased staff, even at parks, is still frowned upon. The NPS is under pressure to contract work, *when and where feasible*.

If you enter a large amount of money in the “Other” cost estimate category, be sure to explain the use of this funding in the Supporting Information Field.

It is also crucial that you enter an item priority if more than one funding component is present. Several components can be assigned the same priority if the need to be funded concurrently to accomplish the job. However, be sure to show actual priorities in case the record is split. For example, even if you are unable to expand interpretive operations for a year, do you first require additional funding for utilities for visitor center operations. Prioritization of components helps the WASO budget staff make decisions based on your priorities when they are splitting a record to squeeze in at least part of an operational increase. This greatly facilitates the proper “split” of records when that proves necessary. If the field splits a request, the portion of the request that should be funded first should be put in the “A” record and the portion of the request that should be funded at a later date should be put in the “B” record. This will allow future splitting of the “B” record into the “C” record, the “C” record into the “D” record, and so on.

Generally each task represents a different PWE. The system will however, allow you to enter tasks using the same PWE if you want to differentiate between GPRA goal results accruing from the same type of task. (The GPRA Picker will soon be changed so goal results are no longer tied to specific funding components, since multiple goals could be achieved by one funding component or multiple funding components could contribute to the achievement of a single goal.)

Parks and offices should follow a broad, activity-based approach when entering OFS requests. Certain OFS records may have a variety of PWEs in the funding components, such as requests operate new facilities, maintain new lands, or operate new units. However, whenever possible, OFS requests should focus on one of the core activities performed by the NPS and should therefore contain PWEs for only one or two functions besides support costs (which can be associated with all requests): facility maintenance (MW*), operational maintenance (MZ*), law enforcement (LZ*), resource protection

(PZ*), interpretation (IZ*), cultural resource management (CZ*), or natural resource management (NZ*).

Changes to PWEs due to Activity Based Costing (ABC/M) were reflected in OFS in October 2004; and this should assist parks and offices in complying with the new broad, activity-based approach to OFS records. A complete list of Program Work Elements (PWEs) can be found in the OFS Help section under the Budget Call tab on the *NPS Budget Webpage* (www.nps.gov/budget).

GPRA Goal

The GPRA goal feature in OFS was updated in December, 2004 so GPRA goals in OFS now reflect the current Strategic Plan and OFS draws data directly from the Performance Management Data System (PMDS). Updates to GPRA goal data are currently done on a weekly basis (and they will eventually be done on a nightly basis). GPRA goal selection is now done entirely in Step 3 of Add Requests and Edit Requests. Users report on GPRA goals for the entire record, instead of assigning GPRA goals for each component of a record. The aim is to have more accurate and comprehensive GPRA goal data in OFS, so base operating increases can be better linked to performance -- which is becoming increasingly more important. It is unlikely that increases that lack projected performance data will be considered for inclusion in future budget submissions.