

NATIONAL NRM UNIFORM COMMITTEE REPORT
October 20 – 23, 2003

The Committee met in Las Vegas, NV with the uniform committees from the National Park Service and the US Fish & Wildlife Service. Also in attendance from the National Park Service were the Contracting Office Specialist, the UAA Web Site Managers, and the new Contracting Officer. The contractor, VF Solutions, was also there. Attending for the Corps were Grafton Anding representing MVD, Ralph Gendron representing NAD, Michele Fromdahl representing the NWD (Missouri River), Mark Andreasen representing NWD (Columbia River), Sara Jernigan representing SAD, Barbara Cooper representing SPD, Susan Robinson representing SWD, Steve Austin representing HQ, and Jim Runkles Chair. Paul Toman (LRP) attended in lieu of Dean Bonifacio from LRD. Carrie Richardson, Park Ranger SPK, attended the first day.

Prior to the meeting, the committee members circulated a questionnaire throughout all the districts. Responses were gathered and consolidated. This tool is used to determine the width and breadth of the comments, i.e. is the suggestion/complaint an isolated one, or similar across the country. (The results of this questionnaire are attached in two files. The first is entitled Questionnaire Results, and the second is entitled Comment Matrix.)

UAA Website

In order for VF Solutions to send instant confirmation of orders, it will be necessary for the email address box to be filled out on the UAA. This must be a government email address. No personal email addresses will be accepted.

General Information concerning VF Solutions

VF has made many improvements to the website since we met in 2002. For the first three months of the FY, the website was totally unacceptable. This cost VF Solutions a great deal of embarrassment, and ultimately cost two employees their jobs. Early this calendar year VF hired a new E-business Manager who has turned the website around. The first and most important issue was a cleansing of the database. Many of the items were shown incorrectly, with incomplete or inaccurate sizing information. This was a major task that required many hours of effort. Once this was completed, improvements were added. The new three step check out process insured that employees finished their orders and were not waiting for items never entered into the system. Other measures such as pop-up messages to users and increased speed of ordering were implemented. Electronically, the uniform ordering process has made giant steps.

Product wise, the Contractor has implemented some changes designed to reduce the number of quality complaints. New procedures implemented at the Martinsville, VA Distribution Center should catch defective items before they are shipped. (**Note to all employees: When you receive a shipment, check closely all the items shipped. If they are defective return the item immediately. If you do not receive a satisfactory item, please contact your Division Representative on the Uniform Committee.**)

This year VF Solutions hopes to improve the ordering process for nameplates. The goal of the E-business Manager is to reduce the overall time necessary to acquire nameplates by 33%.

On a side note, VF Solutions informed all the committees that they, VF, make only 15% of the items the contract requires. They are therefore working with sub-contractors to provide what we want. This also explains why some items are no longer available for the contract as companies move their manufacturers overseas.

Discussion of Uniform Items

The committee went over the Comments on the uniform items as listed in the Comment Matrix (attached). The following is a brief synopsis of the discussions and the recommendations of the committee.

Maternity Uniform

Loaner Program Through the volunteer efforts of Park Ranger Carrie Richardson (phone (559) 673-5151 or carrie.Richardson@usace.army.mil) a maternity loaner program has been established. This program coordinates the loaning of maternity wear from one person to another, thereby providing an immediate short-term solution for the ranger needing maternity wear. The committee decided to purchase 4 each of all sizes of the shirts and trousers and have them shipped to Mrs. Richardson.

Short Term The committee also decided to maintain the current maternity allowance for those employees who wished to own their own maternity uniforms.

Long Term In addition, the committee made the following recommendations to improve the maternity uniform. First, it was recommended to modify the existing maternity shirt by removing the pleats, adding tiebacks, adding nameplate and badge reinforcements and shortening the shirt by 3 to 4 inches. Second, while we will maintain the maternity trousers, we will make them optional and allow the employee to wear black, gray, or dark green maternity pants of their own if they so choose. Third, we will no longer offer the maternity jumper. Sales of this item have been extremely low, and we could find no one who actually liked it. Fourth, once the changes have been made to the maternity blouse, we will buy a specific number of items and have the contractor store them. Then when the employee needs the maternity items, they can be shipped right away without cost to the employee. We sincerely hope this will provide the necessary corrections to this sensitive subject.

Uniform Allowance Increase

The committee sent to HQ a recommendation last year to increase the replacement allowance for permanent employees. The committee was informed that this request is currently at the Chief of Operations level at HQ who is seeking input from all the Division Chiefs of Operations before making a final decision.

Duty Shirt Wear Test

Last year the committee agreed to a wear test of a new fabric the contractor referred to as Horizon. Both the Corps and the National Park Service had field and office employees test the shirt through the spring/summer. The thought was that we could end up a shirt that would serve for both duty and summer wear. The results of the wear test did not indicate a significant improvement over the existing shirts; therefore the

committee opted not to adopt the new shirt. The committee suggested VF Solutions to continue the search for a better fabric to meet our needs.

