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Gregory P. “Skip” Brooks
June 12, 2002

Interview conducted by Janet McDonnell
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Harpers Ferry Center
PO Box 50
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HFC_Archivist@nps.gov

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
SEPTEMBER 11TH ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Interview with

GREGORY P. "SKIP" BROOKS

Chief of Maintenance
Colonial National Historical Park

Conducted by Janet A. McDonnell, Ph.D.

June 12, 2002

Yorktown, Virginia

START OF TAPE

- Janet McDonell: It's June 12, 2002. I'm Janet McDonnell and I'm here with Skip Brooks. He's the Chief of Maintenance here at Colonial [National Historical Park], and we're here to talk about the Park Service response to the September 11, 2001 attacks. Maybe the best place to start is to ask you to tell me how you first learned about the attacks on the World Trade Center.
- Gregory Brooks: I was in a meeting with York County discussing some land exchanges, and I got a phone call saying a plane had gone into the Trade Center, and we were expecting the Type-1 Team to be on alert to be called out. I was pretty impressed with the time frame of that because I think that call was like 15 or 20 minutes right after the first plane went in.
- Janet McDonell: Where did the call come from?
- Gregory Brooks: It came from Greg Stiles, who works in Shenandoah [National Park]. There is a dispatch system there, and he alerted me to that fact, to be prepared. And then later on during that, once we got the call we were asked to go to - Dennis Burnett got involved and said, "Why don't you try to get your team together and go to Shenandoah right now because we don't know what's going to happen in Washington?" So, they had the team activated to report to Shenandoah, which we stayed in Luray.
- Janet McDonell: So, did you quickly get in your car and start driving out there?
- Gregory Brooks: Yes, we got there - Dennis McGinnis and I were probably the first two responders on the team because Dennis lives there in that area. But he was also at Cape Hatteras - that's right, I remember this now. He drove up, we met, we went to Shenandoah, and were there that evening. Other team members - I guess if there was a mistake as far as the all-risk management team was concerned, we were always pretty cocky about [how] we could respond within 24 hours. Well, that's when we could use the planes. And we learned a lesson by not assuming that we could get to our locations by planes anymore.
- Gregory Brooks: So we had some people driving in, and then we actually had to wait until some of the people could catch planes which, to me personally, as the Incident Commander, I was two to three days

behind the power curve basically because I couldn't get my team members there.

Janet McDonell: It would be helpful to me if you would just give me a brief overview of how your team is made up.

Gregory Brooks: The Type-1 Team is made up of functions. We have an Incident Commander, a Planning Section Chief, an Operations Section Chief, a Finance Section Chief, a Logistics Section Chief, and an Information Officer, which takes over these functions. It works very well. The system works great. But it's also based on having the tools to work with. With this situation, you know, we couldn't develop a plan until we got all of our team members there which, like I said, it put us behind.

Gregory Brooks: We develop a plan. First of all, we do objectives, then we do strategies, and then we do tactics of how we're going to implement the incident. And we base that on the delegation of authority that's given to us, and in this situation delegation of authority was given to us directly by the Director. She gave us tasks on what we should do during this incident.

Janet McDonell: I'd actually like to go through those in just a minute. Is there anything more you want to tell me about who the other members were and how they were notified or anything?

Gregory Brooks: Yes. Well, that was the problem, too, and I'm glad you brought that up. My Planning Section Chief, who is Greg Stiles, usually is with me, but he also does some things for the Department of the Interior, so I lost my Planning Section Chief. I did not have a Planning Section Chief at that time until I had to eventually get one.

Gregory Brooks: Dennis McGinnis was my Operations Section Chief, and then we had Bob Howard as our Logistics Section Chief. Finance we had Kim Glass come in. Then she had to rotate out because we brought someone else in because we felt like the next team would be here - we've already assumed that this incident was going to be longer than a 14-day detail. So, we brought in Ruth Kohler as our Finance Section person. Information was Debee Schwarz, and I was trying to find a Planning Section Chief, which I did get, and that was Cheto. I've got to look up Cheto's last name. He's from Zion, which really worked well, considering that he had never worked with the

team, and we had worked together a long time, and I didn't have my main corps together because we went in different directions, which I did not like, but I couldn't control that.

Once we got together, I thought it worked very well, once we got organized.

Janet McDonell: So, your original team - not the team for this event, but your basic team, the positions are one-deep?

Gregory Brooks: No, we have two-deep, and that's why the other Incident Commander, J.D. Swed, he came with us because he could drive in. He was from Indiana Dunes. He would drive in to assist me as the deputy. But after being there a while, we all saw the handwriting on the wall, that this was going to go longer. So, we needed to rotate the other core team out so they could come back after September 21st. Once we left, we left.

Janet McDonell: So, 14 days is the typical rotation for an event?

Gregory Brooks: Yes. It used to be 21 days. They changed that to 14 days. But no, that's the rule now, 14 days. And I wouldn't say that can't be longer for all risk. All risk is - in my opinion, all risk can definitely be to 21 days. Fourteen days really came from fire, because of the fatigue of fighting fires. I think all risk could go longer, but the new rule was we'd do 14 days.

Janet McDonell: Okay. I understand there was also a Type-2 team, and that team was set up out at Shenandoah. Do you want to give me a little background?

Gregory Brooks: Yes. The Type-2 Team we brought in to go to Shenandoah because of all the communications. Shenandoah was the main dispatch system for everything - at that time, for us. The other thing is, we had to think logically that if something happened in Washington, we needed to have a backup team somewhere else to support - if we lost communications or contact, we needed to have someone in place at Shenandoah to take care of the situation for the rest of the National Parks. And, I mean, we didn't know what was going to happen, so that's the reason we had a backup plan to have another team, and that was a Type-2 Team from the Southeast Region.

Janet McDonell: When did that happen?

Gregory Brooks: That came in within, I think, a week after we had been there.

Janet McDonell: It was fairly soon, I recall.

