



National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Death Valley National
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Death Valley News Release

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Death Valley National Park Slated for Centennial Dollars

“As part of the Centennial Initiative and Centennial Challenge Death Valley National Park will not only see twenty-two new seasonal and permanent rangers in 2008, but the funding of a park-wide inventory of every species of flora and fauna in the park,” exclaims Superintendent James T. Reynolds.

Secretary of Interior Kempthorne laid out the presidential initiative at a Founder’s Day event one year ago. He said the vision of the Centennial Initiative is to energize the National Park Service with up to \$3 billion in additional funding before its 100th anniversary in 2016.

The initiative calls for \$1 billion over 10 years to strengthen basic park operations, and a challenge from President Bush: create a public-private funding vehicle of up to \$2 billion for new projects and programs with the goal of a \$100 million public-private match each year for 10 years.

National Park Service Director Mary Bomar speaking from Yosemite National Park announced the proposals eligible for centennial challenge matching funds. “We are ready to go!” Bomar said. “We certified only the very best proposals that are ready to go and had an engaged partner committed to provide at least a 50 percent cash match. These are projects that can begin in Fiscal Year 2008 which is less than six weeks away.”

The additional staff will allow Death Valley to provide more ranger conducted programs (guided walks and demonstrations) in the park as well as outreach to schools and other organizations. Additionally, the extra staff will allow the park to have a greater presence in the park’s vast backcountry to do needed patrols, research and monitoring and general visitor assistance. “These new positions could not come at a better time to help us better protect our valuable resources, but also provide the quality visitor services people expect of the National Park Service,” said Superintendent Reynolds.

Besides the additional staff the park’s approved challenge project for 2008, Creating Environmental Stewardship Through Discovery: All Taxa Biodiversity Inventory, will be a benefit to the service and the public for generations.

All Taxa Biodiversity Inventories (ATBI) engage the public by partnering citizens with scientists in the exploration and discovery of biological diversity. ATBIs are systematic scientific surveys of all taxa using dedicated groups of scientists, taxonomists, and citizens to search for organisms. This multi-park project will engage the public in the excitement of a nationally representative and scientifically credible tool to measure and compare the biodiversity throughout the National Park

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System. This project is national in scope, but is structured with a focus on supporting local ATBIs, their community groups, parks, and partners.

“This project would only be a pipedream without the support of park partners like the Death Valley Natural History Association.” Superintendent Reynolds said. Their monetary contributions will be matched by federal dollars to help Death Valley gain otherwise unattainable data on what occurs in the park. The park would never have the ability to access the comprehensive depth of species expertise that ATBI allow. Most of the activities will be planned and led by scientists, trained volunteers, and partner staff. Adults and students will be trained and used in group and individual activities led by scientists or non-profit partner staffs. Younger children though not scientists are always excited by exploration and discovery. The recent book by Richard Louv, *Last Child in the Woods; Saving Our Children from Nature-Deficit Disorder* presents a compelling case for involving children in exactly the kind of activities ATBI’s offer.

Both the House and Senate include record park operations increases in a pending National Park Service fiscal year 2008 budget. Director Mary Bomar said Congress is still at work on legislation to authorize private-public funding for the centennial proposals. “We are ready – with Congress providing the final key with a centennial challenge fund - to transform our parks and awaken the spirit of wonder for another century of visitors.”

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