

Brass Buttons

A Word From HQUSACE

The Corps entered into a new five-year inter-agency uniform contract with VF Imagewear on 1 October 2005. The award followed a lengthy procurement period, which involved the preparation of a comprehensive specification package and the evaluation of a number of technical and price proposals. This was a very competitive process, which resulted in many improved business practices and reduced costs in many of our uniform items.

During the course of this contract, we will be documenting performance, which could lead to an additional award-year for the contractor. Part of the review process includes direct feedback from you. Please forward any suggestions, problems and compliments to your District Uniform Coordinator at anytime. Your coordinator will work with the National Uniform Committee and Headquarters to ensure that your comments are included in the performance reviews. You can also provide input by completing VF's Comment Cards or going on-line under the *Uniform Program – News/Current Events* page of the NRM Gateway website (corpsslakes.usace.army.mil).

The Corps NRM Uniform Committee met with the National Park/Fish & Wildlife Service committees in San Antonio in January. A number of new uniform items and program changes were discussed. See Jim Runkles' column in this newsletter for a listing of the committee recommendations that will be forwarded to Headquarters for consideration and possible adoption.

I've heard from many that our uniform program has improved significantly over the years. This is a direct result of our strong and effective national Uniform Committee, our District

Coordinators and you! Our uniform contractors have told us many times that the Corps has the most professional, knowledgeable and friendly employees of any client that they work for. Good job all!

Finally, I'd like to thank Barbara Cooper for taking the initiative to create and publish this newsletter. In government, we can never communicate enough and Barbara's newsletter goes a long way in helping get the important uniform message out to everyone.

Steve Austin

Contracting Officer Technical Representative
Natural Resources Management/Operations CoP
HQUSACE



Needle & Thread

NRM Uniform Committee Report

January 31, 2006

The NRM Uniform Committee met in San Antonio, Texas the week of January 22 through 27, 2006. This was the first year the three land management agencies (Corps of Engineers, US Fish & Wildlife Service and National Park Service) met in January as opposed to October. The time was shifted to allow for the agencies to get past early Fiscal Year budget issues. This was also the first meeting since the letting of the new uniform contract with VF Imagewear, formerly VF Solutions.

The Corps of Engineers was represented by Mark Andreasen (NWD), Dean Bonifacio (LRD), Barbara Cooper (SPD), Michele Fromdahl (NWD), Ralph Gendron (NAD), Susan Haney (SWD), Sara Jernigan (SAD), and Jeff Rose (MVD). Steve Austin (HQ and COTR) and Jim Runkles (Committee Chair) also attended.

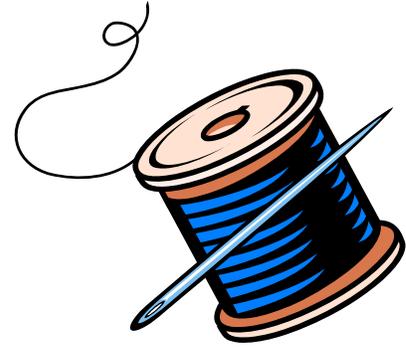
The Committee first went over the results of the NRM Uniform Questionnaire that each of the members had sent to the field the previous month. This served as a basis for many of the discussions on uniform items, policies and procedures for the week.

All the responses were combined into a Matrix with five columns. The columns dealt with 1) the Uniform Website, Item, or Procedure; 2) the Comment itself; 3) how many times this comment occurred; 4) the Action taken by the Committee; and 5) the Justification for that action. The Excel Spreadsheet with that Matrix has been posted to the Gateway Website. The tabs at the bottom of the spreadsheet, reflect the responses from the eight Divisions (NWD counts as two).