Gregory Brooks: Yes, we sat down and started evaluating this thing, and once we got all our core teams together, we were trying to have backup systems, what we were doing, and then we were also trying to support the director on obtaining the information she needed from each Park. We were to do reports twice a day to see what was going on in the parks, and she wanted to be briefed on especially the New York parks.

Janet McDonell: Is there anything you can tell me about the implementation of either the Department's continuity of operations Plan, or the Park Service's continuity of operations Plan? I guess what I am looking for is to see if there is any connection between the implementation of that plan and the role of your team. Is the activation of the team related in any way to the continuity of operations?

Gregory Brooks: Yes. It's in the - it's in that Washington - Washington controls the Type-1 Team. The regions control the Type-2 Teams. And Washington will implement the plan as they see fit if they need a Type-1 plan.

Gregory Brooks: An observation on my part was, and it's in all fairness to the Park Service, was that they were moving, and all their plans were in boxes. No fault by anybody, but they were supposed to move, and people had things packed away, so when this incident happened, their access to what they needed wasn't readily there. They did have them. I'm just saying to me, that was not anybody's fault, but you go in everybody's office and they're saying, "We're packed. We've got to find this stuff." It's just coincidental. Like I said, it's nobody's fault, but it just shows that in order to be prepared, you need to be prepared, and everybody had packed those things away. Of course, I think of a lot of the Ranger Activities folks, they knew exactly what to do and they did. They implemented it, as far as I'm concerned, as far as all-risk is concerned.

Janet McDonell: But you mean maybe some of the other offices up there?

Gregory Brooks: Yes, right.

- Janet McDonell: Some of the senior staff. Well, let's go on to the delegation of authority letter that the Director signed. When was this done, and why was it significant that she signed that letter? What's the significance of that letter?
- Gregory Brooks: Well, I have to get in a notebook if you want me to.
- Janet McDonell: Actually, I think I have a copy of the letter.
- Gregory Brooks: The significance of that is in order for an incident team to come in and run an incident, you have to have someone that will delegate that authority for you to do it. The Director felt like this was an incident that - I have worked on other incidents where the superintendents have given me delegation of authority. Y2K, Deny Galvin gave me it, but in this situation director, this was a major, major incident and the Director was very involved, which I was very appreciative of. She gave me opportunities to brief her twice a day. She was there. She wanted to know what was going on, and we tried to provide her that information. And she made me stick with that delegation.
- Janet McDonell: Tell me a little bit more about the delegation, and I guess the objectives that it laid out. Didn't it specify the specific things?
- Gregory Brooks: Specific points. You've got to be financially accountable to try to do it in a safe manner, your incident. Work with the Department, well, support the Department in its needs as well as the National Park Service. That was [one of] the key things of the delegation, which was, you know—
- Janet McDonell: To support the Department and the Service; is that unique? Is that something that you had encountered before?
- Gregory Brooks: That's the first one that I've encountered. Yes. I'm used to supporting, you know, the National Park Service, or the Park. Like Y2K I was just at the National Park Service. But supporting the Department, and basically when you support a Department, it was based on if they needed resources, which we came to find out during the incident that law enforcement rangers were gold. I mean, we needed law enforcement rangers not only for the National Park Service, but specifically the Bureau of Reclamation, which that's where the Department would try to support them.

Janet McDonell: You were talking about the objectives in the delegation of authority. You indicated that this was the first time a delegation of authority has specified that the team would support the Department as well as the Bureau, as the NPS, and I'm wondering how that complicated the team's function.

Gregory Brooks: Well, we worked with the Department during Y2K - I should take that back- we supported the Department as well through Y2K, so at least my team had experienced working with the Department. In this situation, you know, the Y2K was more of a process versus an incident itself. It could have been an incident, but it, to me, was just a process that we had to safeguard. But this was an actual incident in which things happened.

Janet McDonell: And which involved dealing with resources much more.

Gregory Brooks: Right, dealing with resources. The problem I had was, as an incident commander, and Rick Gale was my advisor for the director, we had to be compromising to the point where when it got to law enforcement rangers, we needed to make sure that the parks were protected as well as the needs for the Department, which was difficult. That was tricky, because the Department has their needs, and they would come to me and say, "Well, we've got to have so many Rangers here," and we tried to do that. I would brief the Director, and the Director would make the final decisions - or Rick, I should say, if we were giving out too much and the parks weren't being protected.

Gregory Brooks: As far as I know, I thought we met their needs. They may disagree with that - and as well as meeting the needs for the parks. The confusion, I think, working with the Department was they were not that familiar with the Incident Command System. We tried to do that, and we even actually supported them in getting resources to create their own little ICS team over there, which, you know, that's what they wanted. We had a couple of meetings with Gary Allen and said, "Why can't we make a unified command system, and we would be under the Department's umbrella, and we would use the system." Well, he preferred not doing that.

Janet McDonell: Who is Gary Allen?

Gregory Brooks: He worked for Steve Calvery. I mean, he was in charge of all of this.

- Janet McDonell: So, he is the person that you dealt with.
- Gregory Brooks: Well, he and Rick more so than me. But I did have a meeting to try to explain this process to him, how we could have a unified command system and I had no problems with this, that if the Department wanted to be like the area commander, and the National Park Service had an incident commander, we could do this. But they preferred doing it a different way, and the Park Service did it their way.
- Janet McDonell: Do you have a sense of why the Department was reluctant to adopt our incident management procedure?
- Gregory Brooks: I really don't think they were very familiar with res had a lot to do with it, the structure, the network. And, you know, I mean, I'm not faulting them for that. A lot of agencies just don't know how this works.
- Gregory Brooks: During the Bridal Trail murders in Shenandoah, we had the FBI there. We created a unified command system there. That's why I thought this could work with the Department. The FBI and the National Park Service investigated those murders, and it worked beautifully. The FBI loved it, and we didn't have any problems with it at all. But I can't make decisions of why they didn't want to do it, or why they wanted to go out on their own little - they created their own little team, but it's not what I'm accustomed to as far as the system is concerned.
- Janet McDonell: Just to go back a little bit, that first day, on the 11th you said you arrived at Shenandoah National Park in the evening, and I think I read somewhere that the original plan was for you to meet up with Park Service leadership in Harper's Ferry. Is that correct?
- Gregory Brooks: I heard about that, because they were using Harper's Ferry as an area, they thought would be safe as well, but that never transpired.
- Janet McDonell: You never got any instructions to do that?
- Gregory Brooks: Well, the first night I was in Shenandoah, and then we were trying to get all these communications from Washington, that's when I made a decision, and I said, "We've got to be in Washington. And what we'll do is we'll be in Washington, and we'll create

another team to be at Shenandoah in case something happens to us. Because this is not going to work by us being out here trying to do this."

