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## **BRIEFING STATEMENT**

### **ISSUE: National Park Service Centennial**

- The National Park Centennial Initiative is a 10-year program to reinvigorate America's national parks for a second century of conservation, preservation and enjoyment.
- Interior Secretary Kempthorne's May 2007 report to President Bush, *The Future of America's National Parks*, outlines an exciting vision for the National Park Service as it prepares for its Centennial in 2016. Developed with the input of the American people, the report identifies five Centennial goals: stewardship, environmental leadership, recreational experience, education, and professional excellence.
- To get ready, the President's 2008 NPS budget provided over \$100,000,000 in new funding to achieve new levels of excellence in parks. This included an additional 3,000 seasonal rangers and staff to enhance visitor education and facility maintenance in the national parks.
- President Bush also proposed an ambitious Centennial Challenge Fund that would provide \$100 million annually to match philanthropic contributions. While Congress is still debating the idea, it did provide nearly \$25 million in FY 2008 to get started.
- That money was quickly put to work. On April 24, Secretary Kempthorne and National Park Service Director Mary Bomar announced funding for 110 projects on the steps on the United States Capitol. More than 130 partners across the country embarked on centennial projects and programs that benefit 76 parks in 39 states plus the District of Columbia. These projects and programs represent a total investment of more than \$51 million.
- The projects – all with private matching funds committed – range from expanding a popular outdoor stewardship program for teenagers in Washington, DC, to improving interpretive trails at San Antonio Missions National Historical Park, to reintroducing Trumpeter Swans at Buffalo National River.

- From now through 2016, a team of National Park Service professionals will continue to work with the public and park friends and partners to develop innovative projects and programs with lasting benefits to the parks and to the American people. On August 25, 2016, the parks will begin a new era, prepared and invigorated for a second century of conservation, preservation, and enjoyment.
- Legislation is required to create an annual Centennial Challenge matching fund to leverage private donations to continue these efforts to improve parks and serve all Americans, especially our nation's youth. The NPS is actively working with Congress to establish the parameters and funding leading up to the NPS Centennial in 2016.
- Private support for the National Park Service mission was the topic of the first-ever Leadership Summit on Partnership and Philanthropy convened by the National Park Foundation at the University of Texas at Austin on October 16, 2007. With a keynote address by the foundation's honorary chair, Mrs. Laura Bush, the gathering brought together top leaders and visionaries from business, philanthropy, government, education, and parks to explore how the private sector can help ensure the future of the national parks into the next century.
- That future is also being considered by the Second Century Commission, a nonpartisan citizens group established in August by a private donation through the National Parks Conservation Association and led by former U.S. Senators Howard H. Baker, Jr. (R-TN) and J. Bennett Johnston, Jr. (D-LA). The commission will issue its recommendations in 2009.
- 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.
- For more information and a complete list of 2008 centennial projects and programs, visit the National Park Service's centennial website at [www.nps.gov/2016](http://www.nps.gov/2016)

## **CONTACT**

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