

THE
FUTURE
OF
AMERICA'S
NATIONAL
PARKS

A Report to the President of the United States
by the Secretary of the Interior Dirk Kempthorne

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From the Secretary



Dear Mr. President,

Inspired by the passions of thousands of citizens and mindful that boldness matches our history, today I bring you our vision to ensure that the American love affair with national parks endures.

Above: Interior Secretary Dirk Kempthorne joins a Junior Ranger program.

Cover: Family experiencing Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area, California.

Americans love their parks. Yosemite and Yellowstone, Grand Canyon and Grand Teton, Shiloh and Shenandoah, and other parks are sanctuaries of enjoyment, recreation, learning, and personal renewal. They preserve majestic natural wonders and offer spectacular backcountry hiking. They are home to grizzlies, moose, spawning salmon, and birds of all feathers. They help us keep watch over battlefields hallowed by red badges of courage. They keep culture alive at sites dedicated to the performing arts, poetry, and music. Urban parks introduce inner-city children to outdoor wonders. Parks teach and inspire. Parks are America the beautiful...the cultural...the historical.

Last August, on the 90th anniversary of the National Park Service, you directed me to write specific performance goals to be achieved so our parks enjoy “another century of conservation, preservation, and enjoyment.” Because parks are set aside for America’s future, the best goals meet the needs of both parks and future generations.

America’s population is growing, aging, becoming more diverse, and more urbanized. Children are increasingly disconnected from the outdoors. Urban sprawl has affected the woods

and fields where many of today’s parents and grandparents played as children. Modern technology and virtual experiences compete with authentic learning adventures and personal exploration of our nation’s nature and history.

National parks find themselves in changing landscapes, compromised by invasive species that disrupt native plant and animal communities. Sensitive freshwater species, including native trout, are missing from park habitats. Many ocean fish are in decline, while coral reefs—popular showcases of dazzling biological complexity—display signs of distress. Fragmented habitats result in fewer migratory birds returning to national parks.

The challenge facing the National Park Service is to conserve what is timeless while keeping pace with the modern needs of Americans. The National Park Service must make a 21st-century commitment to work in partnership to preserve parks, while re-connecting adults and children to the outdoors, history, and culture. An inner-city child in Washington, D.C. who catches a bluegill in a cement-lined pond in Constitution Gardens may one day explore the wilds of Alaska fishing for king salmon.

School children visiting Channel Islands National Park may grow up to be underwater archaeologists. Students touring Gettysburg witness history and courage, forever shaping their lives. These experiences will only continue if parks are preserved.

In 40 listening sessions across America, we heard Americans express their hopes, dreams and, frankly, their concerns for national parks. We received 6,000 comments, talked with employees, experts, and advocates, and consulted with Office of Management and Budget Director Rob Portman and Council on Environmental Quality Chairman Jim Connaughton. The universal message was that parks need bold goals, clear objectives, specific strategies, and increased and accountable public and private investment.

I have also had the honor of discussing your Centennial Initiative with a true champion of national parks, your wife, First Lady Laura Bush. She demonstrates her commitment, through her work with Preserve America, to the places that honor our history. Her service and dedication to all national parks, as honorary chairwoman of the National Park Foundation, serve as an example and inspiration to all of us.

This report identifies overarching goals to guide the work leading up to the 100th anniversary in 2016. The National Park Service will transform these goals into reality. In consultation with partners and using these goals as a framework, every park superintendent will craft an implementation strategy.

These goals require increased investment. Mr. President, your 2008 budget is the largest in National Park Service history. Next year Americans will see 3,000 more uniformed park rangers. Your initiative will inspire future administrations to sustain this investment.

You also committed an additional mandatory \$100 million for each of the next 10 years if matched by private donations. This funding will spur philanthropic investment, a national park tradition. Thirty national parks

began with private gifts. You also asked for centennial projects and programs to continue the “legacy of leveraging philanthropic, partnership, and government investments for the benefit of national parks and their visitors.” Americans responded to your call in force. Some 2,000 ideas were submitted. The National Park Foundation, chartered by Congress to seek gifts benefiting national parks, will work with park friends groups to raise necessary funds.

In the spirit of partnership bolstered by the listening sessions, National Park Service Director Mary Bomar and I will continue to engage the American people in fulfilling this vision for the future of national parks.

This August 25th, on the 91st anniversary, I will report on each park’s centennial strategy as well as projects that should be funded in 2008. All projects will meet the highest standards of accountability and transparency. This sets the tradition that the Secretary of the Interior will report annually on progress achieved and future actions to be taken.

