

PO Box 44
Mesa Verde National Park, CO 81330
July 20, 2009

Linda Lanier
Mesa Verde National Park
PO Box 8
Mesa Verde National Park, CO 81330

Dear Linda:

I am writing you again because I would like to have either hard copy versions or have access to the electronic, digital versions of the **Mesa Verde National Park FY 2007** and the **Mesa Verde National Park FY 2008** financial statements pertaining to and detailing the final and exact expenditures of each and every local account of the ONPS budgets, and the “Project, Fire Pro, Donations, Reimbursable, and Fee Demonstration” accounts. I also would like the **Mesa Verde National Park FY 2009 Year-to-Date** financial statements pertaining to and detailing the final and exact expenditures of each and every local account of the ONPS budget, and the “Project, Fire Pro, Donations, Reimbursable, and Fee Demonstration” accounts.

Now, in addition to the overall budget information, I am also interested in more specific information concerning the following:

- In the 2009 budget, there was \$421,256 allocated for “21—Travel.” What kind of travel does that include, who is using the money, and why? Specifically, I am interested in the travel expenses of Larry Wiese and Tessy Shirakawa, and in how many travel authorizations and travel vouchers were prepared and used by them, for how many days, to what kind of locations, and for what purpose.
- How many sister park or partner park relationships do we have? And how often have employees of Mesa Verde National Park visited parks in Hawaii, Alaska, or outside the borders of the United States?
- I am trying to find out why so many staff positions have been left vacant, in spite of regular increases in the park’s funding. What has happened to the funding for the Museum Curator, the Historic Architect, the Head of Stabilization, and the Biology Technician? And how was last year’s special centennial funding used? It was supposed to be used for extra seasonal rangers, but extra rangers were never hired. Essentially I am trying to find out what happens to funding for staff positions that are never filled.

I am writing you, Linda, because you are the Budget Analyst of the park and you have the easiest and quickest access to all the information I am requesting. I am writing you as a courtesy, so that we all can avoid an official and much more cumbersome, complicated, and

expensive Freedom of Information Act request. If I have to make an official FOIA request, a lot of record keeping is required and a lot of unnecessary paper work is involved.

Furthermore, I am writing you because after my last letter dated July 1, 2009, the superintendent “passed the buck” to Tessy Shirakawa suggesting that my request should be handled through the “chain of command.” As the person ultimately responsible for the management of the park and how it responds to FOIA type request, that was Larry’s prerogative.

I don’t understand why he would give the responsibility of answering my questions to Tessy since she simply doesn’t have access to the information I requested, and I suspect Larry knew that. She is the Chief of Interpretation not the Budget Analyst, and she doesn’t have computer access to budgets other than her own Interpretation budget.

So why was the decision made to “pass the buck” to Tessy? I’m not sure, but one could easily argue that the decision was not in keeping with the letter and spirit of the President’s memorandum of January 21, 2009 concerning the Freedom of Information Act; it was not in keeping with the intentions of the memorandum we all received on Wednesday, July 8, 2009 from the Secretary of the Interior concerning the Freedom of Information Act Policy Guidance; and it might have been a clear example of what the Attorney General of the United States wants to avoid when he wrote, “Unnecessary bureaucratic hurdles have no place in the “new era of open Government” that the President has proclaimed.” (from the Office of the Attorney General, dated March 19, 2009.)

Finally, I am writing you, Linda, because I’ve read the Freedom of Information Act and its subsequent regulations carefully. There is nothing in the Act that tries to limit, control, or suggest in any way that employees of the government should make FOIA request only “through channels.”

To date, instead of receiving information pertaining to and detailing the expenditures of FY 2007 and FY 2008, I had to wait over a week to get a listing of the authorized amounts of the Interpretation budget for 2009. I had to wait another week to get some of the YTD information about the expenditures of the Interpretation department for FY 2009. And then finally this past weekend I got an email from Tessy which was forward from an email from Bill Nelligan that included more information about the authorized budgets for FY 2009 for all departments. All the information I have received is interesting; and it’s helping me understand more and more of what I need to pursue further, but it’s still not what I asked for in my letter of July 1, 2009. Simply stated, it’s been over three weeks since my first letter, and I haven’t gotten anything that was requested in that first letter.

So once again I am giving you and the park management a chance to be more forthcoming about the expenditures of Mesa Verde National Park. I am writing one more “courtesy letter” in the hope I don’t have to start a formal FOIA request.

Needless to say, I hope we’ve all read carefully the recent memorandum from the Secretary of the Interior (dated July 8, 2009) with links to the President’s memorandum of January 21, 2009 and the Attorney General’s memorandum of March 19, 2009. And hopefully we all appreciate how much better government and all its agencies and departments can be when openness and transparency prevails.

So I look forward to hearing from you. In addition to writing me at my post office address, you can contact me through the regular park mail (as a seasonal ranger I have a mailbox in the Museum basement), or leave messages on my home phone which is 970-529-4024.

Looking ahead,

Bruce E. Schundler

cc: Larry T. Wiese--Superintendent
Bill Nelligan—Assistant Superintendent
Tessy Shirakawa—Chief of Interpretation
Sue Johnson-Erner—FOIA officer of MVNP