Janet McDonell: Right. So, on the 12th you went to the Main Interior Building?

Gregory Brooks: Yes. And we stayed.

Janet McDonell: And you set up shop in the south building, is that correct?

Gregory Brooks: Well, the first couple of days we were at Chris Andress' office, Ranger Activities, and then we went to South Interior, because we have had - we used that building for Y2K, we used it for comprehensive condition assessment. Jerry Land is very good about supporting us when we need that room, and that's why we ended up in South Interior.

Janet McDonell: I'm sure there were no routine days, but just give me a sense of those first few days. You mentioned that you dealt closely with Rick Gale.

Gregory Brooks: Yes.

Janet McDonell: The Director apparently had made him her advisor, and you also mentioned, though, that you briefed her directly.

Gregory Brooks: Directly those first - the first week or so, two times a day, in the morning and the afternoons - well, usually 4:30 or 5:00 we would keep her apprised, and that included weekends as well. I would call her on weekends and let her know if anything was going on. We had a few little things - mishaps which she said anytime anything happened outside, she wanted to know, which we did that.

Janet McDonell: You indicated that she was very involved in the response, just very interested.

Gregory Brooks: Very interested, very energetic.

Janet McDonell: What kind of guidance was she giving you?

Gregory Brooks: She really- well, I'm not speaking for her, but I saw she really wanted to know what was going on in those parks, how they were doing, what was open, what was closed, when we were going to

open something, and she really wanted to know that, and if they needed anything. That's the thing.

Gregory Brooks: The beauty of the system, too, which I think was a good part on the Northeast Region's perspective, was they decided to also call in a Type-2 Team to work out of their Philadelphia office to support New York, and we were in constant communication with that group. Half of that team used to be with my anyway, and we've got good rapport, and that worked out really well.

Janet McDonell: So, you interacted directly with them.

Gregory Brooks: Definitely. Yes. And the Director liked that information that we would get, and we would give to her as well. She also - like I said, she always wanted to know if something was happening. I think there was a plane, or they stopped a plane on a runway during this incident and it flashed on the news. So, we would call and tell her we didn't know what that was, but this is the information we were getting, and then what alert status we would go into.

Gregory Brooks: The U.S. Park Police were assisting very well with us as far as giving us information and letting us know if something was going to happen that we needed to know.

Janet McDonell: Who did you interact with at the Park Police?

Gregory Brooks: I cannot remember.

Janet McDonell: Major Van Horn?

Gregory Brooks: Major Van Horn. Yes, thank you.

Janet McDonell: So, you didn't deal with the Chief's Command Post. You probably weren't calling directly there, or were you?

Gregory Brooks: Well, what we did also is we put someone, an investigator, which we thought was a good idea, and the Department didn't have any problems as well. We assigned that investigator to go to all the departmental meetings, because they had the security clearance. They would also feed that person as well. J.D. Swed kind of served at that, and Tim Ali from Shenandoah, once J.D. left, and that's how we got a lot of our information.

- Gregory Brooks: We would also report, because the Director also was very adamant that all our reports went to a fax number to Shepherdstown where some of the departmental people were staying - I think that's where they're staying. I don't know for sure. We would fax all that information to them as well, and we did that twice a day. Then we cut it down to only a daily situation [report].
- Janet McDonell: We are going to talk a little bit more about communication and coordination in just a minute, but before we leave that overview of the Incident Command structure and system, I would be very interested to hear you assess the overall effectiveness of the system as related to this particular event.
- Gregory Brooks: The system is great. It's a workable system. Anybody can use it, and anybody can learn. In this situation, you have to have all the tools in order to make it work. It took us time to get set up, which I thought, you know, put us behind the power curve. And, you know, you feel like the first, second, or third day oh, this is going south on me, mainly because you can't get all your players in to assist you in developing a plan.
- Gregory Brooks: On a typical incident, I will have an Incident Action Plan within 24 hours. I went three days without an Incident Action Plan. That really bothered me. As an Incident Commander, that was a big concern for me, because I'm not accustomed to that. But we couldn't implement it because we didn't have the team members.
- Janet McDonell: So, when you say tools, you mean primarily staff.
- Gregory Brooks: Staff and resources.
- Janet McDonell: How about money? Is that included?
- Gregory Brooks: Well, at that time, money was not a burden to me. What, in essence it was because I had a cap that I was -
- Janet McDonell: Originally had a \$100,000 cap.
- Gregory Brooks: That's fine. We do that on incidents. There's not a thing wrong with that. But then after about three or four days going into an incident, I realize that we're going to exceed that, way exceed that, and that's why I said well, we need to brief the Director and let her know.

