

47 Four Oaks Road
Bedminster, NJ 07921
September 10, 2009

Alexandra Mallus
DOI FOIA Officer / Department of Interior
FOIA Office (OCIO)
MS-7438 MIB
1849 C Street, N.W.
Washington, DC 20240

Dear Ms. Mallus:

I am writing you to give you an update on my efforts to get some financial records from Mesa Verde National Park.

Simply stated, since first writing on July 1, 2009, and after a number of letters and conversations, I have had absolutely no success getting any records, any files, or any information.

There may be a new administration in power, and new directives and memorandums describing a new era of openness and transparency, and a public desire for a new spirit of cooperation. But at Mesa Verde National Park, there's been no change. In fact, even the power and authority of the President cannot change the sense of autonomy and independence felt by many National Park superintendents. In the case of Larry Wiese, the Superintendent of Mesa Verde National Park, it seems he manages the park with virtually no oversight or supervision, and with virtually no financial audits and/or controls. Worse still, it seems he feels he is totally immune to the directives and memorandums of the President, the Secretary, and the Attorney General.

Simply stated, in spite of memorandums from the President and the Attorney General and the Secretary's memorandum of July 2, 2009, the management at Mesa Verde National Park has not changed. It operates with absolutely no "presumption of openness."

And worse still for me personally, my effort to obtain information has resulted in rumors that I may have problems ever working at Mesa Verde National Park again.

I have included with this letter copies of all the letters I have written in my efforts to get some information from the management at Mesa Verde National Park. In the beginning, I was trying to avoid a formal, official FOIA request. Those efforts were unsuccessful, and as you can see I finally did file a formal FOIA request with Jack O'Brian of the Intermountain Regional Office of the NPS. Unfortunately, I think Jack O'Brian is working hard, but I suspect he's working harder to protect the interests of the Superintendent and less as an advocate for openness and transparency. For instance, shortly after I received his letter that I would have to pay over \$1500.00 to get the information I had requested, it seems a number of people at Mesa Verde National Park all knew the contents of that letter.

Nevertheless, I am continuing in my quest. I have written Jack O'Brian again, and I have submitted a revised and modified request. And I will continue to pursue all my administrative rights as outlined in the FOIA regulations.

Meanwhile, there are rumors that Larry Wiese, the Superintendent at Mesa Verde National Park, will probably let it be known that he doesn't want my wife, Sara, and me to be hired again as seasonal interpretive rangers. From what we have heard based on what he has done in the past, I suspect he will ask the Chief of Interpretation to find reasons why we shouldn't be hired again, or reasons why we would not compare favorably with other candidates in the future. Sadly, that's the kind of retribution he has used in the past, and it's why so many people have continued to work in an atmosphere of fear and intimidation at Mesa Verde National Park for so many years.

Perhaps now you can appreciate why sometimes trying to make government open and transparent can be not only frustrating, it can be painful, it can get personal, and it can have financial consequences.

I hope you don't mind this update. I just wanted you to know that some things haven't changed yet, that some people appreciate everything you are doing, and that together, I hope the dreams of an open and transparent government someday will be fulfilled.

Looking ahead,

Bruce E. Schundler
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cc: Diane Cooke
(ORG CODE 2550)
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Attachments:

- Letter of July 1, 2009 to Linda Lanier—Budget Analyst of Mesa Verde NP
- Letter of July 20, 2009 to Linda Lanier—Budget Analyst of Mesa Verde NP
- Email of July 21, 2009 from Bill Nelligan—Deputy Superintendent of Mesa Verde NP
- Letter of July 24, 2009 to Tessy Shirakawa—Chief of Interpretation at Mesa Verde NP
- Cover Letter of July 31, 2009 to Jack O'Brian—FOIA Officer of Intermountain Regional NPS
- Letter of July 31, 2009 to Jack O'Brian—FOIA Officer of Intermountain Regional NPS with first formal FOIA request
- Letter of August 14, 2009 to Bill Nelligan—Deputy Superintendent of Mesa Verde NP
- Letter of August 28, 2009 from Jack O'Brian—FOIA Officer of Intermountain Regional NPS
- Cover Letter of September 8, 2009 to Jack O'Brian—FOIA Officer of Intermountain Regional NPS
- Letter of September 8, 2009 to Jack O'Brian—FOIA Officer of Intermountain Regional NPS with modified and restated FOIA request