

Sitka Tribe of Alaska (STA) – Compacting with NPS

LISA GASSMAN, GENERAL MANAGER
AIANTA CONFERENCE – SEPTEMBER 17, 2019

Presentation will Cover:

- ▶ History of our efforts
- ▶ Lessons learned
- ▶ Highlight some of our successes
- ▶ Last, my contact info. We are willing to share documents we've created/relied on for our negotiations to any Tribe to use that would like to explore compacting with NPS in your community

History of Efforts

- ▶ 2004 Tribal Council put management of Totem Park on the STA Strategic Plan
- ▶ Staff had an NPS box that passed from Dept to Dept, not quite sure how to make that happen.
- ▶ Another GM raised the potential of STA Compacting at a SG conf in 2012-2013 timeframe, NPS responded negatively – how dare a Tribe try to take over anything at NPS!
- ▶ Summer 2016 – Lisa Gassman returned as GM to STA, this item was not completed, began work on it
 - ▶ Letter submitted September 2016
 - ▶ Issues experienced from outset (nonworking fax, phone for NPS)
 - ▶ Response by NPS received indicating a team would be identified and further info would follow
 - ▶ Issue: That didn't happen

NCAI Resolution Oct 2016

- ▶ STA requested assistance from NCAI in bringing to the attention of Congress that no Tribe had been successful in entering in to an Annual Funding Agreement outside of BIA/IHS despite 20 years passing since the ISDEAA had been passed.
- ▶ <http://www.ncai.org/resources/resolutions/self-governance-advancement-tribal-compacting-of-national-park-projects-and-programs>
- ▶ Lists all of the parks near a Tribe that may have “a special geographic, historic or cultural relationship to Federally Recognized Tribes”
- ▶ We requested Congress request the Secretary of Interior to analyze attempts to compact and report back on barriers to compacting with NPS

History of Efforts

- ▶ FY18 Negotiations
 - ▶ STA requested several divisions within SNHP
 - ▶ Interpretation, Cultural Resources, Natural Resources and Maintenance
 - ▶ Issues experienced:
 - ▶ No documents available to utilize – NPS has done cooperative agreements and with Tribes, attempted to treat compacting through SG as a grant, not a government to government agreement
 - ▶ GM modeled AFA and Budget off of BIA documents
 - ▶ Inherently federal positions asserted by NPS
 - ▶ NPS unwilling to provide full indirect funding
 - ▶ NPS stated all upper positions within the divisions performed “inherently federal functions and therefore were not compactible
 - ▶ To get an agreement in place, we agreed to accept only limited positions within Interpretation. That was a 6-month agreement (4/1/18-9/30/18)
 - ▶ We haven't been able to get NPS in the Alaska Region to budge regarding their position on what is inherently federal

History of Efforts

- ▶ FY19 Negotiations
 - ▶ Did Status Quo of FY18 to get an agreement in place and combat assertion that NPS needed money back for additional federal positions, was able to slip in another seasonal position.
 - ▶ Despite another Park in East Coast being turned over to a County government and no inherently federal issues being raised there, Alaska region still won't budge.
 - ▶ ZERO indirect provided – despite prior year providing some, and full indirect in cooperative agreements NPS has taken flawed legal position they don't get it so cannot give it – Ramah?

History of Efforts

- ▶ FY20 Negotiations
 - ▶ Doing status quo of FY19 to get an agreement in place
 - ▶ Approached Congressional delegation throughout but particularly in this year's negotiations to keep them in loop
 - ▶ Staffers offered to participate in negotiations
 - ▶ Currently awaiting "review" by NPS of documents despite all docs being ready and to them by 7/2/19.
 - ▶ Currently considering other actions for future years that are not public at this point

Lessons Learned/Advice for other Tribes

- ▶ 1. You will face obstacles, don't give up be persistent
- ▶ 2. NPS has no concept of what true Self-Governance means
- ▶ 3. Don't let NPS get you to use documents that are like grant agreements/cooperative agreements
- ▶ 4. Be willing to be the leader in your state – make it happen for Tribes in your area
- ▶ 5. Be prepared to have Tribe support some of the cost while you battle NPS to fully fund indirect
- ▶ 6. Keep your congressional delegation informed of issues, call on them to help
- ▶ 7. Support the frontline staff that are facing a potentially unfriendly NPS staff who don't want to see change

STA Staffing 2019

- ▶ Louise Brady* – Operations Lead
- ▶ Chuck Miller* – Deputy Operations Lead
- ▶ Education Specialist – Mark Sixbey*
- ▶ Seasonal Rangers – Tristian Duncan*, Josh DeAsis*, Haylee Steffes*, Nancy Keen*, Deborah Copeland, Henry Larsen*, Sharon McIndoo*, and Nyla Duncan*
- ▶ Artist Demonstrators – Marie Guthrie*, Charlie Skultka Jr.*, Sarah Williams*, and Tommy Joseph*

* Tribal citizen or other federally recognized Tribal citizen

Park Employees 2018 and 2019

- ▶ 2018 – Taking opportunity to introduce Senator Murkowski to STA staff at Sitka National Historical Park.
- ▶ 2019 – Mid-season dinner hosted by STA to show our employees we appreciated them being on the front lines



Brief Video showing our success

▶ <https://vimeo.com/289620609>



Core STA negotiating
team - updating
Assistant Secretary of
Indian Affairs, Tara
Sweeney on our efforts
at NCAI October 2018

Pictured left to right:
Lisa Gassman, STA
General Manager; Tara
Sweeney, AS-IA;
KathyHope Erickson,
STA Chairman;
Lawrence "Woody"
Widmark, STA Vice-
Chairman

Successes from 2018- 2019

- ▶ STA has been telling our story since Summer 2018
- ▶ Visitors who have been there before notice a difference it is our youth, our people.
- ▶ We've taken our story back – it is being told by us and better than anyone else can



Contact Information

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Please contact me and I would be happy to share our documents with you related to establishing an Annual Funding Agreement with NPS. We want to help fellow Tribes that want to enter in to an Annual Funding Agreement with a park in your area if that park has “a special geographic, historic or cultural relationship” to your tribe.