



Commercial Filming at NPS Sites



Why

Images created by explorers and artists illustrated the grandeur of the American west and played a significant role in establishing national parks. John Wesley Powell's drawings introduced Americans to the Grand Canyon and William Henry Jackson's photographs propelled Yellowstone to national consciousness. Since then, national parks have become popular places for photography and filming.

The National Park Service was established in 1916 to “conserve the

scenery and the natural and historic objects...and to provide for the enjoyment of the same...and...[to] leave them unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations.” Today, the National Park Service has almost 400 units and includes natural, cultural and historic sites as well as recreation and wilderness areas. Each area requires special care to ensure that it remains unimpaired for future generations.

How

Commercial filming in national park areas, including video and sound recording, requires a permit. Still photography requires a permit when it involves models, sets or props, may interfere with the visitor experience, takes place outside of normal visitation hours or locations, or creates the potential for damage to the resource.

Permits are authorized by park superintendents and are considered on a case-by-case basis. For each permit application, parks evaluate issues such as: the connection between the proposed activity and the park purpose, the appropriate uses for and potential impact on the park's resources, potential impact on the visitor experience and park operations, the location(s) requested, and the permittees' ability to comply with safety regulations and other park-specific conditions. Permits are accompanied by conditions and generally incur fees, including an application fee. Some permits will have insurance, bond or cash deposit requirements. Permittees are also generally required to reimburse the park for costs incurred as a result of the filming or photography activity.

To apply for a permit, contact a park directly. The superintendent's office will refer the inquiry to the appropriate park personnel. It is

important to contact the specific park in which you propose to film because some areas, such as in Washington, D.C., have special filming regulations. Be prepared to explain exactly why you want to film in a national park. In addition you will need to explain what you want to do, where and when you want to do it, with how many people, what equipment/props/sets you will need and any other requirements necessary for your proposal.

Contact a park early in the planning process. While applications for small filming and photography projects may be processed in a few days, large projects may take several weeks. Some areas may be closed to filming or photography or there may be times when filming activities are not permitted. For example, at a historic site, filming may have to take place at night, while a natural area may have restrictions to avoid interfering with a nesting threatened or endangered bird. Park personnel can advise applicants about any requirements. Understanding the parameters will help in planning and applying for a permit. After a superintendent approves a permit, permittees are mailed a copy of the permit and conditions.

For more information on the National Park Service photography and filming regulations go to: www.nps.gov/policy/Dorders/Dorder53.html