- Janet McDonell: And you mentioned, actually, for the sake of the recording, you mentioned earlier that recognizing that that cap was insufficient, you went back to the Director and sort of revised the delegation of authority letter.
- Gregory Brooks: Right, based on the Director, and this is why I appreciate the Director's perspective, she said, "I will remove the cap when you provide me the documentation of why to remove the cap." That's why I gave you a copy of that briefing, and that's the information that we gave her on what we were going to do. She wanted to know where we were going with this, which is the right thing to do, and Incident Teams are accustomed to doing that.
- Janet McDonell: You indicated a few minutes ago that departmental leaders were somewhat unfamiliar with the Incident Command System, and therefore reluctant to adopt it. What about senior Park Service leadership, including the Director? It sounds like she, by contrast, was fully supportive.
- Gregory Brooks: I feel like I had no problems. As far as I was concerned, she was fully supporting what we were doing.
- Janet McDonell: Did the Type-1 Team, did it have enough visibility within the Main Interior Building? I mean, did you feel like employees really understood why the team was there and what it was doing?
- Gregory Brooks: The Park Service employees did. We also wear a green shirt that says Incident Management Team, and we have done some incidents, and like I said, we did the Y2K incident in Washington, we did the comprehensive condition assessment in Washington. The Park Service people knew us.
- Gregory Brooks: Departmental-wise, people knew us, but Steve King [?] and Jerry Land were more familiar with us than anybody, as far as the Department was concerned. They knew about how we worked. That's why, you know, Jerry has called the team to do other things, and done things for the Department.
- Janet McDonell: So, you think you have sort of won some of those people over?
- Gregory Brooks: During Y2K. Yes, during Y2K. I felt comfortable with those as far as their familiarity with what we do. They knew that we could do and what we couldn't do, and I would think they would support us.

I think in this incident, I think probably if they had a concern about how - I think they would probably say we couldn't get resources there fast enough for them, and that was a communication problem, and I could see that that was happening, but I couldn't control it.

Janet McDonell:

Do you think the Incident Command System was used or utilized to the fullest extent? Is there more that your team and the system could have done beyond what was specified in the delegation of authority letter, or was it under-utilized?

Gregory Brooks:

I wouldn't say it was under-utilized. Based on the way the incident teams work, you work for whoever gives you the delegation of authority or the superintendent of a park. I could see where the team was being pulled in all different directions by other people that were in Washington involved in - how should I say this - they had needs as well. And it was very difficult at times to meet everybody's needs, and I felt like the control of this incident—

END OF SIDE A

START OF SIDE B

Janet McDonell:

Again, just to sort of finish up in this Incident System area, what aspects of the team's operations do you think were the smoothest? It sounds like getting your team together initially was maybe the most challenging part, but what aspect of the operation worked—

Gregory Brooks:

The smoothest? Hmmm. I think they were all tough. I really do. I say that because everybody was trying to achieve our objectives, number one, and when you have a situation where it takes you three to four days to get your Incident Action Plan developed, to me that's telling me that we are behind, and everybody is having a problem here trying to get things going. So, I wouldn't think any of them were smooth.

Gregory Brooks:

Information got changed quite a bit because we wanted to provide the best information, but it came in at different times. Your time zones were different. We tried to coordinate them, and we thought we had that pretty well handled once we got in our second week. We tried to get daily stuff to her the first week. We thought that was good, but we—I don't mind admitting this—we kept finding

mistakes our first week. I'm not accustomed to that. The team wasn't accustomed to that.

Janet McDonell: So, is some of that, then, related to the fact that information is different, depending on the time of day that it's collected?

Gregory Brooks: Right, and how it was coming into us, and how they were reporting it. And regions wanted to change this format, or they wanted to do it this way. And that was the other thing. We were getting information from all the regions.

Gregory Brooks: I think there were some weak links in our lines of communication at the Shenandoah Dispatch of how they were interpreting the information that was coming in there. I actually had people in the regions calling and telling me that, and that was a fault. We felt that we got that corrected after our second week, but it shouldn't have taken that long. But there were some lines of communication - and everybody was working hard, to the point where that's why I'm not going to say there was too much—

Janet McDonell: That there was anything that was smooth about it.

Gregory Brooks: --smooth, and to be honest with you, including me, as the Incident Commander. Usually the Incident Commander has the smoothest part, you know, and he or she makes sure things are going smoothly, and everybody is doing their jobs. But I don't mind admitting that I was very stressed myself because I saw things not coming together like I wanted them to, like I'm accustomed to. I keep saying that. It eventually did. It's just it didn't come in the time frame that I wanted it to.

Janet McDonell: Would you talk just a little bit about the transition to Eddie Lopez's team. Was that after the first two weeks, that 14 days that you transitioned out?

Gregory Brooks: After the first two weeks, right. Yes.

Janet McDonell: Is there anything I need to know about that transition?

Gregory Brooks: Basically, what we do is when we do a transition, each Section Chief, including the Incident Commander, will go over their roles with the new people coming in. And actually, in Eddie's situation too, I actually took him to a couple of meetings with the Director,

so he could be familiar with what she requested. But the transition part as far as what we explained to him—

Janet McDonell: It was pretty smooth.

Gregory Brooks: To me, that was—

Janet McDonell: That part was pretty smooth.

Gregory Brooks: Yes, that was the easiest thing, because people knew they were going home. But I was concerned, like I've said to you, I worried about where all the documentation was going to go. We left our documentation with Eddie's team, and they took care of it from there.

Janet McDonell: You've obviously been involved in a number of events in the past. You've mentioned a couple just in our conversation here. But in this particular event, did you see a distinction between the emergency phase and a response phase? Oftentimes in a disaster or a fire, or whatever, there are these distinct phases that you can identify. Did you see that with this event?

Gregory Brooks: I saw the emergency phase, and as far as response to stages, yes, I would say they were working.

Janet McDonell: When do you think that transition occurred?

Gregory Brooks: The second or third day. The first day we were trying to get our thoughts together, and then trying to implement the emergency as soon as possible, but also doing it in a unified order. And I would say the second or third day, we were starting to get to the emergency stage, that I felt like we were getting people out there. But it still took time, because you had problems with, I think, the first or second day you still couldn't get flights out.

Gregory Brooks: The emergency phase was really affected by not having airline capabilities. That is something that as a team we have got to consider that we cannot always say we can get there by air. We were actually talking about chartered flights and things like that, and that was majorly expensive.

