

GREAT BASIN NATIONAL PARK



THE BEST IDEA AMERICA EVER HAD

With the establishment of Yellowstone in 1872, the United States created the world's first national park. The idea of setting aside land to be protected in perpetuity and for all people to enjoy has been described as the best idea America ever had. Many parks were established following Yellowstone, such as Grand Canyon, Yosemite, and Mesa Verde. But it was not until the passing of the 1916 Organic Act that the National Park Service was created, and with it a mission to preserve and protect the nation's natural and cultural heritage for all people to enjoy. The National Park Service serves as the steward of our resources and the teller of our stories. Nearly 400 National Park System units (384 as of June, 2001) range from the mangroves to the mountains. They celebrate our freedom (Independence Hall, Statue of Liberty), and remind us of our darker moments as well (Manzanar, Brown vs Board of Education). From seashores to cliff dwellings, mansions to mudpots, the National Park System is as diverse as the people it serves. So, come to the parks, be it for recreation, education, or inspiration. Come to experience America.

ESTABLISHING NATIONAL PARKS

National parks are established by acts of Congress. Typically, a bill is introduced for the formation of a park by a congressman or senator who represents the region where the park will be. The bill may go through many versions before it is finally passed and signed into law by the President. Every park has enabling legislation that describes the purpose of the park and the National Park Service's obligations in running it. While the general theme of enabling legislations is similar from park to park (to preserve and protect and provide for enjoyment), each park is established for a specific purpose and the legislation reflects that purpose.

National monuments differ from parks in that they can be established by Congress or by presidential proclamation. The Antiquities Act, passed by Congress in 1906, gives the President authority to protect areas containing significant scientific, historical, and cultural importance. The driving force behind the Antiquities Act was the need to protect prehistoric treasures from vandalism and theft (pot hunting). In recent years the act has been used to protect large tracts of natural areas as well.

LEHMAN CAVES AND THE BATTLE FOR A NATIONAL PARK

In 1885, Absalom Lehman, a rancher, discovered an underground cavern full of stalactites, stalagmites, and many other cave formations. He began leading people through the caves, which were subsequently named after him, for the steep price of one dollar. Lehman only lived for six years after making his discovery, but the word was out about the caves, with hundreds of people traveling to see the caves every year.

In September 1921, Cada C. Boak sent a report and a full set of pictures of Lehman Caves to Stephen Mather, Director of the five-year old National Park Service, and to President Harding, suggesting the caves "be created a National Monument or National Park by the Government at once." The Department of Interior acted favorably towards the report until they discovered in the U.S. Land Office that the nine acres Boak had suggested lay within a National Forest. This placed the proposed area under the jurisdiction of the United States Forest Service. Because local cattlemen objected to "taking in so much territory", the nine square mile proposed area was reduced to one square mile.

President Warren G. Harding proclaimed Lehman Caves a National Monument on January 24, 1922, administered by the United States Forest Service. But as early as 1924, Democratic Senator Key Pittman proposed the establishment of a national park in Nevada. Pittman considered "the introduction of the bill that would make such a park of Lehman Caves, now a national monument..." to give Lehman Caves National Park status.

Over the next 53 years, special interest groups and politicians pushed to see the caves included in the 77,000 acre package that would give this portion of the USFS Humboldt National Forest (South Snake Range) National Park status.

