



## **NATIONAL PARKS...WHY, WHERE AND HOW MANY?**

### ***OBJECTIVES:***

- Distinguish different types of National Park areas
- Identify various park areas located around the United States
- Identify exemplary National Park areas around the world
- Distinguish park areas from other preservation areas

### ***GRADE/SKILL LEVEL:***

Adaptable to grade 5 and beyond.

### ***MATERIALS:***

- Student Reader Sheets
- Maps of North America
- Handouts on National Park Service history and events
- Old National Geographic and similar types of magazines
- Video programs on National Parks

## **BACKGROUND:**

The National Park System truly began with the establishment of Yellowstone National Park in 1872. Several other areas had been set aside earlier by the U.S. government to ensure their preservation, including Hot Springs, Arkansas in 1832 and Yosemite Valley, which was ceded to the state of California in 1864. For that matter, the northern tip of Cape Cod was initially set aside as the "Province Lands" by the Plymouth Colony in the early 1600's. However, Yellowstone was the first area specifically established through legislation as a National Park.

The passage of the Antiquities Act of 1906 brought about another means of creating National Park areas. The act allowed the President of the United States to set aside significant areas located on federal land as National Monuments. In the 1930s, Congress began recognizing significant historic sites, giving them such designations as National Historic Site, National Battlefield or National Historical Park. Somewhat later, other designations were used to establish additional areas. These included National Recreation Area, National Lakeshores and National Seashores. Regardless of their titles, all of these areas are National Park sites and all of the designated parks, recreation areas, monuments and most of the historic sites are administered uniformly by the National Park Service. In fact, two-thirds of the over 360 National Park units are historic sites.

National Parks are often confused with such other areas as National Forests and State Parks. Although outwardly similar, their management may be different, as some federal agencies allow for a greater degree of resource use than the Park Service does. For example, the White Mountains National Forest, is administered by the U.S. Forest Service which may allow cutting of trees, mining and grazing activities within the boundaries of its areas. However, many National Forests contain designated wilderness areas which cannot be developed. National Park Service areas seek to accomplish a dual role of serving the public while also specifically protecting natural and cultural resources.

Cape Cod National Seashore can lay claim to two "firsts." It was the first area established in the United States that allowed for the purchase of private property to complete the park. All previous areas were either established on pre-existing federal land or else incorporated donated property. Cape Cod also allowed for the continued private ownership of much of the land within its boundaries, another "first."

New parks are always being considered — and perhaps even more important, so are new ways to protect older areas. A growing trend in parks around the world is to focus more on resource management programs and activities which attempt to recognize and rectify threats to park resources. National Park are widely diverse special places, and all of them make important contributions to the National Park family.

# **ACTIVITIES:**

## ***Pre-visit:***

- Read the Student Reader sheet on National Parks
- Watch a video program on National Parks. Discuss how the producers elected to focus only on certain types of parks, or parks in certain regions.
- Obtain or have students bring in national, state and regional maps. Have students see how many different names (and possibly types) of parks they can find. (Hint: make sure to look for historic sites too!).
- Discuss resource management issues at parks. Ask students to see if they can develop a list of human-related problems at certain parks (e.g feeding animals at Yellowstone, stepping into piping plover nesting areas on Cape Cod, or disturbing archaeological resources at Mesa Verde).
- Conduct a home (or library) search of old National Geographics or similar magazines to look for national park related articles. Award a prize for the most unusual or greatest number of findings.

## ***On Site:***

- Have a contest to try to count the number of National Park Service logos that can be found at Cape Cod National Seashore.
- Make a list.- Have sub-groups make a list of the natural, historical and recreational features protected by the Seashore. Compare findings.
- Look for and list resource management issues that can be identified during your visit. Discuss how you can help in this regard.

## ***Post Visit:***

- Write to other National Park areas and compare findings.
- Read brochures and books on selected National Park Areas and write an essay or prepare a report.



# ***NATIONAL PARKS ... WONDER OF THE WORLD***

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***Student Information Sheet***

Did you know that in the United States alone, there are over 365 National Park Service areas? That is more than one for every day of the year. Most of these areas are not the large natural places out west that come so easily to mind. Many are smaller sites that were set aside to protect our history. But when people think of National Parks, they think most often of places like Yellowstone. Actually, that is a good place to start, because Yellowstone was the very first National Park established by law anywhere in the world.

It all began in 1872. When explorers from the eastern United States first viewed Yellowstone, they could not believe their eyes. The abundant geysers, hot springs and wildlife filled them with wonder. The story goes that one night while sitting around a campfire, someone suggested that the area was so special that it should be set aside for all people. And in 1872 the Congress of the United States agreed, leading to the establishment of the world's first National Park area. Other National Parks followed, most of them large scenic natural areas located in the western United States such as Yosemite, Sequoia, and Mount Rainier National Parks. The idea caught on in other countries as well, including Canada, which set aside Banff National Park in the Canadian Rocky Mountains in 1885.

In 1906 two new things happened in the United States. Mesa Verde National Park was created and Congress passed the Antiquities Act. Mesa Verde was the first National Park established to protect a historic feature, the famous cliff dwelling houses built by Native Americans over 600 years ago. The Antiquities Act did something equally important. It allowed the President to set aside government-owned lands as National Monuments. Most National Monuments are the same as National Parks, except that they have different "last names." The Grand Canyon, for example, was first set aside by the President as a National Monument. Later, Congress recognized the area as a National Park.

Over the years, a number of different "last names" were given to other areas added to the National Park System. Perhaps the biggest change came in the 1930s with the addition of large numbers of historic areas. Some of these areas were called National Historic Park, National Battlefield or National Historical Site. Many of these will be familiar to you, as they include the Liberty Bell, the Statue of Liberty and Valley Forge. Today there are over 20 different titles that can be given to individual areas, including National Seashore, National Lakeshore and National Recreation Area. Cape Cod is unique in that it could have been given a natural, historic or recreation title.

National Parks are sometimes confused with such similar areas as National Forests. Usually the main difference is how the land can be used. For example, in some areas the Forest Service allows cutting of trees, mining or grazing cattle within its boundaries. In other areas, however, the Forest Service protects its wilderness areas much the same way the Park Service does. State Parks are also similar to National Parks. Sometimes the only main difference is that they are run by the state government rather than the national government.

Today, in addition to over 365 National Park Service areas in the United States, there are hundreds of sites around the world. Some of these have been set aside to protect important natural resources, such as mountains, rivers or parts of tropical rainforests, while others are set aside to preserve ancient historical features and stories. Saving these areas benefits us all.

And it all started around a campfire in Yellowstone in 1872.

# ***NATIONAL PARKS STUDY SHEET***

1 There are over \_\_\_\_\_ National Park Areas in the United States today.

2 The title National Park is only one of the terms used to name National Park Areas. Historical areas sometimes have been given titles such as \_\_\_\_\_, or \_\_\_\_\_

3 National Parks and National Monuments are \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

4 National Forest Service areas are sometimes different from National Park areas because they allow for \_\_\_\_\_. However, often they protect Wilderness Areas in the same way National Park sites do.

5 Most of the National Park areas in the United States were established to protect historical features or events. Some of these include  
\_\_\_\_\_

6 Today National Park areas are located around the entire world. Banff National Park is located in \_\_\_\_\_. Some parks located in other countries protect natural and historical resources that are also important to us, such as \_\_\_\_\_