- Janet McDonell: I guess part of the reason I asked that question is because one individual I interviewed observed that he thought the Park Service was in a reacting mode for months after September 11th, instead of being in the driver's seat, that our agency was reacting to events. And I wondered what your take is on that.
- Gregory Brooks: Well, it depends on how you define reacting versus emergency. An emergency is a reaction, and I don't know what this individual - how they were thinking. I can understand why someone would say we were reacting after the emergency for a couple of months after the incident. I can see some of that. But as far as getting the emergency personnel and the resources where they were needed, I thought that we responded to that as far as the team was concerned. Now, what Washington does after the team leaves, I don't know. If they are reacting to the emergency after we leave, that's nothing for me to comment on.
- Janet McDonell: Okay. You're right, it does come down to definitions of some of these terms.
- Gregory Brooks: Any interpretations, too.
- Janet McDonell: Now, to turn a little bit more to communications and coordination, I'd be interested in your perspective on how effective communications overall within the Park Service were after this event, and that would include maybe talking about how effective the function of the dispatch center at Shenandoah National Park was, and that kind of thing. How good is the Park Service at getting information back forth from parks to and headquarters?
- Gregory Brooks: I thought the communications the Director also implemented a plan that all regional directors would talk to her on a daily basis.
- Janet McDonell: Conference calls.
- Gregory Brooks: Conference calls, which she had Rick and I as a part of that, which I thought was great. I know that for some regional directors it was probably - I mean, they weren't affected as much as some regional directors. I mean, the Northeast was affected, then you had the ones that had the dam, so we did that, I think it was twice a day in the beginning. No, I think it was once a day, and then we went like not every day, but every other day. That's what it was.

I think that communication was effective as far as what's happening in the field. And then, of course, I think she would take that information and also brief the Secretary.

Gregory Brooks:

As far as the dispatch system, this was a major, major incident which had a lot of resources which were being asked to be filled, different resources. Usually with a fire, you take a whole crew. Well, now you're getting individual resources because you're putting them not only in national parks, but you've got to put them in other places.

Gregory Brooks:

And I thought there was a little problem with the Shenandoah Communications Center. They couldn't get those resources out as quick. Or if there was a definition of what do you need, and where do you need it, I don't know. I didn't have a handle on that. But I did see complications where I thought somebody was there on a Monday, and they didn't get there until a Thursday, and that's when the planes were running. So, I don't know if it was just a massive incident with a lots of things going on at the same time that caused that difficulty, because Shenandoah is a very effective communication system. I mean, they're prepared to do things. I just think in this incident there were some flaws of responding to the regions and needs.

Janet McDonell:

I heard complaints that there were actually too many communications centers. There was the Chief's Command Post, there was a communications center in Shepherdstown, as I understand it, and one in Shenandoah, one in Main Interior. Was that your experience as well, that it caused--

Gregory Brooks:

Yes, because I had to fax information to Shepherdstown all the time, twice a day. The problem with that was they would say sometimes in the Secretary's meeting with the Director, the Director would say, "Skip, they say they didn't get this." Well, come to find out, I would send it to this one person, and that person left for two or three days and it sat there. I mean, I actually faxed the stuff myself to prove to myself that this information was going. But once it got on the other end, that wasn't my fault. But that was happening quite a bit, and I couldn't understand that, but that bothered me.

Gregory Brooks:

If you want the information and you've got it, you shouldn't complain or say that you didn't receive it. And that was going on

quite a bit. And in fairness to Shenandoah, too, that kind of got them in the same mode. They felt like they were doing things. And see, when you ask for a resource, you don't want to be technical about it, and this is the way you do. You say, "I need a law enforcement ranger." Okay, what do you need of that law enforcement ranger? Have that law enforcement ranger bring a patrol car, or equipment, or whatever. You just don't say bring a law enforcement ranger unless you - so Shenandoah, in fairness to them, they would go back and call and ask those specific questions, of what they needed out of that resource, and that slowed things down, because you're communicating back and forth.

Gregory Brooks: We also did set up or were trying to set up a system to find out how many resources do you have in the National Park Service - not only law enforcement. I mean equipment. Everybody thought they could put their - each region could handle that, and they knew exactly what they've got. Well, I don't totally agree with that. We implemented a program called FMSS to identify all the resources for equipment needs throughout the National Park Service. It's FMSS, but it's really Maximo.

Janet McDonell: What does the FMSS stand for?

Gregory Brooks: Facilities Management Systems Software. You can identify all of the equipment throughout the system, and then you can have if that was in the system, then Shenandoah would know, or whatever dispatcher would know, okay, we've got two bulldozers here, or five bucket trucks here.

Janet McDonell: And that worked pretty well using that system?

Gregory Brooks: Well, we implemented trying to do all of that, whether they carried it out, I don't know.

Janet McDonell: What was the role of the morning report in communications? Was that a useful tool, or were you involved in that at all?

Gregory Brooks: Well, what I did was I saw that you would read the morning report, and then the Director would get a report that's not the same as the morning report. So I had a concern about that, so what I did was at that time decided well, let me call Bill Halainen in and let him work with the team to make sure we're working together, what he's

sending out is the same thing the Director was getting. So, I did that. And after we got Bill in there, that smoothed out pretty well.

Janet McDonell: Okay, so that the park status information and the morning report would be the same as the park status sheet that you gave the Director.

Gregory Brooks: Right. That's why I said just put Bill here so we can work together, and that worked out really well.

Janet McDonell: A couple of more things about communication, but before we get to that, I would be interested to know - you indicated that you participated in the conference calls with the regional directors.

Gregory Brooks: Yes.

Janet McDonell: Could you just give me, since I've not been able to talk to anybody else who sat in there, could you give me a sense of the overall tone of these conference calls, or some of the major concerns that came up in these conference calls?

Gregory Brooks: Well, the major thing is you were reporting in to see how everything is going as far as your region is concerned, how your parks are doing and your resources. I think the first week or, so they were very helpful. There were things that they would tell me - well, we're not getting this information, or could somebody do this for us, or could you look into this for us, and I thought that was very helpful to me—

Janet McDonell: To be able to communicate directly.

