

31 January 2010

NRM Uniform Committee Meeting Notes

The Corps NRM Uniform Committee met in Memphis, Tennessee from January 24 – January 29, 2010 with the Contracting Officer, the uniform contractor (VF Imagewear), and the uniform committees from the National Park Service, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and the U.S. Park Police. The Corps committee consisted of Dean Bonifacio (LRD), Linda Clapp (SPD), Michele Fromdahl (NWD-M), Ralph Gendron (NAD), Susan Haney (SWD), Sara Jernigan (SAD), Jeff Rose (MVD) and Jim Runkles (Chair). Steve Austin (HQ) joined the meeting on Jan. 27, 2010. Mark Andreasen (NWD-C) was unable to attend.

The committee reviewed all the comments collected from the annual uniform questionnaire. They also reviewed contractor's website and developed a list of topics to discuss.

The topics of discussion can be divided into five categories: Recommendations, Requested Changes, Follow-on Research, Notes to the Field, and the Draft ER and EP.

(I need to place a caveat here for all readers. The Uniform Committee does not make final decisions pertaining to items in the uniform program. The role of the committee is to field comments from the field, address these concerns with the contractor, evaluate proposed changes either from the field or the contractor, and finally to make recommendations to Headquarters for adoption. Usually the recommendations are adopted however the reader should understand the recommendations are not final until approved by HQ.)

Recommendations We recommended the following be approved:

1. Replace the existing Windbreaker with a new Soft Shell Windbreaker. This should be added to the system this FY.
2. Replace the existing polo with a new lighter weight polo that will come with embroidered name and title and Corps Logo on the front but no castle on the back. This should also be available this FY. (Note: This product is manufactured in Thailand. A waiver was granted to the National Park Service for this item.)
3. Replace the existing nameplate with a new nameplate with just the castle logo as opposed to the "shoulder patch" logo. This should occur very soon.
4. Replace the existing Sun Hat with a new green Sun Hat similar to that recently adopted by the National Park Service.
5. The contractor supply and add to the website packets of clasps for the back of the nameplates as these are often lost.
6. The contractor place on the Special Purchase side of the house, Hat Templates for the Campaign Hat. This consists of a box of cardboard squares with holes in them for the various hat sizes. This should eliminate trial and error in finding the right size for the Campaign Hat. We recommend every project order a set for their respective site.

Requested Changes We requested the contractor take the following actions:

1. Replace the existing straps on the Bib Overalls with a stouter strap that does not stretch out of shape as easily.
2. Increase the size of the collar and cuffs on all the Ladies LS Duty Shirts.
3. Verify that all Men's LS Duty Shirts have two buttons and one buttonhole in order to adjust the size of the cuff.
4. Add a Corps castle to the collar of the existing Turtleneck Shirt.
5. Add size 26 to the Ladies Duty Shirts.

Follow-on Research The committee asked the contractor to research the following and report back to the committee:

1. Continue to seek a replacement fabric for the Brush Pants. We want a fabric that will be just as tough yet not fade as the current 100% cotton fabric does. If fabric is found, look into the possibility of adding a side pocket similar to the coveralls.
2. Continue to seek a more elastic fleece for the fleece cap. The existing cap does not stretch well thereby not fitting all heads.
3. Explore the possibility of combining the parka (waist length and hip length) with the insulated hood, and the overshell with the uninsulated hood such that they would be sold together. This was done to ensure the hood matched the jacket.
4. Investigate the sizing of the Hat Trap Carrier. The website states one size fits all however we have learned it does not. We would like to know the range of hats it will fit and if there is another hat trap carrier for the larger sizes.
5. Explore the cost of replacing the "shoulder patch" on the Winter Cap with the smaller red castle.
6. Determine if the Cool Lite-Pro Sock comes in a small size.
7. Research and develop a potential new lightweight trouser for consideration.
8. Contact the subcontractor to determine if the Campaign Hats can be ordered with a removable sweatband such that it could be laundered.
9. Contact the subcontractor to locate a replacement for the brown leather strap on the winter ball cap. The strap should be either black or green.
10. Conduct quality inspections on the stitching in the crotch and inseams of the various trousers.
11. Seek a method of electronically notifying employees whenever an ordered item is backordered.
12. Research the possibility of lengthening the back of the vest. We understand it needs to be short in the front so as to allow access to the belt, but would like to see the back lengthened to cover the lumbar area.
13. Verify that the Tie Tack has a small prong that would preclude the tack from rotating.
14. Continue to explore the possibility of XS sizes on all outerwear items.

The contractor also showed the committee two new items that have potential for the uniform program. These need further development before implementation.

1. The contractor has developed a possible new style for the ladies uniform trousers. These may result in a better fit.
2. The contractor also showed the committee a potential new raincoat. It has possibilities because it comes with a hood, is shorter than the existing raincoat and has larger pockets. We discussed the possibility of reflective strips on the coat as well. The one drawback is that the coat is made of the same material as the existing raincoat.
3. The contractor is also interested in “going green”. They propose to eliminate printing the catalog and focus on the web based catalog. (Note: The catalog can be found on the left hand column of the uniform ordering website.)

Notes to the Field The following are comments to assist the field employees with uniform issues.

1. When you receive uniform items, try them on immediately. You have a 30 day window in which to return items for any reason. If you wait more than 30 days, the items can not be returned unless they are defective.
2. It is also strongly suggested that you “date” your uniform items. With a Sharpie or similar permanent marker, place the date you received the items on the inside of the tag. The contractor will take back items that are defective within the first year therefore it is incumbent upon you to verify the date of purchase.
3. Belts. If the color of the belt starts to “flake off” contact your Division Rep to assist you in getting this back to the contractor.
4. We had several comments about pants wearing out in the crotch and inner thigh area. The contractor would like to see some of these for the purposes of research. Please contact your Division Rep to assist you.
5. Socks. When you get them, try them on. If the fit, **wash them before you wear them** to remove excess dye and keep your feet from changing color.
6. The committee received many requests for new or additional items. It is imperative that the uniform wearer understand a few things about the uniform program. The typical uniform wearer does not spend all their uniform allowance (much less any of their own money). The contractor has to supply all the items in the catalog. If more items are added to the program, the allowance will be spread thinner resulting in some items not selling at all. This is not good for the program or for the contractor. The Corps already provides more initial allowance than any other agency (COE and NPS give the same over a 5 year period.)
7. The committee consistently receives requests to add T-shirts, gloves, and orange safety equipment. Employees need to understand that the uniform program does not provide underwear (personal items) nor safety items (local purchase).
8. The National Park Service is looking into upgrading the UAA website. If changes are made, a notice will be sent out informing the Uniform Coordinators of those changes.

Draft ER and EP The committee submitted a draft ER and EP to HQ last year. The draft was routed through the MSCs for comment. Those comments were incorporated into the draft. The draft is currently being reviewed by the Human Resources Office and the

Office of Counsel at Headquarters. It is the committee's hope that this regulation will be finalized and approved this FY.

A personal note: For the past twelve years I have been honored to be the Chair of the NRM Uniform Committee. This committee is one of the hardest working committees I have ever had the pleasure of working with. I will be moving to a new position outside the NRM community and as such have tendered my resignation from the committee. Ms. Sara Jernigan of the Mobile District has agreed to fill the Chair position. I am certain she will do an outstanding job. The next committee meeting is scheduled for January 31 through February 4, 2011 in Austin, Texas.

Respectfully,

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Cascade Locks, OR.