The Committee came up with a number of recommendations in response to the comments from the field. I will try to summarize them here.

a. Trousers (as a whole). We received a large number of comments concerning the Cargo Pants that were introduced last year. These were introduced, following the results of a nationwide survey, to replace the jeans. While many positive comments were received about the cargo pants, the general comment was that they were not sturdy enough to serve as work pants. In fact, many requests were submitted to allow the cargo pants to be worn on a daily basis with the Class B Daily Uniform. The committee discussed the various issues and made the following recommendations. First, to allow the wearing of Cargo Pants with the Class B Duty Daily uniform. Second, to adopt into the program the NPS Brush Pant for Class C Work uniform. This duck cloth pant has a good record for durability. Third, the remaining trousers in the system, i.e. the Cool Weather Wools, the Warm Weather Wools, and the Twill trousers will remain in the program. **This will require a modification to the contract before it can be implemented.**

b. Shorts. The shorts currently in the



system were adopted when the previous manufacturer of the shorts moved their operation out of the country. We have continued to receive unfavorable comments about these shorts this year as in years past. The committee decided to request the contractor explore the construction of a new pair of shorts that would be more flexible than the current model and slightly shorter than the current 7" inseam model. **A new short will not be adopted into the system until the contractor has an opportunity to explore what options are available.**

c. Turtlenecks. While many praised the black turtleneck shirt in the system, we also received many comments about the lack of durability of this model. The committee spoke with the contractor about a



Spending the evening chatting with a security guard at "The Alamo" was one of the after-hour highlights for the USACE members of the Inter-Agency Uniform Committee Meeting held in San Antonio. Photo Credit: Mark Andreasen, NWS.

slightly different model turtleneck that would hold its shape better. The contractor is exploring this issue.

Because the new turtleneck will be slightly higher in price, this will require a modification to the contract before it can be implemented.

d. Polo Shirt. The committee was able to see samples of polo shirts and the designs for embroidery and silk-screening to apply to the shirt. The committee made a final selection of style, material and design for the polo shirt and requested the contractor move forward with this action. **This will require a modification to the contract and a period of stock buildup before the polo shirt will be available to the field.**

e. Volunteer Items. At the request of the Volunteer Coordinator, the NRM Committee looked at polo shirts, vests and jackets to offer on the Special Purchase side of the website for Volunteers. The committee recommended polo shirts, both long and short sleeve in red, tan, and white. We also recommended vests in both red and tan, and a "coach's jacket" in red. The key point to each of these items was that they were all made in America, and were off-the-shelf items, thus no delays in construction. Each of these would come with the Volunteer patch attached. **These recommendations were sent to the Volunteer Coordinator in HQ. If approved, the contract would have to be modified before the items would become available.**

f. Hat Trap. This item was offered last year, but restricted to the Special Purchase side of the website. It was felt that this would preclude employees from having to spend their allowance on the item, and encourage projects to purchase them for the employees. Less than 30 of these were purchased last year, and with requests from the field asking for these items to be on the allowance side, the committee directed the contractor to place the hat trap on both sides.

Fleece Hat. The contractor presented a fleece hat to the committee. The committee liked the item and recommended the adoption of the fleece

hat and the removal of the two stocking caps (acrylic and wool) currently in the system. The hat will be embroidered with the Corps castle. **Specifications will have to be developed, and the contract modified before this item will become available.**

6. The committee addressed numerous other issues. Here is a short synopsis of those issues.

a. Duty Shirt. We had several comments concerning the fabric of the duty shirt. This fiscal year marked the beginning of a new contract with VF Imagewear (formerly VF Solutions). In their bid for the contract, they included a new shirt of material we had recently wear-tested. This fabric is the same weight as the former shirt, but has better color retention, and wicking properties. The female wearers will also notice a slightly looser collar on the long sleeve shirt. Currently there is a mixed inventory of both fabrics, but everyone should see this change this fiscal year.

b. Warm Weather Trousers. In answer to suggestions from the field, the contractor has added a permanent crease to the warm weather trousers. This silicon bead has been added to the trousers at no extra cost.

c. Trouser Hems. Many employees commented on the change in hem length on the wool trousers. Previously, the hem was a hidden hem of 1.5." This hidden hem was held in place by a light basting stitch (thus the term "hidden" as the seam did not show). Many employees wear boots and shoes that utilize hooks for the shoestrings. The basting stitch inside the hem would catch on these hooks and tear out the seam. The contractor changed this hem to a seam that goes through the trouser material to prevent the hem from tearing out. This was coordinated with the COTR before changing. Again, this was done at no extra cost to the employee or government.

