




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

JUL 29 2016

Memorandum

To: Kristen J. Sarri
Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary for Policy, Management and Budget

From: Michael P. Colombo 
Western Regional Manager for Audits, Inspections, and Evaluations

Subject: Verification Review – Recommendations for the Report, “NPS Contractor Oversight of Visitor Tent Cabins at Yosemite National Park Involved in Hantavirus Outbreak” (WR-IS-NPS-0009-2013)
Report No. 2016-WR-052

The Office of Inspector General (OIG) has completed a verification review of two recommendations presented in the subject report. Our objective was to determine whether the National Park Service (NPS) implemented Recommendations 1 and 2 as reported to the Office of Financial Management (PFM), Office of Policy, Management and Budget. PFM reported to OIG that it has closed the recommendations. We do not concur that the recommendations have been implemented and ask PFM to re-open the recommendations.

Background

Our May 15, 2013 report titled “NPS Contractor Oversight of Visitor Tent Cabins at Yosemite National Park Involved in Hantavirus Outbreak” made four recommendations designed to assist NPS in its hantavirus prevention activities throughout its national parks specific to guest accommodations.

The NPS Director concurred with the report’s recommendations in a memorandum dated July 2, 2013, and detailed NPS’ plans to implement them. In an August 8, 2013 memorandum, we referred the recommendations to the Assistant Secretary for Policy, Management and Budget to track their implementation.

Scope and Methodology

The scope of this review was limited to determining whether NPS implemented Recommendations 1 and 2. OIG determined that Recommendations 3 and 4 had been implemented prior to referring them to PFM. To accomplish our objective, we reviewed PFM’s and NPS’ documentation relating to the actions taken to implement the recommendations. We did not perform internal control testing, visit sites, or conduct fieldwork to determine whether the underlying deficiencies that were initially identified have been corrected. As a result, this review was not conducted in accordance with Generally Accepted Government Auditing Standards,

issued by the Comptroller General of the United States, or Quality Standards for Inspection and Evaluation issued by the Council of the Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency.

Results of Review

Our current review found that NPS has not taken sufficient action for us to consider Recommendations 1 and 2 implemented.

Recommendation 1: Require NPS health, safety, and building officials to review proposals of new visitor accommodations and modifications to their structures for vector-borne disease vulnerabilities and document the outcome of the reviews before NPS authorizes work on structures.

Action Taken: In its July 2, 2013 response to the final report, NPS stated that the facilities management and commercial services programs currently review new construction and facility modifications. It further stated that the public health and integrated pest management programs would be incorporated into these existing review processes for visitor accommodation facilities. NPS also stated that the review by these groups would focus on controlling vector-borne diseases through physical controls to prevent vector access and operational and educational interventions to minimize vector-borne disease exposures. An August 18, 2014 memorandum from PFM stated that NPS' integrated pest management program had compiled a set of design standards and specifications for structural modifications on new construction and renovations to prevent vector-borne disease. The memo stated that these specifications were provided to the Quality Assurance and Technical Support Branch of the Denver Service Center for review and incorporation into the professional guidance portion of the architectural design standards.

We requested additional documentation from NPS to determine whether the specifications mentioned above were incorporated into the architectural design standards. We also sought information on whether NPS had issued a policy requiring NPS officials to review proposals of new visitor accommodations and modifications to their structures for vector-borne disease vulnerabilities and document the outcome of the reviews before NPS authorizes work on the structures. NPS provided evidence that it had incorporated the updated design standards and specifications into the architectural design standards. It is our understanding, however, that the Denver Service Center reviews construction and modification projects above a certain dollar threshold and that smaller projects may therefore not be subject to the architectural design standards. If that is the case, updating the architectural design standards alone would not ensure that all proposals are reviewed for vector-borne disease vulnerabilities and would not be sufficient to satisfy the recommendation.

Recommendation 2: Require NPS health, safety, and building officials to inspect visitor accommodations on a cyclical basis to assess vector-borne disease vulnerabilities.

Action Taken: In its July 2, 2013 response to the final report, NPS stated that it would review its policy and process for evaluating concessionaire performance to include updated information gained as a result of the hantavirus outbreak. It also stated that NPS would continue to evaluate concessionaire contract performance annually and, where necessary, would enhance guidance and training provided to concessionaires to aid them in implementing effective vector-borne disease prevention programs, including an integrated pest management program. An August 18, 2014 memorandum from PFM stated that NPS held a webinar on April 17, 2014, on rodent exclusion and management in developed areas for bureau-wide Commercial Services Division staff.

We requested additional documentation from NPS, and it provided us with a technical bulletin stating that the NPS Integrated Pesticide Management Coordinator would ensure that concessionaires conduct inspections on a seasonal basis. The intent of this recommendation, however, is for trained health, safety, or building officials employed by NPS to conduct inspections of visitor accommodations on a cyclical basis to prevent a reoccurrence of the circumstances that resulted in the 2012 hantavirus outbreak.

Conclusion

We consider Recommendations 1 and 2 as not implemented; therefore, we request that PFM reinstate these recommendations and take appropriate follow-up action. We informed NPS officials of the results of this review on July 6, 2016. They agreed with our findings and informed us that they plan to update the “NPS Reference Manual” to better address these two recommendations.

cc: Olivia Ferriter, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Policy, Management and Budget
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