



Highlights of [GAO-05-410](#), a report to congressional requesters

Why GAO Did This Study

The National Park Service routinely issues permits for special park uses, such as special events or commercial filming and still photography. However, the National Football League's use of the National Mall to launch its 2003 season raised questions about whether permitting such events was consistent with existing policies and law and whether all applicable fees for permitting special park uses were being collected.

GAO (1) identified applicable policy guidance for issuing special uses permits for special events and for commercial filming and still photography, (2) assessed the extent to which this guidance was applied during fiscal year 2003, and (3) determined the extent to which the Park Service implemented the requirement to collect location fees for commercial filming and still photography.

What GAO Recommends

GAO is making several recommendations on identifying and collecting fees for administering and monitoring special events and commercial filming and still photography, and on expediting the implementation of the requirement to collect location fees and costs for such activities.

In commenting on the draft report, Interior neither agreed nor disagreed with our recommendations.

www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-05-410.

To view the full product, including the scope and methodology, click on the link above. For more information, contact Robin M. Nazzaro at (202) 512-3841 or nazzaror@gao.gov.

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

Revenues Could Increase by Charging Allowed Fees for Some Special Uses Permits

What GAO Found

The Park Service has developed policy guidance for issuing permits for special events and for commercial filming and still photography activities. This policy guidance includes general criteria about the terms and conditions as to when and where specific types of activities can take place and requires park units to recover applicable costs associated with administering and monitoring special park uses. Recovery of costs associated with filming activities is required by law. Recoverable costs include, for example, the time charged by a park ranger to visit the site of the event, such as a festival held on park grounds, to monitor that the terms and conditions of the permit are met.

During fiscal year 2003, park units did not consistently apply Park Service guidance for permitting special events and for commercial filming and still photography, and often did not identify and recover costs associated with permitting such activities, thereby decreasing financial resources available to the parks. Of the six park units we visited, one did not charge fees for processing applications; one only recovered monitoring costs associated with some of its permits; and three others had not updated, for several years, hourly charges to reflect current higher costs for personnel time for administering and monitoring permitted activities. For example, National Capital Parks-Central officials charged no administrative fees for the estimated 1,400-plus permits issued for special events and for filming and still photography in fiscal year 2003. Officials said that park units had not updated fees because of regional policy and a high workload or because updating the fees was given low priority.

The Park Service has not implemented a law enacted almost 5 years ago to collect location fees for commercial filming and still photography, resulting in significant annual forgone revenues. The agency has not implemented the law because of delays in reviewing the proposed regulations at the Department of Justice and a lack of agreement among the Interior agencies about the fee schedule and how it is to be applied. We estimated the Park Service would have collected about \$1.6 million in location fee revenues in fiscal year 2003, if the requirement to collect such fees had been implemented.