



National Park Service  
Department of the Interior

Grand Canyon National Park  
Arizona

U.S. Forest Service  
Department of Agriculture

Kaibab National Forest  
Arizona



## HELITACK MODULE INTERACTION PLAN



## GRAND CANYON NATIONAL PARK AND KAIBAB NATIONAL FOREST

### HELITACK MODULE INTERACTION PLAN

#### Purpose

The purpose of this plan is to provide the Grand Canyon Zone (GCZ) with an efficient and effective helicopter program. This is a continuation of the idea initiated by Mike Minton in 2006 to create a closer working relationship between the Grand Canyon National Park (GRCA) and Kaibab National Forest (KNF) helicopter programs. The goal of this interaction is to have two helitack crews that can integrate smoothly and work together on a regular basis. This will be accomplished through combined training, trading of crewmembers and helicopter management support from overhead. Combining the modules to perform heli-rappel training will improve cohesion and allow the modules to trade both rappellers and spotters when critical needs arise.

#### Pre-Season

The “Pre-Season” portion of this Plan allows the two modules to spend a significant amount of time together which should improve crew cohesion. All of the advantages of the previous plans will be seen again with the 2009 plan. The Pre-Season portion of the plan consists of bringing the two modules together to achieve orientation, training and operational experience. The bulk of the training will be focused on Helirappel and should allow the two modules to “fully interact”. Such interaction is critical for members of each module when they swap out later in the season and should allow them to easily rappel out of either model of aircraft (Bell 407 and MD 900). Interchangeability of crewmembers and managers is an important goal of this cross-training.

The Pre-Season training schedule is as follows:

- Feb 21<sup>st</sup> – 25<sup>th</sup>: Coverage of SRHB by KNF manager for HAI awards ceremony
- April 13<sup>th</sup> – 17<sup>th</sup>: S-271 training at Pittman Valley Helibase (instructor support from GRCA)
- April 20<sup>th</sup>: RT-130 at GRCA South Rim Helibase
- April 21<sup>st</sup>: RT-271 at GRCA South Rim Helibase
- April 27<sup>th</sup>- 29<sup>th</sup>: Rappel Ground School and Tower Training @ Prescott Fire Center
- April 30<sup>th</sup>: Pittman Valley Helibase orientation and MD-900 Live rappels
- May 1<sup>st</sup>: Bell 407 Live Rappel Training at Pittman Valley Helibase
- May <sup>TBD</sup>: PSD machine refresher and training at the South Rim Helibase

Although the GRCA and KNF helicopter program managers have tried to balance the training between forest and park facilities, much of it will occur at GRCA because of the need to staff the park helicopter on a daily basis. However, an additional benefit will be for operational experience for both modules as regular, day-to-day missions occur during training. For the 2009 season all helirappel training will be performed away from the South Rim Helibase to avoid distractions and conflicts with other missions. This season the Mesa Verde Helitack program will back fill the SRHB to allow both GCZ modules to maintain an uninterrupted training schedule.

## **Season**

During the “Season”, all aircraft (one on the Forest and two on the Park) are on contract with the ability to perform their full range of missions. If one of the three aircraft is short-handed, the interaction of the modules should allow individual crew members to be moved around until adequate coverage is provided. The Pre-Season cross-training and interaction should prevent compromising either program during these crew exchanges. The two helicopter program managers will coordinate their final decisions with their respective supervisors.

When wildland fire activity increases, staging both modules at the park’s South Rim Helibase should be considered. This proved extremely advantageous in 2006. A side benefit for forest helitack crew members is exposure to the interagency Helicopter Training Academy (HTA) and day-to-day park missions. Forest module members will be given opportunities to function as instructors in the HTA program which we believe would be of value to both agencies.

With changes to the KNF’s helicopter contract, now May 1 until Aug 28, some additional coordination will need to occur between the two program managers. The KNF helicopter will now spend the end of its contract on the Beaverhead-Deer Lodge NF in Montana. With this change for 2009 the program managers will work together to ensure adequate support of all helicopters hosted in the Grand Canyon Zone.

## **Post-Season**

The “Post-Season” portion of the Helitack Module Interaction Plan consists of how to allow the modules to interact after the Forest’s helicopter has gone off contract. There are many possibilities but an essential component is that the park’s helicopter is on a year-around contract and requires continuous staffing. That would become the priority for both modules during the Post-Season with exceptions as specified by each agency’s Fire Management Officers.

The Post-Season has been divided into two periods: the *Immediate Post-Season* when seasonal staffing continues to be available and *Late Post-Season* when personnel are limited to permanent and career-seasonal employees. Interaction possibilities for both periods will be evaluated on a day-by-day basis.

As discovered in previous seasons, GRCA and KNF module leaders must maintain frequent communications to assess each agency’s needs when conflicts arise over the demand for a limited number of aviation staff. If adequate communications between the module leaders cannot occur for some reason, their respective supervisors or duty officers should be contacted regarding the availability of personnel.

### *Immediate Post-Season:*

1. Provide desired fire staffing level to park’s helicopter.
2. Provided services to forest / park individually as directed by fire management officers.
3. Make available a CWN module for use in the zone.
4. Make available individuals to work on currency / developmental positions nationally.
5. Assemble a module of 4 to 8 to be utilized for interagency RX or Fire Use projects.

*Late Post-Season:*

1. Provide desired project staffing level to park's helicopter.
2. Work together on employee development and planning issues.
3. Provide interagency training opportunities such as S-270, S-371, S-372, B-3, M-3, etc. to the local units and the region as requested.

**Conclusion**

The concept of helitack modules from Grand Canyon National Park and the Kaibab National Forest interacting is sound and certainly has merit. However, the successful implementation of this concept can be difficult and therefore requires constant attention by members of both aviation programs.

At the end of each calendar year, forest and park helicopter program managers will solicit feedback from Fire Management Officers, Duty Officers, the Williams Interagency Dispatch Center, aviation management staff, individual members of both modules and other helicopter users. The two helicopter program managers will jointly produce an end-of-year evaluation to capture and consolidate this feedback. This evaluation will also contain recommendations for improvement as well as an assessment regarding whether the interaction plan should continue.

**Signatures**

<u>/s/ James Pettit</u> James Pettit, KNF Helicopter Program Manager	<u>03/06/09</u> Date
<u>/s/ Jay Lusher</u> Jay Lusher, GRCA Helicopter Program Manager	<u>03/04/09</u> Date
<u>/s/ Joe Reinarz</u> Joe Reinarz, Williams District Fire Management Officer	<u>03/16/09</u> Date
<u>/s/ Michael J. Ebersole</u> Michael Ebersole, Interagency Unit Aviation Officer	<u>03/17/2009</u> Date
<u>/s/ David Mertz</u> Dave Mertz, KNF Fire Staff Officer	<u>03/23/09</u> Date
<u>/s/ Dan Oltrogge</u> Dan Oltrogge, GRCA Fire & Aviation Officer	<u>3/20/09</u> Date