



Centennial Initiative News Release

Release date: Immediate

Contact: Public Affairs Officer, Jackie Skaggs

Phone: 307.739.3393

Date: August 23, 2007

Centennial proposals eligible for matching funds

Moose, Wyoming – To celebrate the 91st anniversary of the National Park Service, NPS Director Mary Bomar and Secretary of the Interior Dirk Kempthorne announced today at a press conference in Yosemite National Park that several proposals have been selected as eligible for matching funds under the Centennial Initiative for the coming 2008 fiscal year. Proposals totaling nearly \$370 million are eligible for centennial challenge matching funds. Grand Teton National Park was among the 201 proposals selected nationwide to receive matching funds under the guidelines of the NPS Centennial Initiative.

“The National Park Service has, after a rigorous review, certified these proposals as eligible for centennial challenge matching funds,” Bomar said. “And they are ready to go in Fiscal Year 2008, which begins October 1.”

Grand Teton National Park is eligible for \$25,000 in matching funds to support a project that will educate park visitors and employees about potential exposure to the West Nile Virus and Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza, and implement protection measures to reduce exposure to these diseases. Grand Teton National Park will work with the local Teton County Mosquito Abatement as a partner for this project to minimize health and safety risks. This particular project was identified as ready to implement in 2008, however, Grand Teton has also identified several other major projects and programs that meet the guidelines for matching funding under the centennial challenge.

Director Bomar said, “The centennial challenge is a critical element in the National Park Centennial Initiative put forward by President Bush and unveiled by Secretary Kempthorne one year ago. The full centennial initiative is a potential \$3 billion investment in our national parks, two-thirds of it a public-private partnership of matching money.”

The President’s fiscal year 2008 budget called for an additional \$100 million a year for ten years to be dedicated to bolster basic park operations. Congress has included the first \$100 million for operations in the fiscal year 2008 budget that awaits final passage.

“The second part of the initiative is the centennial challenge – a funding mechanism to match up to \$100 million a year over ten years of public money, with \$100 million a year for ten years in private donations,” Bomar said. “Legislation is pending before Congress to create the public-private centennial challenge.”

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Financial commitments to the first round of proposals exceeded the President's challenge. "We have approximately \$370 million in proposals with \$216 million committed from park visitors, friends groups and other partners," Bomar said. "This far exceeds the \$100 million in private commitments needed to move forward and speaks volumes about the private sector's support of national parks."

"I've testified before Senate and House subcommittees and judging by the warm reception we received, I believe Congress will include centennial challenge money in our next budget. We look forward to working with members from both sides of the aisle to provide the key to the centennial challenge. When that happens, we can make decisions on which of these wonderful proposals to begin in the fall," said Bomar.

The list of proposals—at 116 parks in 40 states and the District of Columbia—touches parks nationwide with a centennial effort to inventory every living thing in the national park system.

To be certified, proposals had to be imaginative and innovative, address critical Service needs, have a philanthropic partner, require little or no additional recurring operating funds to be sustainable, improve the efficiency of park management, operations and employees and produce measurable results.

Other proposals:

- Lewis and Clark National Historical Park adopting the Class of 2016 with the goal of turning students to stewards.
- Additional student education through Acadia National Park's "No Child Left Inside" project.
- Strengthening efforts to save Kemp's Ridley sea turtles – the world's most endangered sea turtle – with citizens assisting park rangers to observe and relocate nests on Padre Island National Seashore, the turtle's most important U.S. nesting habitat.
- Restoration of more than 50 miles of important foot trails in Yosemite National Park.
- Climate change research of glaciers at Mount Rainier National Park and
- Utilizing scientists and volunteers to study life along the Appalachian Trail seeing national parks as an environmental barometer.

"There is a huge wave of excitement among National Park Service professionals and our partners," Bomar said. "We will create park-based centers for Junior Rangers, implement cutting-edge energy projects like fuel cells and geothermal, and build multimedia wayside exhibits that "talk" to visitors. This is a victory for national parks and over 270 million park visitors we see each year."

"Last week, I sent an email to the men and women of the National Park Service to inform them of our announcement. One of the replies I received says it best: 'This is thrilling! A win/win opportunity like we've never seen before. Thanks for the energy and vision for the NPS.'"

"That thanks," Bomar said, "is for the many who worked to transform vision into action: Secretary Kempthorne and our friends in Congress, from both sides of the aisle, who introduced legislation to support the Centennial. But most of all, our thanks go to park superintendents, friends groups, partners, and an army of supporters."

"When history is written," Bomar said, "the Centennial Initiative will be second only to the creation of the national park system itself."

To answer the call for Centennial Initiative proposals, Grand Teton National Park has laid out a ten-year strategic plan that includes projects and programs in partnership with the Grand Teton National Park Foundation, the Grand Teton Association, the National Trust for Historic Preservation, and the Friends of Pathways. To meet the Centennial Initiative's national objectives, Grand Teton proposes to pursue the following long-term goals: develop an historic preservation center at the old White Grass Dude

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Ranch (a project that has already begun but needs future funding); restore more than 4,000 acres of former rangelands and eliminate non-native species; establish pathways along road corridors that will connect the park with adjacent gateway communities and encourage non-motorized visitation; develop virtual field trips and provide Web-casting programs to stay relevant with visitors who increasingly depend on technology for information; conserve, protect and interpret the David T. Vernon collection of American Indian art and artifacts in a new sustainable facility with year-round visitor access; establish a Grand Teton Trails Forever program to address critically needed trail maintenance on the 420 miles of highly popular park trails—including a Youth Conservation Program that has successfully operated during 2006 and 2007; and establish a fund to facilitate acquisition from willing sellers of high priority properties within the park that are identified in the park's Land Protection Plan.

Superintendent Mary Gibson Scott stated, "Being selected for the proposal to protect park visitors and employees from exposure to West Nile Virus and Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza will allow Grand Teton to address public safety concerns while fulfilling the Stewardship Goal under the Centennial Initiative. Other worthwhile projects will follow in subsequent years as Grand Teton National Park continues to improve services and programs throughout the next nine years before the culmination of the NPS Centennial in 2016."

To review a list of centennial strategic goals for Grand Teton National Park, please go to the Web site <http://www.nps.gov/grte/parkmgmt/2016.htm>.

The full list of nationwide centennial challenge-eligible projects and programs is available on-line at the National Park Service centennial web site www.nps.gov/2016.

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