Polo Shirts

The committee again discussed the issue of a polo shirt. The vast majority of comments concerning this shirt were requests for a shirt to wear with the shorts and/or in work situations. The committee decided to make the following recommendations. First, the committee will design a polo-type shirt to be worn for boat/bike/beach patrols. This shirt will not have embroidered badge, nor will a badge be worn with this uniform. (This shirt will not be recommended for beach interpretive programs.) Second, this same shirt will be recommended for wear with jeans in a Class C work situation. Third, under no circumstances would this uniform be worn with any Class B uniforms. Fourth, this shirt would not be worn in an office situation.

Turtleneck Shirts

The committee recommended adoption of the black turtleneck shirt currently in the National Park Service program. This “cool max” shirt will be authorized for wear under the long sleeve duty shirt with the Class B Daily Wear uniform and with the Class C Work Uniform. It is not to be worn with the Class B Formal or Court/Ceremonies uniforms, nor is it to be worn by itself.

Shorts

The issue of shorts was discussed in the committee and with other committees. The current length of shorts (a nine-inch inseam) is considered “industry standard”. No changes were made to the uniform at this time, however the committee will continue to look for a replacement short.

Cargo Pants

There has been a demand for either a cargo style or BDU type trouser over the past few years. A favorable wear test was conducted by the USFWS last year. The National Park Service has decided to adopt this trouser into their program to replace their equivalent of the Corps Twill trousers. The Corps committee determined that the need for a wash and wear trouser outweighed the demand for cargo trousers. If the cargo pant were to be adopted into the program, it would be used for work situations. The committee did not feel the cargo pant should be worn with the Class B uniform. With this in mind, **the committee will conduct a survey on the Gateway site to determine whether or not the cargo pant should be adopted in lieu of the existing jeans.**

Fleece Jacket

This is probably the most popular item in the existing uniform program. The National Park Service, who shares this jacket, is looking at some possible improvements to make the jacket more wind/rain resistant. This may make the fleece more expensive. The Corps committee will wait and see what comes of this effort.

Windbreaker

The current Corps windbreaker is no longer available. The contractor who made it moved overseas. The National Park Service has a windbreaker in their program. The committee recommended that we adopt this windbreaker. It is a much plainer, and less expensive item, which will fill the need for a lightweight inexpensive outerwear item.

Raincoat

Like the windbreaker, the existing raincoat is no longer available. The raincoat currently in the National Park Service is less expensive and breaths better than the current Corps raincoat, but is not reversible. The committee decided to recommend adoption of this raincoat.

Sun Hat

Last year the committee recommended adopting a sun hat into the program. It would provide better UV protection in work type situations than the baseball cap. The model the committee looked at last year did not meet our expectations. The committee is going to look at two options this year and hopefully will adopt one of them into our system. This hat would only be authorized in those situations where the ball caps are currently worn, i.e. boat patrol, and work situations.

Trooper Hat or Winter Cap

The committee received several requests to adopt the Winter Cap currently in the National Park Service program. The committee did not feel there was enough justification to carry yet another different winter cap, however, **we are going to conduct a survey of the employees on the Gateway to determine if the employees would prefer the Winter Cap in lieu of the Trooper Hat.**

Velcro Ties

Both the Corps and the National Park Service discussed the issue of replacing the clip-on tie with a Velcro fastening tie. It was decided to recommend retaining the clip-on ties. Both committees considered the clip-on to be safer for the Velcro did not give way as easily in confrontational situations.

Made to Measure

The committee asked the contractor for better information on Made to Measure items. **Note: Made to Measure items are not the same as Cut to Order items. Made to Measure is for those employees whose proportions would require a new pattern be developed specifically for the employee, i.e. a person with a small waist line and very developed thighs like a weight-lifter. Cut to Order items are for those employees who are of a size out of the normal sizing range and therefore not stocked, i.e. a Women size 2. Cut to Order also includes the Duty Jacket, which is not kept in stock due to low turnover.** The committee asked the contractor to improve Customer Service on Made to Measure items. To that end, the contractor is going to add a Made to Measure option on the web site with better instructions on how to acquire the proper fit. The contractor strongly suggests that the employee seek a professional tailor

to take their measurements prior to ordering. Made to Measure items take 90 to 120 days to acquire.

Quality Control

The committee brought several issues of quality control to the attention of the contractor. The contractor is taking steps to improve their QC. In addition, the contractor pulled all it's stock of jeans last FY when issues of quality (incorrect sizing) were brought to their attention.

Utility Belt

Last year when the issue of Utility Belts was brought up, the committee recommended that the issue be discussed with the Visitor Assistance Committee. The VA committee recommended that a nylon utility belt be authorized. The Uniform Committee concurred with the VA committee on this recommendation. Utility belts will not be offered through the uniform program. It is recommended that projects purchase these items and make them project property. This should provide for uniformity at the sites. Utility belts will be Optional with Class D, Class C, and Class B Daily wear. They are not to be worn with Class B Formal or Class B Court/Ceremony uniforms.

Hat Trap

VF Solutions showed the committee a device known as a Hat Trap. This plastic carrying case will protect and maintain the campaign hat while not in use. The committee recommended that the device be made available through the Special Purchase side of the uniform web site.

This concludes the recommendations of the Uniform Committee. Any questions or corrections should be addressed to Jim Runkles at 541-374-4556.