Gregory Brooks: To communicate with them, and the Director to bring up, "Well, Skip, you handle this, you and Rick deal with this," or we'll look into this, and to me it was very productive. But like I said, there were some regions, though, that just weren't really affected as much as others, so I don't know if they got to a point where the— they didn't want to do it daily, and that's when we started—the second week we started doing it like every other day. But they were very helpful to me. And she would have not only regional directors, but she would have her associates as well in that meeting, so it was her whole senior staff, whoever was there really.

Janet McDonell: Okay. Ultimately, how do you think the state of communications affected the operations of your team, or the ability of your team to be effective? Did you have all the information that you needed as head of the Type-1 Team to be able to fulfill your missions and objectives?

Gregory Brooks: I think I had the information. But the information changed so quickly, which made it difficult at times. As soon as we would do something, or set up a strategy or plan, something else would pop in and we were always changing. That's why I said the control there was limited to the point where I couldn't control it. Nobody could really control it. You had to just go with the information, and each time it would come in, you would have to make changes. And sometimes the information was - and that's why I was very concerned- sometimes we would get information that there were times when I said, "Well, why didn't we get that yesterday? Why are we getting that today? We should have had this." And that's what bothered, that the information communication to me was slow sometimes, confusing at times, and I just wish that could have been better.

Janet McDonell: What about intelligence information specifically; intelligence that would have to do with potential risks to parks? Did you get that kind of information?

Gregory Brooks: Yes.

Janet McDonell: And if so, from where?

Gregory Brooks: Yes. That's why - that was from the Command Center from the Department and the U.S. Park Police as well. That's why I had someone sitting with them, going over it and filling them in. I didn't see any problem with that. Once something happened, they let us know. I can't speak for all my team members, but I felt like I got that information.

Janet McDonell: Let's move on then—I've got a few questions about security and the security missions that the team had. What role did the team play in addressing security issues. I know the team had a role in looking at security in the Main Interior Building, and security at the G Street address. If you would want to just talk about that for a few minutes.

- Gregory Brooks: That was a task that we were given to research and investigate what needs to be done with security of Interior and the new building. I think, too, that we had someone come over to the National Capital area to give a little—
- Janet McDonell: You did.
- Gregory Brooks: I think that was J.D. Swed, who kind of briefed you all on what we were trying to do.
- Janet McDonell: And assessed security in our building.
- Gregory Brooks: Right. We did do a document on that. I don't know if you have a copy of that, on what we thought would be needed for those buildings. Of course, the buildings change, but I thought that was fine. We brought in a task corps that worked for operations, that fell under Dennis McGinnis to do all those analyses, and I thought they did a pretty darn good job of that, what I saw.
- Janet McDonell: Was that a unique mission for your team? Had you done security assessments before?
- Gregory Brooks: We've done - it's no different doing the comprehensive conditions assessment except it's dealing with buildings. So, all you do is evaluate the building for security purposes, and getting people involved. We also had the Department involved with that, talking to them as well. I think Steve King and Jerry Levette [?] were involved in that as well, kind of filling in on what we were going to be doing with that and giving our recommendations.
- Janet McDonell: Is there an existing evacuation plan for the Main Interior Building, do you know?
- Gregory Brooks: I thought there was.
- Janet McDonell: That's not something you were involved in?
- Gregory Brooks: No. Because the evacuation part was - and that's something, too, we were working on to make sure that there was an evacuation plan once we got there, and the security people were doing that as well.

- Janet McDonell: So, once you arrived at the Main Interior Building on the 12th, that is something that you started to do?
- Gregory Brooks: Not immediately, no. Not immediately. I think that was an afterthought because people assumed there were some evacuation plans available. We understood the first day people went down to the basement and congregated. Well, the basement ceiling is glass, so we were tasked to look into that.
- Janet McDonell: I guess I didn't realize that they went down to the basement on the 11th. I knew that on the morning of the 12th they all gathered in the cafeteria, but—
- Gregory Brooks: I don't know if it was the 11th or the 12th I can't remember which day that was. I was just told they did that.
- Janet McDonell: That they had done that, and that they had no—other than a bullhorn for the Director—they had no public address system.
- Gregory Brooks: That's right.
- Janet McDonell: Maybe just to get to some questions, broader questions, I would be interested to know what impact you think the decentralized structure of the National Park Service might have on its ability to allocate resources. You mentioned earlier that sometimes Shenandoah, that it might take days for a ranger who was supposed to get from Park A to Park B or whatever, it might take days for that to happen. And I understand that occasionally there was some reluctance on the part of park superintendents to release resources for potentially very good reasons.
- Gregory Brooks: Right. And that's the reason I don't want to put all of that on Shenandoah Dispatch. They did their job, whether they showed up late. That's why it was confusing to me whether it's based on what they were doing getting the orders filled or based on a reluctance to release that resource. And I understood why there was reluctance, but at the same time superintendents in other parks probably didn't realize we were not only helping the national parks here, but we've got to help the Bureau of Reclamation, which means that really put a - that strapped out the law enforcement rangers, and I think that's why there was some reluctance there.

Gregory Brooks: There were ideas of contracting things out that were for the Bureau of Reclamation. But then you get into jurisdiction problems. There were a lot of things to be worked out that no one had thought about, and I just feel like yes, the response time in some occasions was based on communication handling.

Janet McDonell: So, I guess back to my original question, do you think that the structure of the Park Service does affect its ability to allocate resources?

Gregory Brooks: I wouldn't say it's the structure as much as the way the - the way the Incident Command works is you do a Resource Order. You order that person, and the person responds. They have a time to respond, and when they are supposed to be released or whatever.

Janet McDonell: And you give that Resource Order to a particular park?

Gregory Brooks: Shenandoah does the calls at that time. Now, there are other communications systems throughout nationwide- not Park Service, but other communications systems that probably are more experienced in major incidents like this, but usually it is based on fire. That's the flaw in the system as far as decentralized is callouts are very rarely available, and usually when you have a fire response, you don't have the problems. But when you order things that you're not accustomed to knowing what you should be ordering, that causes a dilemma. And in this situation, it wasn't firefighters, it was law enforcement men. So that's different for fire centers to do that.