GREAT BASIN NATIONAL PARK



A BASIN GREAT ENOUGH TO CELEBRATE

For the first seventy years that the National Park Service existed, the Great Basin was not represented by a park in the system. The long battle to establish a national park dedicated to the natural and cultural heritage of the Great Basin was finally won on October 27, 1986, when President Reagan signed an Act of Congress establishing Great Basin National Park. This Act charged the National Park Service to “conserve and protect the scenery, the natural, geologic, historic, and archaeological resources of the park, including fish and wildlife, and to provide for the public use and enjoyment of the same in such a manner as to perpetuate these qualities for future generations.” (public law 99-565). These 77,000 acres, located in the heart of the Great Basin near the Utah/Nevada border, are an outstanding example of Great Basin geology, biology, and culture. Within the national park are the block-faulted mountains of basin and range topography, limestone caves, and mountain cirques carved by glaciers - one small glacier still remains in the shadow of 13,063 foot Wheeler Peak. The vegetation ranges from sagebrush to mountain mahogany, ponderosa pine to alpine wildflowers. The Bristlecone pine, growing near treeline, is the oldest living tree, with individual trees surviving as long as 5000 years. The 12-mile scenic road rises to 10,000 feet, passing through five major “life zones” on the ascent. The wide elevation range provides diverse habitat for more than 230 bird species, 60 mammal species, and a variety of fish, reptiles, and amphibians. People have inhabited the area for thousands of years; those who left artifacts and rock art were followed in more recent times by explorers, miners, and ranchers who also left their mark.

NOTES:

GREAT BASIN NATIONAL PARK



HOW TO GET THERE:

Great Basin National Park is located five miles west of the town of Baker, Nevada, near the Nevada/Utah border. Driving distances from Las Vegas is 286 miles; Salt Lake City, 234 miles; and Reno, 385 miles. The nearest cities are Ely, Nevada, 70 miles northwest, and Delta, Utah, 100 miles east of the park. Access to the park is via Route 6 and 50 near the Nevada/Utah border, south on Route 487 to Baker, and then west on Highway 488.

VISITOR ACTIVITIES

Hiking, camping, backpacking, and photography are all popular activities. Ranger led programs are available daily. Check at the visitor center for current schedules.

VISITOR SERVICES AND ACCOMMODATIONS:

A concessionaire adjacent to the visitor center operates a cafe and gift shop from April to October. Restaurants, a small grocery store, motels, and gasoline are available in Baker, Nevada.

The Great Basin Natural History Association bookstore is also housed inside the visitor center. This not-for-profit organization supports the educational and interpretative goals for Great Basin National Park with sales of books, maps and other materials relating to the Great Basin.

FEES:

Entrance to the park is free. Recreation fees apply to the ranger led walks into Lehman Cave, developed campgrounds, and use of the RV sanitary station.

HOURS OF OPERATION:

Daily, Summer: 7:00 am to 6:00 pm Pacific; Daily, Winter: 8:30 am to 5:00 pm Pacific; Closed Thanksgiving Day, Christmas Day, and New Years Day. Lehman Cave tours are offered daily year-round. Wheeler Peak Scenic Drive is open year-round to Upper Lehman Campground, opening to Wheeler Peak Campground from May or June through October or November. These dates are weather dependent.

HOW TO SCHEDULE AN EDUCATIONAL FIELD TRIP:

Education programs are available for groups who want to learn first hand about the area. These programs are available on a reservation basis. To book a program, contact the Education Coordinator at the park address or call (775) 234-7331. Fee waivers may be available for educational groups to enter Lehman Cave. The park has a self-guided nature trail at the visitor center, and many other longer trails that may be appropriate for your group. A day-use picnic area is also available. Be sure your group is prepared with appropriate clothing and sturdy walking shoes.

HOW TO CONTACT THE PARK:

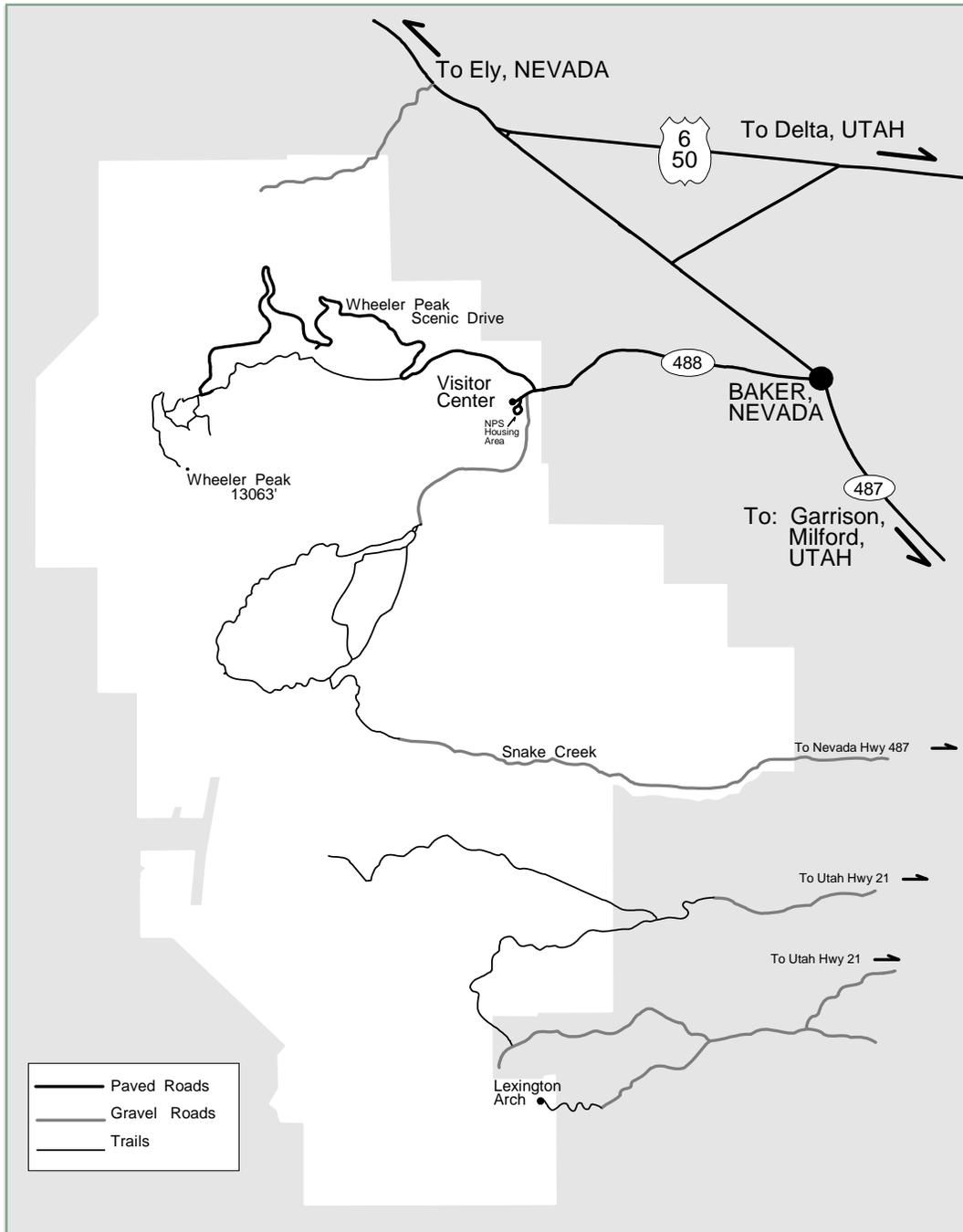
100 Great Basin National Park
Hwy 488
Baker, Nevada 89311
Phone: (775) 234-7331

Please visit our web page at www.nps.gov/grba.

GREAT BASIN NATIONAL PARK



GREAT BASIN NATIONAL PARK



CREATE A NATIONAL PARK

ACTIVITY 1

SUBJECTS:

English, Science

LOCATION:

Outdoors

DURATION:

1 to 1.5 hours

OBJECTIVES:

Students will be able to:

- Cite 3 reasons why national parks are needed
- Describe characteristics of a national park
- List 3 problems facing national parks
- Analyze information to write a persuasive proposal.

BACKGROUND:

There are over 380 national park areas in the National Park System. These areas have been set aside by Congress to preserve and protect the best of our natural, recreational, and cultural resources for use and enjoyment of all people, including future generations.

For this lesson, we will discuss parks set aside for their natural wonders. These parks are as diverse as their visitors, and may offer one or more of the following: campgrounds, hiking trails, scenic overlooks, nature trails, interpretive programs, canoeing, rock climbing, swimming, etc. Some parks offer grocery stores, laundromats, sleeping facilities, and restaurants.