d. Winter Cap. There were many comments/complaints concerning backorders, some as long as one year, for the Winter Cap. We asked the contractor about this issue. They explained that the backorders were a combination of numerous small problems such as delivery of materials, construction delays, etc. The contractor anticipates that all winter cap backorders will be accomplished by March, 2006.

e. VF Website Issues. The contractor was notified of several small problems with their website. For example, the Measurement Guide link on each product page does not go anywhere. Also, not all the items were listed in the sizing charts. Lastly, the sizing charts for the Bib overalls indicated a waist size, while the available sizes did not match waist sizes. The contractor indicated that they were aware of the problems and would be addressing them in short order.

f. Stocked sizes, Non-stocked sizes, and Made-to-Measure. We received many questions concerning stocked sizes. In an attempt to clarify this issue, the committee has asked the contractor to define Made-to-Measure and Non-Stock items on the website. Hopefully this will clarify some of the problems.

g. Gore-Tex Articles. We received several questions concerning Gore-Tex articles not being rain resistant. The contractor informs us that Gore-Tex articles can be improved with proper care. They have placed instructions for the care and laundering of Gore-Tex that will improve the articles rain resistance.

h. Campaign Hat Templates. The committee asked for a source of "templates" for hat sizing. Our campaign style hats come in Regular, Long Oval and Extra Long Oval, however it is difficult to determine what size to order. Stratton Hats offers a set of Hat Templates for \$150.00. If interested call Jeannie at 708-544-5220.

i. Expedited Shipping. A new feature in the contract this year is Expedited Shipping. If you need your uniforms in a hurry, VF Imagewear offers overnight shipping if the order is placed by 1300 hours Central Time. There is a cost, and the cost must be borne by the employee. Uniform Allowance funds cannot be used for this.

j. UAA Website. Next year, the National Park Service who administers this multi-agency contract, will be changing the UAA Website from a Lotus Notes format to a Windows based format. This will create some very noticeable changes for the em-

ployees. The most notable change will be a change in Account Numbers. We will learn more about this as the year progresses, but all employees should expect some changes.

k. ER 1130-2-550, Chapter 8. With the various changes and improvements to the uniform system, the ER and EP are constantly out-of-date. The Committee is exploring avenues to make the changes easier to process. The current ER/EP, dated March 2002, was modified last year and sent to HQ but never signed. This revised version is already out-of-date. The committee is in the process of updating the ER to make it more general in scope so that minor changes to the uniform will not affect its scope. Meanwhile, the committee is proposing to replace the EP with either an Operations Manual or Policy Letters that can be easily updated. These would be published on the NRM Gateway and updated as needed.

In order to keep everyone informed of all the activities of the committee, I have drafted and attached a memorandum for the field. This memorandum covers in condensed form many of the items discussed in this report. Feel free to contact the undersigned if you have questions concerning this or any other matters concerning the committee's recommendations.

JAMES E. RUNKLES

Chair, NRM Uniform Committee

Seamless Ordering

Passwords Are The Key!

When a Uniform Allowance Authorization (UAA) is created for an employee, there is a record extract downloaded from the UAA database each evening. This file is posted to an ftp site from the NPS host website for VF Imagewear to pull down and process into their database on a daily basis. It could take up to 10 working days for a new employee to receive their user ID and password. If the employee has not received their information in that timeframe, and the UAA was approved, contact your Regional Coordinator to expedite obtaining your logon information.

Once the logon information is received, the employee has the option to change their password from the opening screen of the Uniform website. Click on the link to bring up another screen that will allow the employee to select and re-enter the new password for confirmation. Passwords are case-sensitive.

There are no rules imposed on your password selection but it is suggested that your password be at least six characters long and contain at least one number (for example, My-



Pass2). Do not use spaces in your password. You can change your password at any time.