Gregory Brooks: That's my opinion. I'm not saying they're not capable of doing it, but I think they were accustomed to ordering firefighters versus law enforcement.

END OF TAPE 1

START OF TAPE 2

Janet McDonell: I guess your experience with incident management goes back to 1988.

Gregory Brooks: Roughly, yes.

- Janet McDonell: So, you're sort of in a unique position to maybe give me an assessment on how the response to September 11th compares to other events since '88. Was this sort of bigger, and how was it unique?
- Gregory Brooks: This was bigger, but in a sense, in 1992 with Hurricane Andrew, communications there was very limited. You could get there, but the communications problems after - they lost all their phone systems, and we got a satellite to get that going, and it was kind of in the same boat. I'm comparing them a little bit as far as the communications part of it. It took us three days to get going on that incident before we started getting a good control over it. I mean, Rick [Gale] may disagree with me on that, but I could see why once we got all the phone links and the satellite going, then we got a better handle of resources coming in and out of there. So, I do compare it with that as far as communications is concerned. It's probably the largest incident that I've been involved in, 9/11 is, especially on the Washington level. But usually all-risk management we're dealing with catastrophes as far as hurricanes, floods, presidential visits and things like that nature versus a terrorist attack. That was unique in itself.
- Janet McDonell: Do you see either the system itself or the use of the Incident Command System changing at all as a result of September 11th?
- Gregory Brooks: The structure shouldn't change. You can massage it to accommodate your own needs, but the structure still won't change as far as I'm concerned. We have in the National Park Service what used to be called Incident Command System. We use the term Incident Management Team, and those kinds of things you could do, but the structure itself, it's pretty defined. And if you follow that structure, you'll stay out of trouble.
- Janet McDonell: The structure allows enough flexibility, is what you're saying, to modify it for all these different emergencies.
- Gregory Brooks: Right. Definitely.
- Janet McDonell: Okay. Do you view the September 11th attacks as a transforming event for the Park Service in any way?
- Gregory Brooks: Yes, I think we need to change our way of thinking, how we operate in our national parks - not only our national parks, but our

regional offices as well. I think security is - I don't think we were lacking in security. It's just that we need to take a different perspective in how we can create more security, especially for, you know, the icons in the National Park System. I think we've got to balance being able to protect our resources, our visitors, our employees, and then also letting our visitors enjoy the parks. So there has got to be a balance there. There has got to be a change as far as being able to do all of that.

Janet McDonell: There is a sense that our ranger resources, law enforcement ranger resources, protection ranger resources were stretched thin by this. First of all, is that your sense, and then does that make achieving that balance that you just described more difficult?

Gregory Brooks: I think we attempted to achieve it. As far as giving us a grade whether we have achieved that, I couldn't give you an answer on that. I think that you would have to ask more so of the ranger activities folks. That's not particularly what I do, although I am an ex-ranger that converted to maintenance. But I think there's probably studies that would probably say that our national parks are not equipped with the numbers of law enforcement rangers it needs. I can't give you a piece of paper. That's just my opinion, and I imagine someone has that kind of information.

Janet McDonell: Well, we also, as I understand it, don't yet have the information about how those natural and cultural resources have been affected.

Gregory Brooks: Right.

Janet McDonell: All right. What are some of the lessons we've learned about responding to emergencies? You mentioned when the tape was off a few minutes ago about what we might need to be thinking about in terms of our incident system.

Gregory Brooks: The incident management team - what I'm concerned about is, we lost, like I said, Rick Gale was an institution for the system, and we've lost that. He's retiring. And a lot of the incidences I've responded to, and I've been doing this since, you know, 1988-89, it's the same faces that I see. It's the same group of people doing this.

Gregory Brooks: We need to develop some type of recruiting, which we have been trying to do, to get more people involved in all-risk management,

and so we won't be left out in the dark and not prepared for another major incident. Because people are going to be leaving, and you need to start filling these voids.

Gregory Brooks: We have a good structure in place. You know, Washington has this Type-1 Team, the regions have the Type-2 Teams. And I know a lot of Type-2 people, too, and they're the same faces as well. So, we need to develop some type of strategy for recruiting, or people getting involved in all-risk management in order to respond to these. The irony of all-risk management is and speaking from a Washington perspective I'm not in Washington, but I can understand how someone would say, "Well, we don't use these teams all the time. It goes in cycles," which is true. You could go three years without ever using the team. I think that's going to change in the future. But then when you need them, you need them.

Gregory Brooks: I've had three callouts in the last year and a half. That's a lot, and they were pretty major incidents.

Janet McDonell: You mean that you were called personally?

Gregory Brooks: Yes, I responded to them. And like I said, and there's times we're not available unless it's a national emergency. We do our best to always be available for something like that. But I just see - I have a major concern with seeing the same old faces all the time in all these incidents, and we need to have some recruiting efforts, and we also need to have someone in Washington in charge of the incident management teams as well. See, we used to respond to Rick Gale, but Rick is not there anymore. Who is our person that we go through now?

Janet McDonell: Who do you go to now? Someone in ranger activities?

Gregory Brooks: Well, really, right now we have Dennis Burnett or Randy Coffman would call us. That's how we do it right now. And they are aware of these concerns, that we need to develop some type of person in Washington who is going to be handling the all-risk management teams, and getting to some funding, and some recruiting because that's the other thing. When you don't have all these incidents and you go two or three years, you also need to be trained. You need to go through these exercises because you'll get stale if you don't do this process. And every incident is unusual, you know, I mean, it's

different. I mean, presidential visits are pretty much the same, but, you know, hurricanes you may say they're the same, aren't. I mean, this team was involved in but usually they are taking down the Gettysburg Tower two years ago. That was explosives. So, I mean, we've done quite a bit. But I really do hope that someone will take the ball and run with it and try to get into some recruiting efforts and some funding efforts to keep these all-risk management teams going because they are needed in the National Park Service. You can ask for all the law enforcement rangers to respond to an incident, but you've got to have a structure in place to support those rangers, to get them lodged, to give them their incident action plans and tell them what they're going to be doing. You have to support that with finance, and then you have to deal with the news media, and that's why you have to have information. So, I hope somebody would look into that and continue with this process.