A park or monument may have several outstanding natural features for which it was set aside, or it may be preserved for one specific feature. Preserving and protecting these features while providing for their enjoyment poses daily challenges to park managers. Some parks have numerous problems facing them, such as nonnative species (both plant and animal), degraded or threatened water and air quality and development of surrounding areas.

Upon arriving at many of the national parks, the visitor pays a small entrance fee and is handed a park map that outlines major resources and sites to visit. Larger parks have visitor centers where rangers dispense information about the park. One part of a park ranger's job is to interpret the park resources and problems to the visitors so they understand the concerns of the park. Why? Because parks belong to the people and those people want to learn about the valuable resources and how to preserve and protect them.

KEY VOCABULARY:

National park, natural resources, cultural resources

MATERIALS:

Clipboard, paper pencil, hand lens, one 15-foot piece of string, 6 popsicle sticks, peanuts (at least 10 peanuts for each student)



CREATE A NATIONAL PARK

ACTIVITY 1

METHOD:

- 1) Discuss the concept of a national park with your students. Ask the students if they have ever been to a national park. What makes a national park different from a state park or a county park?
- 2) Ask students what they would like in a national park, if they were to create a "perfect park". Why set up a national park? Who owns national parks?
- 3) Pair off students. Distribute the materials listed under the "materials" section to each pair of students.
- 4) Assign, or let each pair choose, an outdoor spot for their national park. Using their string, have them rope off their area.
- 5) Have students move around their national parks on their hands and knees. Using the hand lens, have the students choose scenic values of their parks. For instance, a hole might be the Grand Canyon or a rock might be a mountain, etc. The popsicle sticks can be used to mark trails or scenic spots.
- 6) Give the teams about 20 to 25 minutes to set up trails in their parks. After the students have marked their parks, have them make a brochure (including a map) about their park. Have each team decide if they will charge an entrance fee. What factors might influence this decision?
- 7) Once the parks are ready for business, the "rangers" (the paired students) must interpret the park for its visitors. Have one member of each pair stay with the park, while the other visits other parks. The team members should switch places after the first group has had a chance to visit every park. The second team will then visit the parks. (Students can use peanuts to pay entrance fees if the national park they are visiting charges them.)
- 8) After the students have visited all the parks and returned to the classroom, open a discussion by asking the students the following questions: Were visitors always careful with the park's resources? Were there too many visitors? What problems occurred? How would they raise money to improve park facilities? Name three reasons for having national parks. What would they change? What can you do to help protect the resources in a national park? Who has the responsibility of preserving the park for future generations?

Extension:

Ask students to write a proposal to Congress to set up their national park. What resources will their parks have that need to be protected? What facilities will the park provide - trails, ranger-led programs, restaurants, campgrounds, and a visitor center? How many people will need to be hired to run the park? Remember, a park needs the resource, maintenance, management, interpretation, and law enforcement people. Will the park charge any fees - entrance, camping, or program fees?

NOTES:

NATIONAL PARKS

ACTIVITY 2

SUBJECTS:

Language arts, library skills

LOCATION:

Classroom, library

DURATION:

1 class period, after school library time depending on student

OBJECTIVE:

Students will compare and contrast national parks and zoos.

BACKGROUND:

The National Park System is made up of over 380 units, including parks, monuments, seashores, and scenic riverways. Each unit is established to preserve and protect specific natural or cultural resources. The goals of any park service unit are to preserve and protect its resources while allowing visitors access to learn about and enjoy the resource. Parks do not only protect specific species or artifacts: everything within a park's boundaries is protected, so parks are important in protecting large tracts of habitat and preserving intact ecosystems.

Zoos, aquariums, and botanical gardens also manage and protect natural resources. Many of these facilities are active in researching endangered plants and animals (as are the parks); some even have breeding programs and raise individuals for reintroduction to the wild.

KEY VOCABULARY:

National Park Service

METHOD:

- 1) Begin a class discussion about national parks, asking questions such as: "Why do we establish national parks? What is protected in a national park? When you think about a national park, what do you think of? Why are national parks special? What rules are there in national parks? Why do they have those rules?"
- 2) Write the words ZOO, NATIONAL PARK, ALIKE, and DIFFERENT on the blackboard. Ask the students to name things that are alike in national parks and zoos as well as those things that are different. Write the students' responses on the chalkboard. Some examples are that both protect animals, but parks protect them in their natural habitats and zoos create habitats for the animals. Research is conducted at both parks and zoos, but may be more controlled or hands-on at the zoo.
- 3) Show the students a map of the United States and have them locate national parks around the country.
- 4) Have the students write a report or make a display about the national park they researched.