We will work cooperatively with Congress on this initiative. Democratic and Republican leaders support this effort. They see national parks as you do: an American treasure, not a partisan issue. When first created, national parks helped unify a nation divided by civil war. Parks should remain a unifying and enduring source of pride.

The 21st-century National Park Service will be energized to preserve parks and welcome visitors. Stewardship and science will guide decisions. An inventory of all wildlife in parks will be completed, a vital baseline to monitor change and adjust management. Strategic acquisitions will protect landscapes. Parks will be known as America’s best classrooms. We will work carefully to add new parks to tell America’s stories. Facilities will be in better condition. Hallowed battlefields will be preserved. Majestic species that symbolize this nation, such as bison and bald eagles, will thrive in their native habitats. A new era of private-

public partnerships will bring greater excellence to parks. More volunteers will add value to park experiences. The latest information technology will captivate young people with the national park story. Children will reconnect to the outdoors and lead healthier lives. A new generation of conservationists will convey parks unimpaired to the next generation.

Therefore, firm in the conviction that the golden years for national parks have not passed but are ahead, I propose five overarching goals to guide the National Park Service each day for the next nine years leading up to its 100th anniversary:

- Lead America in preserving and restoring treasured resources;
- Demonstrate environmental leadership to the nation;
- Offer superior recreational experiences where visitors explore and enjoy nature and the great outdoors, culture and history;
- Foster exceptional learning opportunities connecting people to parks, especially children and seniors; and
- Achieve management and partnership excellence to match the magnificence of the treasures entrusted to its care.

Sincerely,

DIRK KEMPTHORNE

From the Director



“National parks are special places that unite us all as Americans. . . as we prepare for the centennial, all Americans will stand united for their national parks.”

Mary A. Bomar
17th Director of the
National Park Service

As an “American by Choice” for three decades, I stand shoulder-to-shoulder with 300 million of my fellow citizens, united in the common cause of our national parks. In October 1977, I took the oath of citizenship, and received a presidential letter that told me I had the right and the responsibility to participate in our government. Little did I know that 29 Octobers later, I would take another oath—this time as the first naturalized citizen responsible for all our magnificent national parks.

There are special places that unite us all as Americans, whether your ancestors arrived here thousands of years ago, 300 years ago, or three weeks ago. National parks are those places, and it is our shared responsibility to preserve them for the generations yet to come.

On August 25, 1916, the National Park Service was formed to manage special places set aside to reflect the character of a great nation—and preserve them for our children and grandchildren. Today, the National Park Service manages 391 sites, and also reaches beyond park boundaries to help communities preserve their heritage and promote outdoor recreation. What an awesome responsibility—and one that I take very seriously.

The Director celebrating the Easter Egg Roll, an annual tradition on the White House lawn.



The men and women of the National Park Service, our partners, and our volunteers are proud to carry out these responsibilities. Much has been accomplished, and more remains to be done to fulfill a common American dream—to leave things better for those who follow us. As we look forward to our next century, the National Park Service will develop new programs and practices—and perhaps a few new parks—to create exciting opportunities for conservation, preservation, and enjoyment.

To keep our parks and programs vibrant for another century, Secretary Kempthorne has embraced five goals to guide us as we prepare for 2016. Bold in concept and broad in reach, these goals provide the opportunity for every American to make meaningful contributions to “America’s best idea.”

These goals, national strategies, and potential projects will be supported by centennial plans for each of our 391 sites. Superintendents are working with park friends, advocacy groups, and community leaders to prepare the vision and outline specific actions for their own parks. They will also identify the specific projects and programs to be proposed for public/private funding between now and 2016.

Based on our listening sessions across the nation and on reports from park superintendents and program managers throughout the National Park Service, we are developing a list of centennial projects that will ensure all parks benefit from this effort, so that all visitors can enjoy vibrant national parks.

We will also be accountable to the American people for our actions and develop benchmarks to measure our success. Our business practices will ensure transparency and accountability with the funds entrusted to us by both the taxpayers and philanthropic donors. And we will report back to the citizens to tell them how we are doing.

The National Park Service will care for the parks and foster a new generation of stewards to care for the riches we enjoy as Americans. The enduring legacy of the centennial will be to engage new generations of Americans in the values of their national parks and ensure their care for a second century.

The National Park Service will educate our visitors, especially our children, and empower them as citizens. We will rely on more than traditional “bricks and mortar” projects as we look to connect Americans to their parks via technology, trails, and educational programs.

The National Park Service will create recreational experiences second to none as a right of all Americans. In 1912, a British diplomat described our national parks as, “The best

idea that America ever had.” Almost a century later, we must do all we can to ensure we continue that legacy. Americans of the 21st century deserve no less than our best.

