

NTEU@NPS

News and Updates for NPS Employees

December
2017

NTEU at the Ranger Rendezvous

The National Treasury Employees Union (NTEU) was part of the 40th annual Ranger Rendezvous hosted by the Association of National Park Rangers in late October. Almost 100 NPS employees gathered for a long weekend at the YMCA of the Rockies in Estes Park, Colo., to engage in outdoor activities and service projects, and attend a variety of keynote presentations and informative workshops.

Speakers included Sue Masica, Intermountain Regional Director; Reed Robinson, Midwest Region Program Manager for the Office of American Indian Affairs; Ani Kame'enui, Director of Legislation and Policy at the National Parks Conservation Association; and Dan Wenk, Yellowstone National Park Superintendent. Workshops ranged from "The Importance of Building Lasting Relationships with Local Communities" and "Policing Today's National Parks - Challenges and Best Practices" to "What does good interpretation look like? Defining New Standards for Interpretation Excellence" and "Power of the Rogue Ranger."

NTEU has become a regular participant at the Ranger Rendezvous to educate NPS employees on the benefits of union membership and learning about issues in parks around the country.



Lesley Johnson, center, Harpers Ferry NHP and Chapter 336 treasurer and chief steward, tell a Ranger Rendezvous participant about the benefits of union membership with NTEU organizer Maya Satz, left.

You Spoke, We Listened

In an effort to better understand the working conditions and needs of National Park employees not currently represented by a union, NTEU emailed a link to a 15-question online survey to more than 8,500 NPS employees in June, asking about working conditions and things they would like to see changed in their jobs. The survey was active for one week and 741 people responded.

Fifty-nine percent of respondents are full-time permanent employees; 20 percent are seasonal, 3 percent are part-time permanent, and the remainder identified as “other.” Nearly 40 percent of respondents have worked for NPS for just 1-5 years and another 11 percent for less than one year. Of those, 46 percent are full-time permanent; just 28 percent are seasonal.

Overall, it was clear that NPS employees, regardless of job title or location, really like what they do. When asked what they liked most about their job, they referenced being able to work outside, teaching visitors about the park, preserving the environment, and their co-workers. Likewise, when asked to rate specific positive aspects about their work, more than a third of respondents said they are always happy to go to work, and almost half said their work provides feelings of accomplishment and pride.

Although many respondents had very positive things to say about their work, there are serious problems in the workplace that they would like to

see addressed. When asked if they could change one thing about their job, they most often cited poor management, low pay, the lack of permanent positions, hostile work environments, and a lack of upward mobility. When asked about the importance of various issues at work, almost seven in 10 said training is very important, followed closely by staffing levels (68 percent) and upward mobility (59 percent).

A slight majority of survey respondents said their career path with the NPS was clear yet only 29 percent believe they will reach their full potential with the agency. Many felt underutilized, frustrated at lack of promotion opportunities or year-round work and pointed out there is a great deal of favoritism by management. Another issue for several respondents was the idea of having to relocate to another park in order to be promoted, uprooting their family to a new location.

While respondents said their direct supervisors are fairly good at recognizing their contributions at work, they do not believe their feedback is taken seriously or that management is transparent about the decisions it makes. It was clear from their comments that they would like to have a voice in many of those decisions.

“The survey results provide a snapshot into the working conditions – both good and bad – for NPS employees at our beautiful national parks across the nation,” said NTEU National President Tony Reardon. “We will be reaching out to many of the park employees in the coming months to determine how we might be able to work together to make their work lives even better.”

Learn More About NTEU at NPS

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For information on organizing a union at your workplace, email us at organize@nteu.org.

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NTEU@NPS is a periodic electronic newsletter for NPS employees,
published by the National Treasury Employees Union.

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