Janet McDonell: Given the transportation difficulties in those first few days that you talked about earlier, is there any thought to redesigning these teams so they might be more geographically shaped, or maybe instead of being one- or two-person deep, maybe three-person deep - any thoughts on that?

Gregory Brooks: Each region has their Type-2 Teams.

Janet McDonell: Right, they have Type-2 Teams.

Gregory Brooks: And we did a matrix of what is a Type-1, Type-2, Type-3, Type-4 situation, and your Type-2 Teams are very capable of handling a lot of major incidents. The problem if you get into a Type-1 situation, I would love to have them three deep. We recruited for years and tried to get people to do this, and it's hard to get people to commit to this.

Gregory Brooks: I mean, I have voids in my team right now, some vacancies that I've got to try to fill, and we have continuously tried to do that. It's just that people—I don't know if they've gotten complacent or they just like to stay in their home parks, or their home units, and this is very stressful when you fall in on an incident, to develop these plans and these strategies and implement them—and you have long days, and usually seven days a week, it takes a toll on you. That's why I'm going to repeat myself again and say we need to get in a recruiting effort because there's one day someone is going to

call, "We need a team at such and such a place." I hope I'm wrong, but I'm afraid there may not be a team. That's why I'm going to keep preaching this until I retire.

Janet McDonell: Is there anything in the area of funding? I mean, I guess we really didn't go back to that whole funding cap issue, and how funding limitations might have affected the operations of your team.

Gregory Brooks: You mean in the beginning?

Janet McDonell: Well, in the beginning, but even after that \$100,000 cap was lifted.

Gregory Brooks: Well, the situation with that is, when a delegation is given to you to keep the cost, that's up to the team to try to do that. The situation with a cap, I personally don't have a problem with a cap. The problem with a cap, though, is in some situations is it makes you think more about funding versus reality. I wouldn't do a cap. But I've been to other incidences where a cap has been there. And if I have a problem with that cap, it's just like in this situation I did present it and say, we're going to exceed this, so we need to change.

Gregory Brooks: But you've got to look at it, too, as a manager even in my position here at Colonial, you do have some budget restraints. You don't want to write a blank check because you don't want people to go out and think I can do whatever I want. So, it is kind of a catch-22. But at the same time, it does mentally say should I do this, is it going to cost too much, or should I say I don't care what it costs, this is needed because of safety and security.

Janet McDonnell: Can you cite any cases where you think that a decision might have been if not for that but well, you know, gee, this could exceed our limit, that a decision would have been different?

Gregory Brooks: Chartered flights. I was basing it on not bringing any people on chartered flights because of the cost. If I didn't have a cap, and I didn't have to think about that, I could have gotten my resources in sooner.

Janet McDonnell: Is there anything more that can be learned from the fire community and the way the system is used to respond to fires that we could apply to non-fire events?

- Gregory Brooks: Well, all-risk management is based on the fire situation as far as developing a plan.
- Janet McDonnell: But I think you indicated earlier that the fire system is actually a bit more centralized.
- Gregory Brooks: Yes, as far as I know. Yes, right. I mean, they're designed by- Boise is the fire center, and they're designed for fire. Can I say there is a center designed totally for all-risk management? No, but the centers will probably tell you they can do it. In this situation on 9/11 I think it's somewhat proven that they had problems filling all-risk management resource orders. I think it was a little different for them.
- Gregory Brooks: But no, there is no center that I know of that is designed particularly to handle all-risk management.
- Janet McDonnell: Are there any other lessons that you can think of, anything else you would have maybe done differently, or hoped that someone else would have done differently?
- Gregory Brooks: No, I can't think of anything right now. I think I've said a lot about-
- Janet McDonnell: You have. You've provided a lot of good information.
- Gregory Brooks: I think a good lesson learned, too, is exactly what you're doing here, taking the history of this type of incident, because it's good documentation to have, and someone can go back and utilize it. We haven't done that on a lot of incidents. I really don't even know if they do them with fires, some major fires. But I think that's good to do. I think this is a good process.
- Gregory Brooks: I'm not trying to make work for you. I just think in situations- I think you have to measure what incident you would do that in, but I think that's a lesson learned that we should do more of these versus 10 years from now someone asking what happened.
- Janet McDonnell: So that you can build up that institutional memory, not just in an individual's head, but in a public record.
- Gregory Brooks: Right. Because that individual eventually is going to leave.

- Janet McDonnell: Do you see any need to educate people to a greater extent, whether those people are senior Park Service people, or Park Service employees in general, or leadership in the Interior Department, to educate them about the role that the incident management system can play, and what it can contribute?
- Gregory Brooks: Yes. In order for senior managers to be confident about bringing in a team that they're not experienced with and have never worked with, they need to understand how the system works. There are some, although really quick exercises that incident management works could be given to them.
- Gregory Brooks: Back in Yosemite during the floods, we actually had a lot of employees there that were utilized under the Incident Command System that did not understand the system. We actually gave all the employees training while we were there to show them how the system works, to be used the same way. And I can understand why, when you bring someone in and you give them a delegation of authority to take over everything, and you don't know anything about the system, sure, that's a lack of confidence in the ability of what that team can do. It's not good for the team, it's not good for the person giving the delegation of authority. And we have run into those situations.
- Gregory Brooks: I think education of the system, it's imperative to do that. That's why I'm saying, and I said earlier, too, we need to recruit new people for incident management. We need funding, and we also need to train people in funding to understand the system. I think that would make people feel more comfortable of what the team would actually do.
- Janet McDonnell: Sort of getting them to buy into it, whether they're actually participants in the system or not? They're buying into the principle and the concept.
- Gregory Brooks: Sure.
- Janet McDonnell: Well, thank you.
- Gregory Brooks: Thank you.
- Janet McDonnell: I've gotten a lot of good information, and I appreciate it.

END OF TAPE