

Mississippi National River and Recreation Area

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

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Teacher to Ranger to Teacher



The intent of the Teacher to Ranger to Teacher program is to provide opportunities for teachers to have well-rounded work experiences in national parks. Teachers will develop lesson plans based on their experience for use in the classroom. The program focuses on teachers from schools that have diverse student populations, who have had no experience with national parks, or little opportunity to explore the relevance these areas can have in their lives.

Background

The challenge for the National Park Service (NPS) is to provide opportunities for all Americans to connect to their national heritage as embodied by national parks. The Teacher to Ranger to Teacher (TRT) Program focuses on the education community and engages teachers from schools that are not currently being reached with park programs, paying particular attention to areas with large, ethnically diverse populations. This program hopes to offer additional opportunities for these populations to connect to the resources of their national parks.

Teachers are detailed as park rangers to parks through an Inter-governmental Personnel Act (IPA) agreement between their public school district and the National Park Service. This program links national park units and teachers from under-served urban and rural school districts. Teachers spend

the summer working and often also living in their park. The parks provide a uniform, housing (if available), and a supplementary payment for the teachers. Teacher-Rangers perform various duties depending on their interests and the needs of the park, including developing and presenting interpretive programs for the general public, staffing the visitor center, developing curriculum-based materials for the park, or taking on special projects.

During the school year, Teacher-Rangers bring the parks into the classroom by developing and presenting curriculum-based lesson plans that draw on their summer's experience. In April, during National Park Week, Teacher-Rangers will wear their NPS uniforms to school, discuss their summer as a park ranger, and engage students and other teachers in activities that relate to America's national parks.

Concepts Learned and Incorporated into the Classroom

This place-based experience provides more opportunities for Teacher-Rangers to deeply connect with park resources. Exposure to our American heritage offers teachers a chance to gain a better understanding of civic engagement, of the relevance these places have for all Americans, and of the diversity of sites that have been set aside by and for the American people. They, in turn, can provide opportunities for their students and other teachers to find their own connections to parks.

Teacher-Rangers learn about the complexities of interpreting and researching cultural resources. For example, Teacher-Rangers learn how:

- parks research and interpret American Indian heritage and regularly consult with tribes who have a government-to-government relationship with the park and its resources;

- a variety of partners contribute to projects being researched in the park;

Many Teacher-Rangers will work in parks with significant natural resources. For example, Teacher-Rangers learn how:

- to increase their understanding of scientific research and the complex issues related to these resources;
- scientific research is applied and interpreted;
- adjacent lands that may or may not be managed under similar resource management philosophies affect park project outcomes;
- to apply National Park Service mission ethics to resource management decisions;
- the public becomes involved in the decision-making process;
- science in parks relates to urban areas and issues.

Benefits of Being a Teacher-Ranger

- Participating Teacher-Rangers have the opportunity to develop a personal connection with national parks.
- These Teacher-Rangers develop a wide array of teaching examples based on real life experience in parks and create “curricula enhancers” that highlight issues surrounding heritage conservation.
- Teacher-Rangers become life-long friends of the National Park Service and teach an ethic of heritage conservation in the schools where much of America’s future resides.
- Teacher-Rangers obtain a wide range of knowledge and skills by working with personnel of a variety of divisions such as Interpretation, Resource Management, Maintenance, and non-law-enforcement specialties of Resource Protection.

Program Benefits to the School District

- Other educators exposed to a Teacher-Ranger in their schools benefit from “curricula enhancers” and other resources. They also gain access to a wide array of resources and teaching tools.
- Teacher-Rangers develop a network with resource specialists, scientists, historians, curators, and the teaching programs and resources of the National Park Service and the Department of the Interior.
- School districts profit from having Teacher-Rangers who have been exposed to current resource-based issues and teaching activities.

Program Benefits to Urban School Children

- This program provides the opportunity for students to connect to the nation’s heritage through the experiences of their Teacher-Ranger.
- A variety of resource issues, based on the teacher’s summer experience, are discussed in class. These might include historic preservation, interpretation, fire, exotic species, endangered species, and air and water issues.
- Students learn about opportunities for summer and permanent employment with the National Park Service.
- Students share the enthusiasm of a teacher who has had the opportunity to be a National Park Ranger.



Contacts

To learn more about the Mississippi National River and Recreation Area and this program, please visit us at www.nps.gov/miss. Position descriptions, the application and instructions are also available there.

You can also contact Denise Niedzolkowski at 651-290-3030 ext 238 or email denise_niedzolkowski@nps.gov.