The National Park Service will be environmental leaders to preserve the quality of parks for our children’s children. We will use the sciences not only to inform our visitors, but to preserve our parks and respond to changing conditions in our parks, on the planet, and in our society. Whether we are removing invasive species from parkland or broadening our stories to reach diverse audiences, parks will keep in step with changing times. We have enormous potential as a living classroom, where what we do and how we do it can serve as models to others—from our care of facilities and landscapes, to restoration of ecosystems, to the use of environmentally friendly technologies. All have the potential to transform both the National Park Service and America.

The National Park Service will organize for action—it will not be business as usual as we shift into high gear for our centennial. We hereby devote ourselves to developing the next generation of leaders, and providing them with the tools and business practices that will reinforce confidence in our stewardship capacities.

As we prepare for our centennial, it will take an army of supporters to help in these efforts. From national organizations like the National Park Foundation, to more than 160 park friends groups to 140,000 volunteers, we will rely on them to augment the efforts of the 20,000 men and women of the National Park Service.

This is not only a report to the president but a pledge to the American people, who are the shareholders in the greatest system of parks and special places in the world. . . a pledge that the men and women of the National Park Service will continue to preserve these wonderful places for the generations yet to come.

Sincerely,

MARY A. BOMAR

The Centennial Initiative will prepare parks for the next century, when new trends will reshape our society and make unprecedented demands of preservation, education, and recreation.

The Case for Change

Changing demographics

National parks need to prepare for a larger, older, and more diverse population that is experiencing cultural changes.

The retirement of the baby boom generation creates more time for them to visit and volunteer at parks.

The U.S. population will grow and become more diverse. It is projected to increase by 40 percent from 300 million today to 420 million in 2050. In that same period of time, the Hispanic population will grow from 13 percent to 25 percent. The number of African Americans will rise by two percent. The percentage of white Americans will decline by 10 percent.

Between 2000 and 2050, the number of people between ages 65 and 84 will increase 115 percent. Those 85 and older will increase 390 percent.

Population migration

National parks will become increasingly important as landscapes protected from urbanization. Urban and suburban development and population increases will add pressure to protect park resources, especially along park boundaries.

By 2025, 75 percent of Americans will live within 100 miles of the nation's coasts.

Population increases in the West will place more Americans closer to large national parks such as Yosemite, Olympic, and Mount Rainier.

Workers value time over money

Greater leisure time and time with family present an opportunity for national parks to provide meaningful experiences that allow productive and engaging use of these precious hours.

A recent Harris poll found that one-third of Americans expect to have more leisure time in the next five years than they now have. That same poll found that workers wish they had about one more day of leisure per week.

In the 21st century, workers given the choice may trade higher salaries for more time with their families.

Children disconnected from the outdoors

National parks offer an ideal venue to reconnect children with the outdoors through active education and recreation.

The Kaiser Family Foundation reports that young people spend 6.5 hours a day using electronic media.

Surveys also show that 70 percent of mothers played outdoors every day as children, compared with 31 percent of their children.

Without concerted effort, children will continue to spend less and less time in direct contact with nature. This adversely affects children's physical and mental health.

Studies show that getting kids out of doors, away from television and video games, fosters creative mental activity and concentration and reduces depression.

A wired America

For parks to remain relevant, especially to young people, they will need to stay abreast of technological change and remain flexible in providing content consistent with visitor expectations.

Paradoxically, to get children outdoors, we must reach them indoors through computers.

The use of handheld wireless devices dominates American society. The use of geo-positioning systems and online social networking is becoming commonplace. This will be replaced by technology not yet imagined.

This technology creates a dilemma for national parks. While some visit parks to escape the latest technology, others expect it to enhance their park experience. Parks must balance technological opportunities with the need to offer sanctuary from the pressures of modern life.

The changing planet

Maintaining national parks in an era of rapid global change will demand the highest levels of performance from the National Park Service and the involvement of the American people.

Changing climate, weather patterns, sea level, wildlife communities, and regional landscapes will require science-based adaptive strategies and management for our nation's natural heritage to remain intact.

Retiring employees

As the National Park Service loses experienced employees, it gains the opportunity to reshape its workforce.

The average age of National Park Service employees is 47 years.

Eleven percent of employees are eligible to retire immediately. More than 35 percent will be eligible in the next five years.

Charitable giving trends

The National Park Service has a rich tradition of philanthropic support. Thirty national parks were created through private donations, and many more are enhanced by the contributions of people who care about them. We need to rekindle this tradition.

In 2005, charitable giving exceeded \$260 billion. Causes related to the National Park Service mission—education; health; arts, culture, and humanities; environment; and animals—received \$90 billion.