Employees are responsible for maintaining their passwords. As the uniform website is not used everyday, many employees forget or lose their password. Keep your password in a safe location that you can retrieve over time especially if you are a returning summer hire. If all fails, contact your district uniform coordinator to request your password information be resent to you.

Off The Cuff

Comments from the Field

It is time to get rid of the ugly, poorly made, green stocking cap and replace it with a black one that keeps its shape! The army issue style cap that I got when I went to Afghanistan is a great hat—doesn't stretch out—and matches the black components of our uniform.

Brett Call, Lake Red Rock Project

The Uniform Committee has recommended a new fleece cap that matches our fleece jacket and vest. It will take a while before you can order one because it still needs final approval by HQ, a contract modification and time for VF to stock the warehouse. We have asked VF to not post the website with any newly issued items until there is adequate stock to avoid backorders.

I would like to request a "forum" of what others are doing with old and under utilized uniforms. I was giving my shirts to the Good Will and it was a big pain to remove the patch. I found it much easier to turn the stuff back in. Lately, no one wants to be the repository for used uniforms. I gave away 8 pairs of pants; they didn't fit but there was lots of life left in them.

George Harrington, NWW

Whenever I have the same situation and many in my district do this, we put out an e-mail to the uniform wearers describing the clothing as up for grabs. The first response gets the items.

Susan Haney, SWF

The volunteer patch is now available from VF Solutions for \$1 each in lots of 25. To order, send a fax with a government credit card number to 615-882-8066 (reference #254) to VF Solutions.

Carolyn Bauer, Volunteer Clearinghouse Nashville

There is currently a proposal to add shirts, vests, windbreakers, fleece jackets, hats and volunteer pins to the uniform contract. Volunteer items would be placed on the special purchase side of the uniform website and provide a consistent image and location for outfitting volunteers. If approved, managers will be authorized project funding to acquire these items. Volunteers will also be able to use their own funds if they want more items than what the project supplies them. ear with them.

First I want to say I enjoyed the first issue of the Garment Gazette and hope that you pass on future issues to the field folks. Next I finally got another one of the new winter hats after the first one was a real miss on the fit. I generally wear a size 7 and the small they sent back fits perfect. Thanks for the recommendation to send it back and I'm glad I did.

Patrick Tetreault, NAE

Thank you for the kudos!

What is the definition of Made To Measure and Nonstock items?

Jim Runkles, NWP

MTM is an abbreviation for Made-To-Measure. MTM simply means that VF does not have a pattern for a specific size and they will have to make it to an individual's dimensions once they receive all of the required measurements. This process takes approximately 90-120 days. The reason for the long turnaround time is because first we send the measurements to our pattern maker, who in turn creates a new pattern to our measurements, then the pattern gets delivered to our cutting facility. Once received into cutting, the specific cut then gets worked into our sewing and trim department. The completed garment is then shipped back to our Distribution Center in Virginia, and then processed to the individual's order. There are no returns on a MTM garment, so measurements that are submitted to VF should be taken by a professional. There is no additional cost for MTM items. Nonstock means that VF already has a pattern but that particular size does not generate enough volume to require a stocked inventory readily available for shipment. The normal turnaround time is 60-90 days from the order date. The process involves VF making the special cut in their manufacturing facility and shipping to the individual. These items can be returned. There is no additional cost to the agency or individual for a Nonstock.

Kristi Hinton, Program Manager, VF Imagewear

“Permanent Press”

News on the Natural Resource Management Uniform Program

How green is your uniform? One of the biggest complaints the Uniform Committee members hear is that the color of our pants, shorts, outerwear, etc is not consistent. We have brought this to the attention of VF before and there wasn't an easy resolution to the problem. Since many of the uniform components were made by different manufacturers and there is a range in the contract for the dye-lot variable it was difficult to obtain a standard color.

VF revisited this issue this past year. After working very hard with our fabrics and dyes, they were successful in narrowing the margin of the color standard for a more uniform color product for us. Color samples were sent back to vendors multiple times to narrow the acceptable range in the dye to get that consistent appearance. During a recent Nashville meeting, the VF representative displayed samples from directly off the warehouse shelves. All the items were the same color, no matter who manufactured them.