EXTENSION:

Do this same exercise to compare and contrast museums and park service historic and cultural sites. The NPS cultural and historic sites include battlefields, homes of historic figures, and ancient cliff dwellings.

LOVING IT TOO MUCH

ACTIVITY 2

SUBJECTS:

English, Science

LOCATION:

Classroom

DURATION:

2 hours

OBJECTIVES:

Students will:

- 1) Explain how increased numbers of park visitors and activities outside park boundaries affect ecosystems and local parks
- 2) Offer possible solutions to problems facing national and local parks.

KEY VOCABULARY:

National park, conservation, preservation

MATERIALS:

Graph paper, pencils

BACKGROUND:

According to 1993 figures, the National Park Service oversees 80 million acres. The National Park system thereby preserves much of our country's historical and natural heritage. Large parks, sea-shores, battlefields, memorials, recreational areas, and historic homes are all part of the system. According to the act that created the National Park Service, all areas in the National Park System are to be managed "to conserve the scenery and the natural and historic objects" in them, and to enable people to enjoy those objects in ways that "will leave them unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations".

Since the end of World War II, more and more people have been visiting national parks. Increased population, standard of living, leisure time, and better transportation have fueled this explosion. Many parks have been overused by the increasing volume of visitors. The number of souvenir shops, hotels, restaurants, and other developments within the parks has ballooned, along with development outside park boundaries. The latter can bring air and water pollution, even to remote parks. See "Problems in Paradise" activity page (included in this activity) for specific examples of park problems.

What can be done to protect our parks so people today and future generations can visit these areas and have enjoyable experiences? While many ideas have been put forth, different strategies work better for different parks. Here are a few solutions people have suggested that are already being implemented in many parks:

- Determine the carrying capacity (number of visitors) for each park and limit visitors to that number at any given time.
- Limit and reduce automobile access to the park. Establish buses, trams and other mass transit systems within parks to move people around.
- Close many shops within the parks and move them to areas outside the park boundaries. Reevaluate other concessions (e.g. restaurants, gas stations) within the parks and possibly move some outside of park boundaries as well.
- Restrict types of activities people can do within or adjacent to certain parks or restrict the times of year for such activities to conserve park ecosystems.
- Increase the Park Service budget for science and conservation programs.
- Educate the public about the need to protect parks already in the system and to increase the number of protected areas.

LOVING IT TOO MUCH

ACTIVITY 2

METHOD:

- 1) Make copies of the activity pages. Pass them out to students.
- 2) If possible, obtain Public Land Trust's Federal and Forest Land Map.
- 3) Show students how to plot a graph on graph paper.
- 4) Begin the activity by asking students how many of them have visited a national park in the United States or in another country. Talk about some local or famous national parks using the activity on the following page. Have the students share their experiences in the parks. Where did they go? What was it like? What did they see? Were there very many people there?
- 5) Ask students which of the following activities they think are allowed in U.S. national parks: mining, logging, or oil and gas drilling. Discuss the fact that although some public lands such as national forests are managed for multiple uses (wildlife, recreation, and timber), national parks are restricted use. (Use background information for explanation of the National Park Service's mission.)
- 6) Divide your group into teams of two, three, or four students. Pass out copies of activity page, graph paper, and a pencil to each student. Have the teams use the statistics to draw a bar or line graph of the United States population growth since 1800 and a graph of park visitation from 1950 to 1990. Depending on the level of your group you may have to give them help in setting up and plotting their graphs.
- 7) Have students work in their groups to answer questions. Afterward, go over and discuss the questions with all the groups situated together.
- 8) Pass out "Problems In Paradise" activity sheet. While the students are reading this page, write the following questions on the chalkboard or with an overhead projector. Have the students, again, work in their groups, reading and discussing these issues.
 - What problems have been caused by the increase of visitors to national parks?
 - What other problems do national parks face?
 - Do any of the same problems affect your local and community parks as well?
 - What solutions would you recommend to combat these problems?
 - What other information would you like to know before making these recommendations?
 - What problems might your recommendations create?
 - Would your recommendations work for all parks or only for some?
 - What can be done when the best action to protect resources inside a park would have a negative effect on the communities outside the park?
- 9) Discuss the problems facing the Park Service. What solutions did most students recommend? How do other students feel about these recommendations? Discuss some of the options presented in the background section of this activity. Do students think parks should charge entrance fees that adequately reflect fair market value of a park experience?
- 10) Have students prepare written arguments stating what should be done about problems facing national or local parks. Explain to the students that each person's argument should define the problems, as well as what causes the problems. Students should clearly state one or more recommendations for solving the problems and explain why their suggestions would be effective. Another option would be to have the groups debate their ideas.