In 2005, the National Park Service received \$27 million in cash gifts. The combined value of contributed services totaled more than \$200 million.

Podcast tour at Valley Forge National Historical Park, Pennsylvania. Parks are exploring innovative technologies to provide dynamic information and interpretation.



Investing in the Future

“A vital goal for this country would be to prepare the parks, to guard the parks, to conserve the parks, and to make the parks relevant to the American people in honor of the 100th anniversary.”

President George Bush’s charge to the National Park Service, issued during its 90th anniversary, calls for all Americans to work together to prepare our national parks for another century of conservation, preservation, and enjoyment. For fiscal year 2008, President Bush proposed the largest operating budget in National Park Service history and launched the \$3 billion National Park Centennial Initiative to provide the National Park Service with resources to meet this challenge.

PUBLIC AND PRIVATE INVESTMENT IN NATIONAL PARKS

President’s Centennial Commitment

\$100 million per year for 10 years in federal spending will fund new levels of excellence in parks. These funds will hire 3,000 more seasonal national park rangers, guides, and maintenance workers; repair buildings; improve landscapes; and enroll more children in Junior Ranger and Web Ranger programs. Together with private donations and the president’s challenge funds, this provides the potential for up to **\$3 billion** in new funds over the next 10 years.

President’s Centennial Challenge

\$100 million per year of federal mandatory funding to match **\$100 million or more in cash donations** to the National Park Service. The Department of the Interior transmitted to the Congress its legislative proposal to create the National Park Centennial Challenge Fund Act, which would provide these funds through 2016.

Funding the First Steps: 2008

\$40.6 million to hire 3,000 new seasonal park rangers for interpretation, resource protection, and maintenance

\$35 million increase to cyclic maintenance; \$10 million dedicated to historic structures

\$3.4 million to expand the Volunteers In Parks program

\$1 million to enhance youth connections to parks through Junior Ranger and Web Ranger programs

\$20 million in flexible park base funding for cultural and natural resource protection and preservation

President George Bush and Interior Secretary Dirk Kempthorne announce the Centennial Initiative at Shenandoah National Park, Virginia.

In announcing his Centennial Initiative,
President Bush emphasized the need to listen:

“I encourage you to invite and receive suggestions from those who desire to preserve the scenic, cultural, historical, geological, and recreational values of our national parks.”

Listening to Americans



*Listening session in
Gatlinburg, Tennessee.*

The National Park Service reached out to people to listen to their hopes and ideas for the future of America’s national parks.

By sharing their thoughts through face-to-face listening sessions, a website, and written comments, Americans helped to shape this report.

*“I am a resident of Manhattan and a member of the Friends of **Acadia National Park**. I went there for the first time on the anniversary of September 11th, because I couldn’t bear to be here. I lost many friends in that event.*

I fell in love with the park.”

New York City listening session participant



*Acadia National Park,
Maine.*

What We Asked...

1. Imagine you, your children, or future generations enjoying national parks in 2016 and beyond. What are your hopes and expectations?
2. What role do you think national parks should play in the lives of Americans and visitors from around the world?
3. What are the signature projects and programs that you think should be highlighted for completion over the next 10 years?



Listening session at Cuyahoga Valley National Park, Ohio.

FORGING A SHARED VISION

- ▶ Conducted more than 40 listening sessions from Alaska to Florida
- ▶ Received comments online and by mail
- ▶ Heard from 4,500 people
- ▶ Considered suggestions from non-profit partners and advocacy, environmental, and recreation groups
- ▶ Interviewed park employees and retirees
- ▶ Consulted with Members of Congress and state and local officials
- ▶ Summarized 6,000 comments

What We Heard...

“A visit to a national park should **cause you to think**, to learn, to experience, and grow.”

“I hope that if and when aliens ever land on this planet, they do not say ‘Take us to your leader.’ Rather, they say **‘Take us to your national parks.’**”

“National Parks play an important role in both domestic and international tourism. They represent **what is right** with the United States. Or at least they should.”

“Opportunities need to be **available for youth** not only to visit national parks, but to get their hands dirty and serve.”

“I envision **investments in technology** that will provide a dynamic experience that goes beyond each individual park and provides a global linkage.”

“Each site should exude confidence, sturdiness of buildings—both new and historical—and **a sense of awe.**”

“Allow people to experience a landscape that is free of modern noise and distraction. Many places can offer noise and bustle. Very few offer **tranquility.**”

“National Parks must reflect the best of the American people in all of their **diversity**. They should be places where skin color differs, where multiple languages are spoken, where program content reflects cultural experience, and where people with physical disabilities are able to have a true wilderness experience.”

