

NRM Uniform Committee Report

January 31, 2006

1. The NRM Uniform Committee met in San Antonio, Texas the week of January 22 through 27, 2006. This was the first year the three land management agencies (Corps of Engineers, US Fish & Wildlife Service and National Park Service) met in January as opposed to October. The time was shifted to allow for the agencies to get past early Fiscal Year budget issues. This was also the first meeting since the letting of the new uniform contract with VF Imagewear, formerly VF Solutions. This is a Requirements Contract with four option years and potential for a fifth bonus year.
2. The Corps of Engineers was represented by Mark Andreasen (NWD), Dean Bonifacio (LRD), Barbara Cooper (SPD), Michele Fromdahl (NWD), Ralph Gendron (NAD), Susan Haney (SWD), Sara Jernigan (SAD), and Jeff Rose (MVD). Steve Austin (HQ and COTR) and Jim Runkles (Committee Chair) also attended.
3. The Committee first went over the results of the NRM Uniform Questionnaire that each of the members had sent to the field the previous month. This served as a basis for many of the discussions on uniform items, policies and procedures for the week.
4. All the responses were combined into a Matrix with five columns. The columns dealt with 1) the Uniform Website, Item, or Procedure; 2) the Comment itself; 3) how many times this comment occurred; 4) the Action taken by the Committee; and 5) the Justification for that action. Attached is the Excel Spreadsheet with that Matrix. The tabs at the bottom reflect the responses from the eight Divisions (NWD counts as two).
5. The Committee came up with a number of recommendations in response to the comments from the field. I will try to summarize them here.
 - a. Trousers (as a whole). We received a large number of comments concerning the Cargo Pants that were introduced last year. These were introduced, following the results of a nationwide survey, to replace the jeans. While many positive comments were received about the cargo pants, the general comment was that they were not sturdy enough to serve as work pants. In fact, many requests were submitted to allow the cargo pants to be worn on a daily basis with the Class B Daily Uniform. The committee discussed the various issues and made the following recommendations. First, to allow the wearing of Cargo Pants with the Class B Duty Daily uniform. Second, to adopt into the program the NPS Brush Pant for Class C Work uniform. This duck cloth pant has a good record for durability. Third, the remaining trousers in the system, i.e. the Cool Weather Wools, the Warm Weather Wools, and the Twill trousers will remain in the program. **This will require a modification to the contract before it can be implemented.**
 - b. Shorts. The shorts currently in the system were adopted when the previous manufacturer of the shorts moved their operation out of the

country. We have continued to receive unfavorable comments about these shorts this year as in years past. The committee decided to request the contractor explore the construction of a new pair of shorts that would be more flexible than the current model and slightly shorter than the current 7” inseam model. **A new short will not be adopted into the system until the contractor has an opportunity to explore what options are available.**

- c. Turtlenecks. While many praised the black turtleneck shirt in the system, we also received many comments about the lack of durability of this model. The committee spoke with the contractor about a slightly different model turtleneck that would hold its shape better. The turtleneck currently worn by the National Park Service has a demonstrated durability. The committee recommended that we adopt the NPS turtleneck into the system. We need to look at current stock levels and determine when we can incorporate this new turtleneck. The contractor is exploring this issue. **Because the new turtleneck will be slightly higher in price, this will require a modification to the contract before it can be implemented.**
- d. Polo Shirt. The committee was able to see samples of polo shirts and the designs for embroidery and silk-screening to apply to the shirt. The committee made a final selection of style, material and design for the polo shirt and requested the contractor move forward with this action. **This will require a modification to the contract and a period of stock buildup before the polo shirt will be available to the field.**
- e. Volunteer Items. At the request of the Volunteer Coordinator, the NRM Committee looked at polo shirts, vests and jackets to offer on the Special Purchase side of the website for Volunteers. The committee recommended polo shirts, both long and short sleeve in red, tan, and white. We also recommended vests in both red and tan, and a “coach’s jacket” in red. The key point to each of these items was that they were all made in America, and were off-the-shelf items, thus no delays in construction. Each of these would come with the Volunteer patch attached. **These recommendations were sent to the Volunteer Coordinator in HQ. If approved, the contract would have to be modified before the items would become available.**
- f. Hat Trap. This item was offered last year, but restricted to the Special Purchase side of the website. It was felt that this would preclude employees from having to spend their allowance on the item, and encourage projects to purchase them for the employees. Less than 30 of these were purchased last year, and with requests from the field asking for these items to be on the allowance side, the committee directed the contractor to place the hat trap on both sides.
- g. Fleece Hat. The contractor presented a fleece hat to the committee. The committee liked the item and recommended the adoption of the fleece hat and the removal of the two stocking caps (acrylic and wool) currently in the system. The hat will be embroidered with the Corps castle.

Specifications will have to be developed, and the contract modified before this item will become available.

