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News Releases

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SHAKE UP AT PARK SERVICE HEADQUARTERS — Reorganization Marginalizes Top Deputy Responsible for Firing Park Police Chief

Washington, DC — The National Park Service is unveiling a wide-ranging reshuffling of management responsibilities, according to documents released today by Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility (PEER). The big loser appears to be Donald Murphy, the now former Deputy Director for External Affairs, whose responsibilities have been significantly reduced.

It was Murphy who filed administrative charges against U.S. Park Police Chief Teresa Chambers for admitting staffing shortages in an interview with The Washington Post. Now, the Park Police has been removed from Murphy's control, as has most of his other former duties. Murphy's new title is Deputy Director for Support Services.

“Don Murphy used to describe himself as ‘the Chief Operations Officer’ for the Park Service but now he is reduced to making sure that birds don't fly into the windows at headquarters,” stated PEER Executive Director Jeff Ruch, whose organization is spearheading the legal challenge to restore Chambers as Chief of the Park Police. “Chief Chambers’ case is just one of a series of matters that Murphy mishandled, so this functional demotion is no surprise.”

Chambers' bid for reinstatement is awaiting a decision from the federal civil service court, called the Merit Systems Protection Board. Chambers was dismissed last July 9th, following more than seven months of administrative leave, while Bush Administration officials decided her fate. Two of the six administrative charges lodged against Chambers have been thrown out. The remaining counts are under challenge for lacking legal and factual basis as well as violating free speech and whistleblower protections. Last month, the Park Service swore in Chambers' former deputy, Dwight Pettiford, as her replacement.

Virtually all NPS operations are being consolidated under a new Deputy Director for Operations, Steve Martin, to whom 99 percent of agency staff will report. Martin, the former NPS Intermountain Regional Director, was promoted to Deputy Director just this past April.

The reorganization also creates two new Associate director positions— one for Business Services and another for Human Capital. According to a congressional transmittal letter from Interior Deputy

Secretary Lynn Scarlett, the significance of this latter position is that it “affirms our commitment to raising the importance of our human capital to equal that of our financial capital.”

“At least it is Human Capital and not Human Cattle,” remarked Ruch, noting that this name change will do little to offset agency gag orders, attempts to outsource staff and budget shortfalls. “Morale within the Park Service is at an all time low; this latest reorganization is merely rearranging the deck chairs on the Titanic.”