Vision for the Future

CENTENNIAL



INITIATIVE

In celebration of the 100th anniversary of the National Park Service in 2016, America invites the world to discover the meaning of national parks to their lives and inspires people to both experience and become devoted to these special places.



Taking a closer look at Cape Hatteras National Seashore, North Carolina.

The National Park Centennial Initiative advances the National Park Service's role as the world leader in natural and cultural resource stewardship.

It enlivens opportunities for people to enjoy the resources entrusted to our care and challenges our leaders to achieve even greater success.

We will engage community partners to reach young people and new audiences, enriching their lives and protecting America's treasures for future generations.

We will work with the leaders of the House and Senate Energy and Natural Resources and Appropriations committees to gain support for the centennial legislation and funding.

Our goals emerged from these themes:

- Stewardship
- Environmental Leadership
- Recreational Experience
- Education
- Professional Excellence

Caring for America's Treasures
Stewardship

In 1916, the National Park Service accepted six million acres for safekeeping, a responsibility that now exceeds 84 million acres. The challenge is to conserve what is timeless while keeping pace with the needs of modern Americans. Leading up to 2016, visitors will experience superior park services, maintenance, and restoration.

Young volunteers in the Urban Trailblazers Summer Program clean up the Lands End trail at Golden Gate National Recreation Area, California.

The National Park Service leads America and the world in preserving and restoring treasured resources. We will:

- Provide inspiring, safe, and accessible places for people to enjoy—the standard to which all other park systems aspire.
- Improve the condition of park resources and assets.
- Set the standard of excellence in urban park landscape design and maintenance.
- Assure that no compelling chapter in the American heritage experience remains untold and that strategically important landscapes are acquired, as authorized by Congress.
- Serve as the preeminent resource laboratory by applying excellence in science and scholarship to understand and respond to environmental changes.
- Encourage children to be future conservationists.

SPECIFIC PERFORMANCE GOALS

Rehabilitate high-priority historic buildings to good condition, and help communities to preserve their history through programs like Preserve America.

Restore native habitats by controlling invasive species and reintroducing key plant and animal species.

Improve high-priority assets to **acceptable condition**, as measured by the Facility Condition Index.

Improve the natural resources in parks, as measured by the vital signs developed under the Natural Resource Challenge.

Complete all **cultural resource inventories** for designated priority resources.

POTENTIAL ACTIONS AND EXAMPLES

Protect battlefields from encroachment by acquiring high-priority lands at **Richmond National Battlefield Park** and **Pecos National Historical Park's Glorieta Battlefield**.

Finish **Flight 93 National Memorial** to honor the heroes of September 11th.

Rehabilitate facilities, roads, trails, and campgrounds in the National Historic Landmark District at **Mount Rainier National Park**.

Demonstrate excellence in park design, maintenance, and visitor services at the **National Mall & Memorial Parks** in Washington, D.C.

Accelerate and complete **all-taxa biota studies** in 32 ecoregions so the National Park Service has a comprehensive plant and animal inventory.

Demonstrate restoration excellence by returning natural water flows through **Everglades National Park** and **Olympic National Park's Elwha River**.



The nation's first conservationists were those who created national parks. National parks must promote environmental leadership that comes with being America's greatest gift, especially in the face of a growing population and environmental change.

Denali National Park's new LEED silver-certified Denali Visitor Center, Alaska.

Setting the Green Standard

Environmental Leadership

The National Park Service demonstrates environmental leadership to the nation. We will:

- Reduce environmental impacts of park operations.
- Inspire an environmental conscience in Americans.
- Engage partners, communities, and visitors in shared environmental stewardship.

SPECIFIC PERFORMANCE GOALS

Establish programs to showcase **exemplary environmental practices** and increase visitor awareness of how the practices apply to their daily lives, as measured by surveys.

Demonstrate environmental excellence through increased use of **alternative energy and fuels** at every park.

Reduce the environmental impacts of park operations on air and water quality.

Serve as a model for energy efficiency, under Executive Order 13423, by ensuring that every new park facility achieves at least the silver rating equivalent under the **Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) standards**.

POTENTIAL ACTIONS AND EXAMPLES

Demonstrate highest standards of energy efficient design using the **USS Arizona Memorial** Visitor Center as an example.

Require **all parks** to complete energy use evaluations and make adjustments accordingly.

Develop an alternative fuel shuttle service, working with the State of Hawaii, at **Hawaii Volcanoes National Park**.

Communicate environmental practices used in parks that can be used residentially and commercially.

Demonstrate the use of alternative bio-fuels to reduce diesel fuel use in **remote Alaska parks**.

Enjoying Nature and Culture

Recreational Experience



Biking the trails in Canyonlands National Park, Utah.