6. The committee addressed numerous other issues. Here is a short synopsis of those issues.
 - a. Duty Shirt. We had several comments concerning the fabric of the duty shirt. This fiscal year marked the beginning of a new contract with VF Imagewear (formerly VF Solutions). In their bid for the contract, they included a new shirt of material we had recently wear-tested. This fabric is the same weight as the former shirt, but has better color retention, and wicking properties. The female wearers will also notice a slightly looser collar on the long sleeve shirt. Currently there is a mixed inventory of both fabrics, but everyone should see this change this fiscal year.
 - b. Warm Weather Trousers. In answer to suggestions from the field, the contractor has added a permanent crease to the warm weather trousers. This silicon bead has been added to the trousers at no extra cost.
 - c. Trouser Hems. Many employees commented on the change in hem length on the wool trousers. Previously, the hem was a hidden hem of 1.5.” This hidden hem was held in place by a light basting stitch (thus the term “hidden” as the seam did not show). Many employees wear boots and shoes that utilize hooks for the shoestrings. The basting stitch inside the hem would catch on these hooks and tear out the seam. The contractor changed this hem to a seam that goes through the trouser material to prevent the hem from tearing out. This was coordinated with the COTR before changing. Again, this was done at no extra cost to the employee or government.
 - d. One Color of Green. VF Imagewear has been working very hard to get all of the “greens” in the program to match. They brought to the meeting a sampling of all the items and demonstrated that they have succeeded in achieving this goal. This new “earth green” will be phased into the stock as the other colors are depleted. It is hoped that by the end of the fiscal year, all the greens in stock will be the new “earth green.”
 - e. Winter Cap. There were many comments/complaints concerning backorders, some as long as one year, for the Winter Cap. We asked the contractor about this issue. They explained that the backorders were a combination of numerous small problems such as delivery of materials, construction delays, etc. The contractor anticipates that all winter cap backorders will be accomplished by the end of February, 2006.
 - f. VF Website Issues. With the start of the new contract, the contractor redesigned their website. The committee notified the contractor of several small problems with their new website. For example, the Measurement Guide link on each product page does not go anywhere. In addition not all the items were listed in the sizing charts or on the drop down lists under “sizes available.” For example size 34 Regular Cargo Trousers were not shown. Lastly, the sizing charts for the Bib overalls indicated a waist size, while the available sizes did not match waist sizes. The contractor

indicated that they were aware of the problems and would be addressing them in short order. **On a side note, VF Imagewear announced new Customer Service hours on Saturdays from 0800 to 1400 Central Time.**

- g. Stocked sizes, Non-stocked sizes, and Made-to-Measure. We received many questions concerning stocked sizes. In an attempt to clarify this issue, the committee has asked the contractor to define Made-to-Measure and Non-Stock items on the website. Hopefully this will clarify some of the problems.
- h. Gore-Tex Articles. We received several questions concerning Gore-Tex articles not being rain resistant. The contractor informs us that Gore-Tex articles can be improved with proper care. They have placed instructions for the care and laundering of Gore-Tex that will improve the articles rain resistance.
- i. Outerwear. The contractor brought before the committee a proposal for a new outerwear system. In an effort to continue to improve the uniform items, the committee is considering a wear test of some of these new items. No decision has been made to adopt or reject these items at this time.
- j. Campaign Hat Templates. The committee asked for a source of “templates” for hat sizing. Our campaign style hats come in Regular, Long Oval and Extra Long Oval, however it is difficult to determine what size to order. Stratton Hats offers a set of Hat Templates for \$150.00. If interested call Jeannie at 708-544-5220.
- k. Expedited Shipping. A new feature in the contract this year is Expedited Shipping. If you need your uniforms in a hurry, VF Imagewear offers overnight shipping if the order is placed by 1300 hours Central Time. There is a cost, and the cost must be borne by the employee. Uniform Allowance funds cannot be used for this.
- l. UAA Website. Next year, the National Park Service who administers this multi-agency contract, will be changing the UAA Website from a Lotus Notes format to a Windows based format. This will create some very noticeable changes for the employees. The most notable change will be a change in Account Numbers. We will learn more about this as the year progresses, but all employees should expect some changes.
- m. American Flag Patch. The committee was asked to look into adding the American Flag Patch to the right shoulder of all uniform shirts and outerwear. A second proposal dealt with wearing a Campaign pin on the uniform. The committee discussed this at length. Several factors were considered including sharing the uniform with the National Park Service, law enforcement image, other avenues to express pride in the US, and implementation costs and procedures. The committee recommended we continue with the status quo of permitting only an American Flag pin or length of service pin on the left collar point.
- n. ER 1130-2-550, Chapter 8. With the various changes and improvements to the uniform system, the ER and EP are constantly out-of-date. The

Committee is exploring avenues to make the changes easier to process. The current ER/EP, dated March 2002, was modified last year and sent to HQ but never signed. This revised version is already out-of-date. The committee is in the process of updating the ER to make it more general in scope so that minor changes to the uniform will not affect its scope. Meanwhile, the committee is proposing to replace the EP with either an Operations Manual or Policy Letters that can be easily updated. These would be published on the NRM Gateway and updated as needed. The committee is also exploring the concept of "Functional Categories" to replace the existing Classes B, C, and D. This is being done to clarify exactly what uniform items are required for each type of work the employee encounter. We hope to have this accomplished before the end of the Fiscal Year.

7. In order to keep everyone informed of all the activities of the committee, I have drafted and attached a memorandum for the field. This memorandum covers in condensed form many of the items discussed in this report. Feel free to contact the undersigned if you have questions concerning this or any other matters concerning the committee's recommendations.

JAMES E. RUNKLES
Chair, NRM Uniform Committee