



National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

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Grand Canyon News Release

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National Park Service reopens historic Hermit Road with a ribbon-cutting ceremony honoring the road and rehabilitation project

Grand Canyon, Ariz. - On Saturday, November 15, 2008, Grand Canyon National Park Superintendent Steve P. Martin, cut a ceremonial ribbon and reopened the historic Hermit Road, located on the South Rim between Grand Canyon Village and Hermits Rest.

Hermit Road is a popular destination for approximately one million visitors each year. The seven-mile road includes nine overlooks, access to the historic Hermits Rest and Hermit Trailhead, and popular spots for sunset viewing.

The rehabilitation of Hermit Road began this past February to address safety issues and accessibility and to preserve the historic integrity of the road. The project included widening and resurfacing the road to a consistent width of 24 feet; improving the shuttle bus stops at each of the overlooks; providing more accessible pedestrian routes from the shuttle bus stops and parking areas to the viewpoints; constructing a new shuttle bus shelter at the Hermit Road interchange; and improving approximately five and a half miles of rim trails, including construction of a new three-mile, multi-use Greenway Trail for bicyclists and pedestrians.

In addition to safety and accessibility, protecting the historical integrity of Hermit Road was an important aspect to this project. The original metal hand railings at each of the overlooks and the rustic-style stone masonry retaining walls were retained. Most of the Greenway Trail follows the alignment of the 1913 Hermit Rim Road. Minimizing disturbance to the natural and cultural environment and restoring damaged areas was another significant aspect of the Hermit Road

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project. Areas were restored that had been damaged by social trailing and other impacts. To better protect a rare plant population and adjacent suitable habitat, the parking area and access-road pavement was removed from Maricopa Point. A new Maricopa Point shuttle bus stop was created west of the rehabilitated parking lot, and a new accessible pedestrian path was built to Maricopa Point.

Speaking to approximately 300 park visitors and residents under clear blue skies and in ideal temperatures, Superintendent Martin stated, “The Hermit Road rehabilitation project is an example of how the National Park Service is using a more holistic approach to address Grand Canyon’s needs and meet our core stewardship responsibilities. We are working to improve the park’s infrastructure to provide a higher quality experience for visitors and residents of all ages and backgrounds, while protecting and improving upon the Canyon’s unique cultural and natural resources.” He added, “As we head toward our centennial in 2016, we realize that, as an agency, we must better meet our mission and core goals, and the Hermit Road rehabilitation project reminds us that we are the right road.”

After the ribbon-cutting, park visitors and residents were treated to cake, punch and special benchmark pins designed to mark the historic event. They were then encouraged to get out and enjoy the new improvements and to spend time connecting with the amazing landscape along Hermit Road. While a limited number of the park’s new low-floor compressed natural gas powered buses were on-hand to take visitors out to Hermits Rest, many people took advantage of the limited traffic and chose to ride their bikes and walk along the newly constructed road.

The Hermit Road rehabilitation project represents the hard work and input of many people and entities. Construction was performed by Fann Contracting, Inc., of Prescott, Arizona. Project oversight and construction management was performed by the Central Federal Lands Highway Division of the Federal Highway Administration. The Grand Canyon Trail Crew worked portions of the Rim Trail and provided stone masonry and viewing area improvements at many of the viewpoints and the Grand Canyon Revegetation Staff planted more than 20,000 plants and restored approximately 4 acres of native vegetation at the overlooks and along the entire road.

In addition, crews from the American Conservations Experience, and volunteers from the Student Conservation Association and the Sierra Club were instrumental in assisting with trail work and revegetation efforts. Superintendent Martin thanked each of these groups for their diligent efforts in the rehabilitation project, and also thanked Xanterra, South Rim L.L.C., a park concessioner and Paul Revere Transportation, the company that manages the park's free shuttle bus system, for their support.

Private vehicles were allowed access to Hermit Road beginning November 16, and will continue to have access to Hermit Road until March 1, 2009, when shuttle bus service will resume for the season. For more information on Grand Canyon National Park's shuttle system please visit <http://www.nps.gov/grca/planyourvisit/shuttle-buses.htm> or call (928) 638-7888. Commercial tours, provided by Xanterra South Rim, L.L.C. also resumed service on November 16. For tour information, please contact Xanterra at 888-297-2757 or visit <http://www.grandcanyonlodges.com/>. For information on Grand Canyon National Park, please call 928-638-7888 or visit <http://www.nps.gov/grca>.

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Vicky Stinson, Project Manager, Grand Canyon NP; Sharon Cann, Paul Revere Transportation; Rick Suarez, Federal Highway Administration; Jason Fann, Fann Contracting, Inc., Palma Wilson, Deputy Superintendent, Grand Canyon NP and Steve Martin, Superintendent, Grand Canyon NP

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