Natural Resource personnel can finally see some consistency in the wearing of the gray and green!



The above photo illustrates the inconsistent color lots by VF's subcontractors before a standard was created. The photo below illustrates that all the clothing matched the new "Earth Green" color just right from the warehouse shelves. There may be some isolated items from the old color still in the warehouse, but VF has been trying to eradicate most of the old color from their inventory.



**For newsletter submissions, send to
Barbara.A.Cooper @usace.army.mil.**

**Contributions for the next edition are
due by May 31, 2006.**

**The newsletter is posted on the
Gateway website.**

Wash and Wear

Maintaining the NRM Uniform

Need to remove a simple spot or stain? Try these tips:

1. Grass Stains: Rub detergent or a pre-wash directly into stain. Clean promptly.
2. Tree Sap: Mix a small amount of ammonia with water and gently rub into spot. After spot has dried, have garment cleaned.
3. Ink/Ball Point Pen: Rub white petroleum jelly into stain. Soak in detergent solution and launder.
4. Mud/Rust: Dry and brush off excess. Sponge with water. Loosen with brush. Flush with water. Feather out and dry. Repeat with vinegar if necessary.
5. Coffee, Tea, Catsup: Sponge with water and soak stain in glycerin. Flush with water. Feather out and dry.
6. Blood: Sponge with cold water. Sponge and flush with naphtha. Feather out and dry.
7. Motor oil/Tar: Apply starch/naphtha paste. Dry and brush off excess. Sponge and flush with naphtha. Feather out and dry.
8. Butter, Cooking Oil: Sponge and flush with naphtha, feather out and dry.
9. Chewing Gum: Sponge in naphtha and scrape off gum. Feather out and dry.
10. Chocolate: Dry and brush off excess. Sponge with naphtha and dry.
11. Glue: Sponge with water. Loosen with brush. Flush with water. Feather out and dry.
12. Iodine: Sponge with rubbing alcohol against blotter paper. Flush with water. Feather out and dry.
13. Mayonnaise: Apply starch/naphtha paste. Dry and brush off excess. Sponge and flush with naphtha, feather and dry.

When removing stains from uniforms, the following precautionary steps should be noted:

- A. Most of the chemicals listed above for spot removal are flammable and should be used in a well-ventilated area free of any open flame. After treatment, air dry. Do not dry in a tumble dryer after treatment.
- B. All work should be done with a clean blotter underneath the stain areas.
- C. Feathering out prevents ringing and is done by starting outside the stain area and lightly brushing towards the center.
- D. These procedures are provided only as a service and should not be interpreted as a warranty.



Outdated Fashion Deauthorized Uniform Wear

The following items were at one time part of the NRM Uniform Program, but have been either replaced by other uniform items or removed from the program. Should an employee still have these items, they should remove any identification (patch) and retire these items from service. Patches should be either turned into Supervisors or destroyed.

1. All Class A Uniform items have been eliminated which include:
 - a. Dress shirt, pale green, long or short sleeved
 - b. Trousers, gray, wool or polyester
 - c. Belt, black, 1" wide, plain with gold buckle
 - d. Tie, green with gray Corps castles
2. Coat, "Tuffy-Topper", green with black faux fur collar and detachable lining
3. Trousers, "Challenger", green polyester
4. Trousers, "Chetopa" green polyester
5. Vest, green, down-filled
6. Vest, green, hollow filled
7. Sweater, gray, Commando-style
8. Hat, Gray, Sheriff's Style, Felt or Straw
9. Jacket, Green, Gabardine ("Texaco" jacket) with zip out liner
10. Any uniform item bearing the old rectangular shoulder patch.

The uniform items below have been replaced in the uniform program, however they are still authorized for wear until such time as they become faded, stained, torn or otherwise unserviceable.

1. Coveralls, Green, Insulated
2. Hat, Fur Trooper, Green with Black faux fur
3. Raincoat, Reversible, Green/Orange
4. Windbreaker, Green with epaulets and brass buttons.

