




OFFICE OF
INSPECTOR GENERAL
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Report No. ER-VS-NPS-0007-2011

June 23, 2011

Memorandum

To: Eric Eisenstein
Division Chief, Internal Control and Audit Follow-up
Office of Financial Management

From: Hannibal M. Ware 
Assistant Regional Manager

Subject: Verification Review of Recommendations for the Evaluation Report, "History Collection in Jeopardy at Harpers Ferry Center"
Report No. Y-EV-NPS-0004-2008, July 2008

The U.S. Department of the Interior (DOI) Office of Inspector General (OIG) has completed a verification review of the four recommendations presented in the subject evaluation report. The objective of the verification was to determine whether the recommendations were implemented by the National Park Service (NPS) as reported to the Office of Financial Management (PFM), Office of Policy, Management and Budget. PFM reported to OIG when each of the four recommendations in the subject report had been addressed and provided supporting documentation. As a result, the evaluation report effectively closed July 12, 2010. Based on our verification, we concur that all recommendations are resolved and implemented.

Background

Our July 2008 evaluation report, "History Collection in Jeopardy at Harpers Ferry Center" contained four recommendations relating to the inventory and preservation of the Center's museum collection.

In a memorandum dated September 11, 2008, NPS concurred with all findings and recommendations in the draft report. NPS also provided a list of actions associated with each recommendation that had either been taken, were in progress, or had been planned. Based on this response, we considered all four recommendations resolved but not implemented. On September 24, 2008, we referred the recommendations to PFM for tracking and implementation.

Subsequently, PFM reported that all recommendations had been implemented (memorandums dated September 30, 2009; November 23, 2009; and July 12, 2010). The evaluation report was closed.

Scope and Methodology

The scope of this review was limited to determining whether NPS took action to implement the recommendations. To accomplish our objective, we reviewed the supporting documentation that NPS officials provided and discussed actions taken relating to each of the four recommendations.

We did not perform any site visits or conduct fieldwork to determine whether the underlying deficiencies that were initially identified have actually been corrected. As a result, this review was not conducted in accordance with the Generally Accepted Government Auditing Standards issued by the Comptroller General of the United States or the Quality Standards for Inspections of the Council of the Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency.

Results of Review

All four of OIG's recommendations have been satisfied, as previously indicated by their closure. In addition, NPS has received funds for fiscal years (FY) 2011, 2012, and 2013 to address the cataloging backlog for the Harpers Ferry Collection. These funds were made available as part of the effort to address Department-wide museum collection accountability problems that surfaced in the OIG follow-on report: "Department of Interior Accountability and Preservation of Museum Collections" (Audit No. C-IN-MOA-0010-2008).

Recommendation 1: NPS move, as soon as possible, the Collection artifacts from the Anthony Library to a more secure and environmentally sound location.

The current Director of the Harpers Ferry Center (HFC) confirmed that every item in the collection was transferred from the Anthony Library to the Willow Springs facility. This move, previously documented as support for closing the recommendation, was completed by November 2008 and performed in accordance with museum collection conservation standards. Two freeze cycles were performed to ensure that any pests in the collection-item box-containers were eliminated prior to the transfer to the Willow Springs facility. According to the Director, this move was originally envisioned as part of the NPS National Collection Plan (2000).

Subsequently, American Recovery and Reinvestment Act funds were provided to renovate the Anthony Library; the final renovation is scheduled for completion this summer. After reviewing the available documentation and speaking with the Director, we conclude that Recommendation 1 has been resolved and implemented.

Recommendation 2: NPS resolve the security and environmental problems identified at the Willow Springs facility.

The HFC Director confirmed that additional video cameras and cipher locks are in place and operational. HFC's standard operating procedures now specify the roles and responsibilities of NPS officials onsite. Access points that lead to the actual museum collections are protected by coded cipher locks and research rooms are under video surveillance. The Director stated that all nitrate films are properly stored in accordance with National Fire Protection Association

standards. HFC pioneered the process and procedures that are now part of NPS policy for handling archival film materials. HFC also produced a DVD about this process and provided it to other parks. After reviewing the available documentation and speaking with the Director, we conclude that Recommendation 2 has been resolved and implemented.

Recommendation 3: NPS determine the appropriate entity or entities to control the NPS History Collection.

The HFC Director controls the Harpers Ferry Collection. After reviewing the available documentation and speaking with the Director, we conclude that Recommendation 3 has been resolved and implemented.

Recommendation 4: NPS develop a detailed plan, with timelines and staffing levels, for documenting and cataloging Collection items. Individuals with appropriate expertise need to be involved in the preparation of the plan, and plan implementation needs to be monitored.

The HFC Director provided a copy of a detailed business plan that is now in place; he is monitoring its implementation. As part of the business plan's implementation, HFC funded a 4-year effort to complete the cataloging of its historic photo collection, at a cost of approximately \$220,000. In addition, through an NPS nationwide contract, HFC will receive a total of approximately \$600,000 over a period of 3 years (FYs 2011 – 2013) to address the rest of its museum collection backlog. These efforts will almost fully fund and complete HFC's inventory catalog. In addition, the Director stated that he still wants to hire four additional staff members and plans to do so as soon as funds become available. In the meantime, HFC has made good use of interns. After reviewing the available documentation and speaking with the Director, we conclude that Recommendation 4 has been resolved and implemented.

Conclusion

We informed NPS officials of the results of this review at an exit conference on June 13, 2011. NPS officials agreed with the results of our review.

cc: Jonathan Jarvis, Director, National Park Service
Nancy Thomas, DOI/GAO Liaison, Office of Financial Management
Vera Washington, Liaison Officer, National Park Services