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National Parks Plan Should Be Approved

By the News-Register

President Bush's budget proposal for the coming fiscal year already has drawn fire in Congress - but one aspect of it should not be controversial. It is the president's proposal for a substantial increase in funding for America's national parks.

Bush has proposed a National Park Service operating budget of about \$2 billion - a 14.3 percent increase over funding for the current year.

While fiscal restraint needs to be the watchword in Washington, Bush's proposal for parks reflects a return to responsible management of our nation's natural and historic treasures. For too many years - under both Democrat and Republican presidents and congresses - the park service has not received adequate funding. That has meant reductions in services and, in some cases, deterioration of important parks.

An important facet of Bush's proposal involves private support for parks, which receive millions of dollars a year in donations from individuals, organizations and companies. The Bush budget would encourage such assistance by providing a \$100 million fund to match private donations to specific parks.

Much of the Bush budget proposal will be subjected to partisan bashing, with Democrats and Republicans in Congress disagreeing on priorities. But our national parks are not - or should not be - a partisan issue. As one supporter of the Bush plan put it, the parks are an "American issue." We agree, and urge lawmakers to adopt the president's plan for parks.