National parks restore minds, hearts, and souls. Many Americans, especially children, are increasingly disconnected from the great outdoors. National parks will be part of the solution to reduce obesity, chronic illness, and adult-onset diabetes. More Americans will volunteer their leisure hours to help park visitors and improve landscapes.

National parks are superior recreational destinations where visitors have fun, explore nature and history, find inspiration, and improve health and wellness. We will:

- Encourage collaboration among and assist park and recreation systems at every level—federal, regional, state, local—to help build an outdoor recreation network accessible to all Americans.
- Establish “volun-tourism” excursions to national parks for volunteers to help achieve natural and cultural resource protection goals.
- Expand partnerships with schools and boys and girls associations to show how national park experiences can improve children’s lives.
- Focus national, regional, and local tourism efforts to reach diverse audiences and young people and to attract visitors to lesser-known parks.

SPECIFIC PERFORMANCE GOALS

Increase annual volunteer hours by 100 percent, from 5.2 million hours to 10.4 million hours.

Increase visitation by 25 percent at lesser-known parks through a national tourism effort aimed at helping people to discover the breadth of parks and experiences.

Rehabilitate over 2,000 miles of trails within or connected to national parks, including trails accessible to those with disabilities.

Increase the number of visitors that attend ranger-facilitated programs such as campfire talks, hikes, and school programs.

POTENTIAL ACTIONS AND EXAMPLES

Use the Alaska National Parks marketing partnership as a model to reach new audiences and promote off-season visitation.

Use urban parks as portals to encourage children and their families to discover all national parks, based on the successful models of the “learn to sail” program for New York City youth at Gateway National Recreation Area and youth stewardship programs, serving children in San Francisco, at Golden Gate National Recreation Area.

Rehabilitate the last section of the towpath at Chesapeake and Ohio Canal National Historical Park so hikers and bikers can traverse its 185-mile length.

Promote a “get outdoors America” campaign to encourage invigorating outdoor activity.



Discovering Bolivar Heights
at Harpers Ferry National
Historical Park, West Virginia.

As the “greatest university without walls,” the National Park Service helps Americans understand their history, culture, and the forces that shape the great outdoors. National parks must embrace education as central to their mission. America will learn about national parks using emerging technologies. Children will be introduced to parks to learn that parks are fun, laying the foundation for them to become conservationists.

Learning in America’s Greatest Classrooms

Education

The National Park Service fosters exceptional learning opportunities that connect people to parks. We will:

- Cooperate with educators to provide curriculum materials, high-quality programs, and park-based and online learning.
- Introduce young people and their families to national parks by using exciting media and technology.
- Promote life-long learning to connect generations through park experiences.
- Impart to every American a sense of their citizen ownership of their national parks.

SPECIFIC PERFORMANCE GOALS

Increase visitors’ **satisfaction, understanding, and appreciation** of the parks they visit.

Enroll an additional **two million children** in the Junior Ranger program.

Increase the number of web hits through the introduction of advanced, interactive features that attract young people to national parks.

POTENTIAL ACTIONS AND EXAMPLES

Work with educators to **develop curricula** to be posted online that teachers can use in classrooms and field trips to parks.

Modernize exhibits and facilities, such as renovating the Franklin Court museum at **Independence National Historical Park** to teach visitors about Benjamin Franklin’s inventions and life.

Launch, by September 2008, a technologically advanced, content-rich **website dedicated to young people** that will increase their interest in national parks.

Establish 10 learning centers at parks near major population centers to serve students and their communities, such as Knoxville, Tennessee; San Antonio, Texas; San Francisco, California; and St. Louis, Missouri.

Preserving the Passion

Professional Excellence



*Pointing the way,
San Francisco Maritime
National Historical Park,
California.*

Its own advisory board describes the National Park Service as “a sleeping giant—beloved and respected, yes; but perhaps a bit too cautious, too resistant to change, too reluctant to engage the challenges that must be addressed in the 21st century.” Leading up to its second century, the National Park Service will establish model management and partnership practices by a workforce that reflects the changing and diverse face of America.

The National Park Service demonstrates management excellence worthy of the treasures entrusted to our care. We will:

- Be one of the top 10 places to work in America.
- Use strategic planning to promote management excellence.
- Promote a safety and health culture for all employees and visitors.
- Model what it means to work in partnership.
- Make national parks the first choice in philanthropic giving among those concerned about environmental, cultural, and recreational values.

SPECIFIC PERFORMANCE GOALS

Meet 100 percent of **diversity recruitment goals** by employing people who reflect the face of America.

Attain the **highest employee satisfaction rate** of all federal agencies, as measured by Office of Personnel Management surveys.

