



NPS/SCA Public Risk Management Internship Program Pilot Project



CALL FOR PARTICIPATION:

The NPS Division of Risk Management and the Student Conservation Association (SCA) will select up to 15 park units to participate in a pilot project to support parks' public risk management efforts through a Public Risk Management Intern Program. Following this pilot project, this program will be offered to all parks with an interest in strengthening their injury prevention programs.

OBJECTIVES AND GOALS:

The objective of this pilot project is to design a sustainable program that will provide park staff with support in their efforts to prevent unintentional injuries such as drowning, fall injuries, hypothermia, dehydration, carbon monoxide poison, animal bites or attacks, trauma from crashes in cars, boats, bikes and other forms of transportation, among many other injuries that occur in parks. In collaboration with the Student Conservation Association (SCA), the NPS Division of Risk Management will establish a program to provide opportunities for undergraduate and graduate level students to apply skills in risk management, injury prevention, health behavior and education to enhance NPS injury prevention, control efforts to mitigate unintentional injuries to park visitors within the National Park Service, and in some cases to assist in the response to park incidents. The goals of this project include the following:

- Build a cadre of future leaders and park staff who apply and further develop skills/understanding of wilderness risk management techniques.
- Increase capacity of current park staff to undertake risk management and injury prevention initiatives.
- Provide resources to strengthen parks' risk management programs.
- Provide safety outreach and education to park visitors.

BACKGROUND:

According to recent data from the Government Performance Result Act (GRPA), every day an estimated 15 people are seriously injured and every week two people die in national parks due to unintentional recreational injuries. The National Park Service has one of the World's finest Search and Rescue (SAR) and Emergency Medical Services (EMS) programs carrying out more than 3,600 search and rescues and responding to more than 24,000 injury events every year in our national parks. The NPS has recently initiated an effort to design and establish a Public Risk Management Program that will elevate park injury prevention efforts to the same world-class status as our response efforts. It is hoped that this program will help to prevent many of the thousands of EMS and SAR events that our response teams risk their lives to perform every year.



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The SCA has a rich history of working to develop conservation skills in our youth and to build a foundation of future conservationists throughout our country. SCA has fielded over 50,000 members serving as conservation interns and in crews over their 50+ year history with a remarkable safety record. In addition, SCA has provided training and applied state of the art risk management techniques in the field successfully over these years, including a taking a leadership role with the national Wilderness Risk Managers Committee, and co-sponsoring and implementing a national conference focused on wilderness risk management since 1995. With over fifty years of collaboration and partnership shared with NPS and SCA on so many conservation and youth initiatives, this effort is an extension of this well-established relationship.

In this new program effort, the NPS Division of Risk Management and SCA is combining our considerable forces to establish a program that will provide opportunities for students with an interest in wilderness and recreational risk management, behavioral sciences, injury epidemiology and/or wilderness medicine to support park injury prevention efforts. This initiative complements the current effort by the NPS to adopt Operational Risk Management as a leadership priority among all employees within the NPS.

PROJECT SCOPE:

Public Risk Management Interns would be placed in parks for three to six months (with flexibility to meet specific park needs) to assist on specific park projects that will enhance injury prevention and control efforts. Interns will engage in a project that requires information gathering, data management and/or data analysis or may work on more in-the-field assignments that would require wilderness roving, educating visitors, and/or supplementing EMS or SAR teams, for example. Before placement in the park unit, interns will undergo an eight day training at a location to be determined (most likely one of the hosting parks).

Two tracks of internship opportunities are available to students through the NPS/SCA Intern Program. The first track would focus on data systems. This track would attract masters or doctoral level students interested in gaining practical experience applying skills in epidemiology, behavioral and/or social sciences to assist park staff to develop, refine and evaluate risk management initiatives.

Examples of the kinds of assignments in which an intern in this track might work include providing support to:

- Design and test tools for gathering and analyzing incident data.
- Set up a data collection system for the park to gather visitor injury data to better target efforts,
- Work with park staff to develop and carry out a visitor or employee risk assessment
- Assist the park to design and implement a visitor injury investigation tool.



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This more senior level internship was piloted at Virgin Islands National Park in 2008 with excellent results.

The second internship track opportunity available through the NPS/SCA Program would attract graduate or undergraduate students interested in a career in parks management, wilderness medicine, education, communications and/or conservation. These interns would provide roving, field level support to parks to:

- Use one of the data collection systems developed by the graduate level interns in the first track (or existing in-park tools) to evaluate its effectiveness.
- Interact with the public before incidents occur in the field to educate on preparedness and safety issues. Some of the educational topics would include:
 - identifying hazards and mitigating risks
 - how to better enjoy their park experience
 - appropriate back country itineraries
 - where to seek additional information
 - proper clothing and equipment
 - proper nutrition and hydration
- Assist with minor first aid issues and/or provide support during a Search and Rescue (SAR) or Emergency Medical Service (EMS) call capturing lessons learned.
- Conduct observational research on a specific area of injury prevention to evaluate interventions.
- Work with the community (local schools, community centers) close to the park to conduct educational programs on safety which link that community to the park and provide a teaching opportunity in conservation and risk management.
- Developing a Junior Ranger safety brochure or initiative for a park

The kinds of projects a Risk Management Intern does will depend on the need of the park and the skill and education level of the intern. Given the critical link between employee and visitor safety, assignments need not be limited to efforts that support public safety exclusively and could focus on areas where improvement and support in employee safety are needed.

Interns with a background in public health, epidemiology, risk management, data collection, behavioral sciences, nursing, wilderness based or general medicine and/or education would be eligible for this assignment. Interns eligible to receive AmeriCorps education awards may receive grants for this assignment.

TRAINING FOR INTERNS:

To ensure students arrive to their assignment as prepared as possible, this program will include an intensive 8 day training program prior to their placement at their assigned park unit. NPS and SCA will identify high quality instructors from both within their respective agencies and



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outside as needed. Students will participate in didactic sessions as well as practicums and case studies that will require active participation in the training. Example topics include:

- Overview of NPS
 - History
 - Structure
 - Processes and Policy
 - Information about the park to which they will be assigned
- Wilderness medicine
 - Nutrition and hydration
 - Response
 - Skill building (likely out come will be certification in an 18 hour wilderness first aid course)
- Risk Management, to include:
 - Hazard identification and Risk assessment
 - Personal risk mitigation
 - Operational Risk Management/Employee safety
- Injury epidemiology
 - Overview of injury in public health and at NPS
 - Data collection and analysis techniques and understanding
 - Understanding the “4 E’s”) (engineering, education, enforcement and emergencies) for injury prevention
- Communication
 - Cultural competency
 - Conflict resolution
 - Behavioral sciences

BENEFITS OF PARTICIPATING IN THIS PROGRAM:

- An opportunity to support current injury prevention at parks or engage in new efforts
- An opportunity to build stewardship and future leaders in recreational and outdoor risk management
- An opportunity to provide input at this pilot stage to design this new program
- An opportunity to more effectively manage risk in the park

HOW TO FUND ACTIVITY

- Fee funded PMIS project
- Centennial Challenge funds
- Friends of parks funds

APPROXIMATE COST TO PARK

- Park would need to provide housing (or housing stipend)



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- Internships during this pilot phase will cost between \$4,000 and \$6,000 per intern for a 3-month period this will include all training, transportation, intern stipend and per diem.
- The Division of Risk Management will cover training costs during this pilot phase

HOW TO PARTICIPATE:

Please contact Sara Newman at 202-513-7225 or sara_newman@nps.gov in the Division of Risk Management if you are interested in learning more about this opportunity and would like your park to be considered for participation.