



# NPS VOICES TOUR 2018

## Summary Report

[See full NPS Voices Report Here](#)

The Voices Tour included 53 in-person sessions, 27 web sessions, and more than 200 submissions to the anonymous portal. In total at least 1,249 individual voices were heard in the Tour. The live sessions conducted between December 2017 and April 2018 included 827 individuals and the web sessions (including the affinity sessions) included 183. The live sessions included nearly equal numbers of male and female participants. The web and affinity sessions and the anonymous portal drew nearly twice as many female-identified participants (220) than male-identified (113).

Even those who found the experience valuable expressed concern about whether any real action would come out of all the effort. Many expressed a sense of futility in participating, as “NPS keep bringing people down here to get our opinion and nothing happens.” They say they have “been through enough surveys and trainings” and now want to see tangible actions. They are hopeful that actual change results from this work rather than “business as usual.” They want the stories shared and recommendations implemented.

### THEMES [Key Findings]

#### Human Resources and Response Systems

Participants express a strong, consistent sentiment that Human Resources does not function effectively or constructively at every stage of the employment life cycle and that its systems are unresponsive, understaffed, and out of touch with the field.

#### Support and Complaint System Effectiveness

Participants widely critique the complaint system and support for employees experiencing workplace misconduct. This includes the perception of lack of responsiveness, insensitivity and the failure to address complaints against prominent individuals. They also focus on the inconsistency and understaffing of EEO and the lack of local resources at the park and region level, to help address the issues they face. They cite retaliation as a strong deterrent to even report issues. Supervisors articulate concerns about the lack of support and guidance in addressing complaints, employee misuse, and the opaqueness of the investigative process.

#### Accountability for Misconduct

Participants consistently and intensely discuss a lack of accountability especially regarding performance, effort, and commitment. They specifically note the lack of consequences for those who misbehave at all levels. Participants overwhelmingly perceive that some leaders who have engaged in misconduct have been transferred or even promoted rather than given realistic and appropriate consequences. Participants also point out that superintendents are the only source of information about what is going on “on the ground” in parks and can mislead regional directors about their leadership ability to holding people accountable.

#### Uncivil and Abusive Behaviors

Participants persistently refer to uncivil and abusive behavior being embedded in the culture of certain parks. While supervisors felt that they were at times intimidated by staff, staff articulate that while bullying is a serious problem, NPS does not take non-protected class abusive behavior seriously.

### **Harassment and Discrimination**

Participants strongly believe that the NPS does not follow its stated zero tolerance policy and that some leaders do not address harassment. In the anonymous submissions, we heard about many reportedly unaddressed harassment and discrimination complaints as well as retaliation for making complaints.

### **Retaliation**

Concerns about retaliation for reporting misconduct or other concerns are universal and particularly significant for those who live and work in remote parks, where retaliation can affect day-to-day safety during work and non-work hours.

Perhaps the strongest message that emerged from the Voices Tour was that participants need to see a response to what they have shared.

The visibility of the Voices Tour led many to express hope that change would come, and some to express cynicism that NPS is even capable of making change. Participants want to know they have been heard and that their participation has contributed to specific, observable change in their workplaces. If parks do not see tangible action coming from the findings of the Tour, we are concerned that the Tour will have raised and then dashed the hopes of those in need of help and change.

The pervasiveness of disrespectful and abusive behavior should sound as much alarm as the high rates of harassment that prompted the tour. Nationally, twenty-eight percent of livesession participants indicated that disrespectful, uncivil, and rude behavior was openly accepted, and nearly half said that while such behavior was not openly accepted, it happened and was not addressed.

Given the stress, overwork, and conduct issues in the parks, NPS cannot afford to have its Human Resources and EEO functions be anemic, yet we heard with tremendous consistency that the function is everything from unresponsive and understaffed to insensitive and ineffective.

Nearly universal agreement that HR systems are not working.

Employees repeatedly stated that bad actors are not held accountable, especially at the leadership level, but rather are moved or promoted. There is the perception that accountability generally is not valued.

The “new” harassment policy has not made a substantive difference and has confused people.

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