



Insider's Look at Grand Canyon

Webisode #17 – Interview with Climate Change Coordinator Kathryn Parker Transcript

Ranger Patrick: Welcome to another webisode of Insider's Look at Grand Canyon. I'm Ranger Patrick and today my guest is the Climate Change Coordinator for Grand Canyon National Park, Kathryn Parker. Kathryn, welcome to the show.

Kathryn Parker: Thank you Patrick, it is great to be here.

Patrick: So, back on October 14th and 15th you led the Climate Friendly Park Workshop. Could you let the folks know what the purpose of that workshop was?

Kathryn: Sure, we wanted to address this really important issue of climate change. And you know on October the 5th, President Obama came out with an executive order directing all federal government agencies, including of course the Park Service, to start tackling this issue. So we wanted to get a head start on that and really build partnerships both inside and outside the park to work together to address this really important issue. In addition we wanted to be able to show leadership and provide an example to others as to how people can take action on this issue.

Patrick: Well specifically, how could folks...or Grand Canyon for that matter, show this leadership?

Kathryn: So, as you know Patrick, we're an iconic park. We are currently being affected by climate change, we are seeing some of those affects now. Like the Javelinas coming up from lower elevations. So want to be able to look at this issue, to address it now and in the future. And because we have over four and a half million visitors every year we have a real opportunity to both, show leadership in the types of things we are doing and what people can do in their own lives /own homes. Also an opportunity to educate local community and these four and half million visitors that come every year, 40% of which are come from the international community. So we have that wide community to affect as well.

Patrick: What does it take to become a Climate Friendly Park?

Kathryn: Well, the first thing one needs to do, a park needs to do, is to put in an application to become one. The second thing is to complete, what we call, a greenhouse inventory. And that looks at the emissions generated within the park. The third thing is to hold the workshop, which is what we just did. And out of that develop an "Action Plan" for the park. The types of actions and steps we are going to take to become more climate friendly.

Patrick: So, I know the outcome of the workshop was to come up with this action plan. Could you share with the folks out there an example of something that is in that action plan that we are examining?

Kathryn: Through our greenhouse gas inventory we realized that a very large portion of our energy usage goes to pumping water that comes all the way from the north rim, down through the canyon, and back up to into Indian Gardens. And then from there pumped up to the south rim for the visitors and people who live here. And that is our water source. So, we use an enormous amount of energy pumping that water up to us. So, one of the things we are looking at is the use of, possibly, micro-hydro power down at Phantom Ranch, which is at the bottom of the canyon, to help supplement bringing that water up. That will save us a tremendous amount of energy and therefore reducing our carbon footprint.

Patrick: So, Kathryn what are the next steps?

Kathryn: Well currently we are working with Superintendent Steve Martin and other senior park managers to take this draft action plan, prioritize them, and then finalize the action plan in January of 2010. Then of course we have to implement it and that's the real important challenge.

Patrick: Well, you know Kathryn it sounds like you have your work cut out for you. But, I am really happy to know that you folks are working hard to address climate change here at Grand Canyon National Park. I know as time goes on you are going to be implementing these things. Would you be willing to come back and share with our listeners some of the updates on that?

Kathryn: Sure would Patrick, be happy to.

Patrick: Well, thanks for being on the show. We will catch you folks next time on, Insider's Look at Grand Canyon.