EXTENSION:

Invite a local park employee to visit your group and address the student's concerns about how the park is managed and cared for, what park rules are, and how the rules are enforced. Have the students discuss their ideas for solving park problems. They might also find out how to present suggestions to the appropriate person in the park's administration.

PROBLEMS IN PARADISE

ACTIVITY 3

ACTIVITY PAGE FOR “LOVING IT TOO MUCH” ACTIVITY

Our nation's “crown jewels” is how some people describe our national parks. Unfortunately, our parks face some big problems. Many people feel that if we don't take steps soon, our parks will suffer.

INSIDE PRESSURES

In 1990, more than 250 million visitors spent time in the historic homes and forts, recreation areas, seashores, memorials, and parks that make up our National Park System. That is about eight times as many people who visited parks in 1950 and park visitation is expected to continue to rise. In fact, some people estimate that visits may double in the next 15 years.

Cars, campers, and motorhomes already jam the most popular parks. Hikers often crowd the trails. Visitors have destroyed trailside vegetation in many areas. Vandalism is a problem in most every park. People steal Native American artifacts, plants, and other pieces of the park's valuable resources to sell to collectors. People spray graffiti on park rocks and walls, and vandals have even used park-protected items for target practice.

Accommodating so many people has put additional pressures on our parks. For example, more roads have been built to handle the increased traffic. New campgrounds have been built and existing campgrounds expanded. More concessions, including snackbars, hotels, and souvenir shops, have been built in many parks. All these developments mean less habitat for the plants and animals that live in the parks.

OUTSIDE PRESSURES

Aside from the problems being caused by the increasing numbers of park visitors, other problems are caused by the activities outside the park boundaries. As the population increases, civilization creeps closer and closer to park boundaries. Wild animals, whose natural ranges extend beyond park boundaries, are being squeezed together for living space as people develop land outside parks. In addition, resource extraction and management activities have brought pollutants into the parks. Let's take a look at some of the threats facing a few of our national parks:

- On some days, air pollution can be a problem in Acadia National Park (Maine) and Shenandoah National Park (Virginia).
- Copper smelters near Glacier National Park (Montana) have caused fluoride contamination in some parts of the park.
- Extensive development in Florida has drained, diverted, or polluted water necessary for the survival of many plants and animals in Everglades National Park.
- In the past 60 years, many wading birds that once nested in the Everglades have disappeared.

FINDING SOLUTIONS

Fortunately, many problems in the parks are being addressed and solved. For example, studies at Cape Cod National Seashore in Massachusetts have led to a management plan that allows off-road vehicle use and protects nesting seabirds and beaches where people swim. In the past few years, stream conditions at Olympic National Park in Washington have improved. And people are working hard to reverse the changes that diverted water away from the Florida Everglades. However, it's going to take more action to completely protect our parks.

National parks belong to all people; young and old, able-bodied, and disabled, those seeking complete solitude and those seeking a nice view. Most important, parks belong to future citizens. Meeting the needs of people today while protecting our resources for the future is a big challenge for the National Park Service. How well it meets these challenges will determine whether our parks survive. (From Project Learning Tree)