Establish a structured **professional development curriculum** to provide park managers with the skills to apply best business practices and superior leadership.

Improve communications and marketing capacity to **increase public understanding** of our mission, opportunities, and benefits.

Reduce the number of employee lost-time incidents and serious visitor injuries by **20 percent**.

POTENTIAL ACTIONS AND EXAMPLES

Provide comprehensive, **mission-oriented training** within an employee’s first two years of service.

Ensure **transparency and accountability** for government and donated funds.

Work with partners to develop **employee exchange programs** to familiarize our workforce with private sector and partner practices.

Rehabilitate facilities to improve support and expand volunteer opportunities at **Cuyahoga Valley National Park**.

Host **annual listening sessions at every park** to seek community and visitor sentiment and to share information.

Develop park managers’ **capacity to lead change and meet leadership opportunities** and challenges associated with increasingly complex park management.

“You are to...identify [centennial] projects...that continue the National Park Service legacy of leveraging philanthropic, partnership, and government investments for the benefit of national parks and their visitors.”

President Bush

Philanthropy and partnerships are cherished traditions of the National Park Service. Thirty parks began with gifts from private donors. To spark greater giving in the future, the president has proposed one billion dollars in federal funds if matched by an equal amount of non-federal funds.

The Congressionally chartered National Park Foundation and more than 144 park friends groups will lead efforts to raise these donations. An October 2007 summit on philanthropy is being planned to develop a national, regional, and local philanthropic framework for national parks.

Philanthropy: An Enduring Legacy



1872
Yellowstone is created when Congress sets aside 2.2 million acres of wilderness to be forever “a public park or pleasuring ground for the benefit and enjoyment of the people.”



1910s
George Dorr (seated, far right) and others acquire land in Maine to preserve it. Their donation of 5,000 acres later bears the name **Acadia National Park**.



1933
National monuments and military parks such as Antietam National Battlefield under War Department jurisdiction are transferred to the National Park Service.

1980s
Business executive Lee Iacocca leads in raising \$350 million from individuals, corporations, foundations, and nonprofits to renovate the **Statue of Liberty** and Ellis Island’s Great Hall. Pennies from schoolchildren nationwide help pay for Liberty’s new pedestal.



1907
Future congressman William Kent and his wife buy, protect, and then donate the old-growth redwood forest north of San Francisco that becomes **Muir Woods National Monument**.



1916
The National Park Service is created.

1920s
Modest until now, park museums at Yosemite, Yellowstone, and Mesa Verde rise to a new level with gifts from **John D. Rockefeller Jr.** and his family.



1950s
Philanthropist **Paul Mellon** (left) shown here with his father, **Andrew Mellon**, joins the State of North Carolina to fund acquisition of the first shore park, Cape Hatteras National Seashore.



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1996–1997
Four corporations donate at least \$1 million each for significant improvements, such as restoring the **Washington Monument**, throughout the National Park System: Canon U.S.A., Toyota U.S.A., American Airlines, and Target.

By sharing the responsibility and rewards of the Centennial Initiative, the National Park Service will continue its tradition of working in partnership with donors.

Sound partnership practices are essential to the success of the Centennial Initiative and must be accountable, efficient, and transparent.



Partnerships: An Enhanced Alliance



2000

The **Proud Partner** program welcomes a new level of corporate philanthropy, providing service-wide support at an estimated value of \$75 million from American Airlines, Discovery Communications, Ford Motor Company, Kodak, Time, Inc., and Unilever.



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2005

The Yosemite Fund raises \$13.5 million to refurbish and enlarge the viewing area at iconic **Lower Yosemite Falls**, with more than \$11 million coming from 14,000 private contributors.

2001

Save-the-Redwoods League acquires and donates the largest grove of giant sequoia trees in private ownership to **Sequoia National Park** at a cost of \$10.3 million.



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2006–2016

Centennial Initiative will continue the proud tradition of public/private collaboration to prepare national parks for their next century.

Because accountability, efficiency, and transparency must govern centennial partnership projects, the Department of the Interior established a team to review both the National Park Service's and the Department's procedures for working cooperatively with partners.

That review led to several recommendations, including;

- Writing a statement of principles to guide partnerships of all land management agencies, including the National Park Service. Stakeholders with a variety of perspectives will be consulted in that process.
- Clarifying legal authority and procedural requirements for entering into cooperative relationships.
- Changes to Departmental procedures for evaluating donations. Changes under consideration include:

Raising vetting thresholds in Departmental donation guidelines.

Evaluating the need to vet donations made by state and local governments.

Increasing training and guidance for land managers to expedite review of donations.

Establishing model fundraising agreements to be used as templates for fundraising campaigns.

