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New Firearms Law Takes Effect Monday

National parks now subject to state laws

WASHINGTON – A change in federal law effective Monday, February 22, allows firearms in many national parks. People who can legally possess firearms under federal and state law in the state in which a particular national park is located may possess firearms in that park. The new law (Sec. 512 of P.L. 111-24) was passed by Congress and signed last May by the President.

Prior to February 22, firearms have generally been prohibited in national parks – except in some Alaska parks and those parks that allow hunting.

State and local firearms laws vary. Visitors who would like to bring a firearm with them to a national park need to understand and comply with the applicable laws. More than 30 national parks are located in more than one state, so visitors must be aware of what state they are in and the laws that apply.

"We will administer this law as we do all others – fairly and consistently," National Park Service Director Jon Jarvis said. "For nearly 100 years, the mission of the National Park Service has been to protect and preserve the parks and to help all visitors enjoy them. The parks belong to all Americans, and our commitment to the American people is to ensure their safety and that of the special places entrusted to our care."

Federal law continues to prohibit the possession of firearms in designated "federal facilities" in national parks, for example, visitor centers, offices, or maintenance buildings. These places are posted with "firearms prohibited" signs at public entrances. The new law does not change prohibitions on the **use** of firearms in national parks and does not change hunting regulations.

Park websites include specific information and links to state firearms laws to help visitors understand the law and to plan accordingly.

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Sec. 512 of P.L. 111-24, an amendment to the Credit Card Accountability, Responsibility, and Disclosure Act of 2009, also applies to the possession of firearms within units of the National Wildlife Refuge System.