Proposed changes will not affect donations and fundraising guidelines or policies governing commercialization of public lands.

In addition, the Inspector General's office, the independent oversight organization for the Department of the Interior, will evaluate the Centennial Initiative's progress based on key financial transactions and controls at predefined critical points. These reports will inform decision making as the Centennial Initiative progresses.

National parks depend on the citizen stewards who care for America's special places. More than 2,000 ideas for centennial public/private partnership projects have been suggested. Many of these already have non-federal cash commitments to be matched with federal funds. Examples of these appear earlier in this report. Others include:

CENTENNIAL Projects and Programs



First Lady Laura Bush swears in a new group of Junior Rangers at the Jefferson Memorial, Washington, D.C.

- In Nevada, deploy new technologies to communicate park stories to rapidly growing populations;
- In Alaska, cooperate with landowners to protect habitat critical to five species of wild salmon in four national parks;
- In Wyoming, model sustainable energy practices in the construction of a world class visitor education center in Yellowstone National Park;
- In Florida, work with educators to establish endowments for park-based curriculum programs that reach underserved communities;
- In New York and New Jersey, rehabilitate deteriorating historic buildings at Ellis Island to expand the telling of America's immigrant story;
- In Texas, recruit volunteers to increase the breeding and survival of the endangered Kemp's ridley sea turtle;
- In Washington, welcome new citizens with an introduction to national parks;
- In Arkansas, restore tallgrass prairie at Buffalo National River to eliminate severe erosion, reintroduce endangered species, and enhance visitors' experiences;
- In South Dakota, create trails to provide visitors access to the natural and cultural resources and history at Mount Rushmore National Memorial; and
- Throughout the country, explore partnerships to fund a Rangers for America program to develop a new cadre of park leaders to take national parks into their next century.

ONLINE

See www.nps.gov/2016 for more information about the Centennial Initiative.

With our partners, we can change lives

The Student Conservation Association changed my life one summer while working in a national park. So how was my life changed?

To answer this question, I need to explain my other life. I was born in a small mountainous town in civil war torn El Salvador. I emigrated to the inner city of Los Angeles at the age of 10. This drastic move had life-changing consequences, but it was not



Mauricio Escobar at the Moore Cabin, Klondike Gold Rush National Historical Park, Skagway, Alaska.

a choice I made, it was simply one I lived through. For the next decade, I grew in the graffiti-filled streets of South Central, where even nice guys had to front a cut-throat persona to get through the day without being beaten. You either rose to the fighting or you died. I had my own run-ins with the authorities.

I was a quarrelsome Latino kid trying to justify his low-income existence and cover his own helplessness with anger.

A friend invited me to a Student Conservation Association meeting—it reached out to inner city kids to spread conservation awareness and to instill a sense of ownership toward national parks. In his words, “Yo, free pizza!” I would like to say that I attended because I believed in the mission, or that I wanted my life changed for the better, but the reality was that I went because they had food. Several pizza meetings later, I decided to spend the summer working on a trail crew at Golden Gate National Recreation Area.

I made this decision for several reasons, mainly I wanted to get away from working as a gardener. I had been working with my father since I was 12 years old, every Saturday and every school break. I also felt slightly guilty for all the pizza I had consumed on the nonprofit's dime.

So, what was the hardest thing for an inner city youth who was used to drive-by shootings and turf-divided school zones? It was not the long hours of cutting brush, or the full-body poison oak outbreak. For me, the hardest things were the pristine silence of nature, deafening to ears accustomed to noise, and the blinding pitch-black nights with the bizarre but mesmerizing highway of stars. Facing these unknowns gave me a new way to interpret the world and my place in it. My life and world no longer needed to be defined by confusing anger. I could see new avenues.

After that summer, I realized I should and could go to a university. I attended the University of California at Santa Cruz and worked with the National Park Service and SCA during summer breaks. I became the first in my entire Salvadorian community to graduate from a university. I later worked for SCA and attended graduate school to study history. I leveraged my experience to become a ranger at Klondike Gold Rush National Historical Park.

I realize the choices I made long ago have come to define my life and destination; and that the turning point was not a specific event but a cumulative experience. It occurred during that one summer spent working in the National Park Service and with a youth organization committed to challenging inner city youths to see the world, and their place in it.

I hope to channel the National Park Service's mission for future generations. I am greatly indebted to both of these organizations for the life I now have.

Mauricio Escobar
National Park Ranger

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To **conserve** the scenery and the natural and historic
objects and the wild life therein and to **provide for**
the enjoyment of the same in such manner and
by such means as will leave them **unimpaired** for the
enjoyment of future generations.

The National Park Service Organic Act
August 25, 1916