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National Park Service Unveils Major Planning Initiative; Effort Will Develop Long- Term Framework for National Mall

Washington, D.C.—The National Park Service (NPS) begins a public planning process that ranges from providing direction on how the National Mall is managed for the foreseeable future to improving ways that visitors experience the National Mall. The general public will have multiple opportunities to become involved in the planning effort, including the unveiling of a new interactive website on November 1st (www.nps.gov/nationalmallplan) and a national symposium that will focus Americans' attention on celebrating the National Mall's past, improving its present state and ensuring a sustainable future for what is considered one of the most important public spaces in this country.

Announcing the initiative include Deputy Interior Secretary Lynn Scarlett, National Park Service Director Mary Bomar, National Capital Region Director Joe Lawler, National Park Foundation President & CEO Vin Cipolla, Chairman of the National Trust for the National Mall, John Akridge III and National Mall & Memorial Parks Superintendent Vikki Keys.

Historically, several landmark plans have provided the foundation for the National Mall. While the use, landscape and appearance of the National Mall has changed over time, these past plans helped determine the current look and feel of the National Mall. In 2003, Congress passed the Reserve Act, which declared the National Mall a completed work of civic art and which provides a foundation to plan for the future of this public space. Since that time the NPS has conducted research and studies to inform the planning process, including domestic and international best practice studies. The current effort is vital to the well- being of the National Mall and is a necessary step to ensure its enjoyment for future generations.

“The National Mall symbolizes our nation and our freedoms,” said Bomar. “Through this process the National Park Service wants to give the American public the chance to help determine how future generations will continue to honor, commemorate, celebrate and enjoy this national treasure.”

The planning initiative will give Americans the opportunity to decide on the use, appearance and landscape of the National Mall, a public space that welcomes more than 25 million visitors each year. That's more than the number of visitors to Yellowstone, Yosemite, and Grand Canyon National Parks combined. These numbers result in stress to and pressure on the National Mall's natural and cultural resources. This level of public use has resulted in

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challenges that include maintaining healthy grass, trees and other landscape items, irrigation systems that need frequent repair and the availability of ample restroom facilities. The NPS, through this planning process, is committed to ensuring these challenges are met so that the National Mall's appearance reflects the values that Americans attach to this space so as to ensure future generations' ability to enjoy the National Mall's open spaces, monuments and memorials.

"We need to plan for growth with a commitment to maintain the National Mall as a place of national significance. As we look forward to the National Park Service centennial, I intend to remain wholly involved in the planning for the next century of National Mall needs," said Senator Craig Thomas (R- WY) Chairman of the National Parks Subcommittee. "I fully endorse this planning effort."

On November 15, 2006, the National Park Service will host a symposium entitled the "Future of the National Mall," which will launch the planning effort and begin a national dialogue around planning for the National Mall's future. The Symposium will touch upon a variety of topics in order to begin clarifying how this public space can successfully meet the needs of the public while also surviving the next century. Topic areas range from improving landscape conditions, to supporting the needs of visitors, to discussing the wear and tear caused by more than 3,000 annual events, festivals, demonstrations and special athletic events.

At the symposium, local, national, and international experts in the fields of landscape architecture, city planning, turf management, and related industries will discuss possible solutions for preserving and caring for the National Mall while meeting the needs of millions of visitors each year. The public is invited to learn, participate, and provide their ideas and feedback. The symposium will be held at the Naval Heritage Center at the U.S. Navy Memorial, 701 Pennsylvania Ave., N.W., in Washington, D.C.

Beginning November 1st, the public is encouraged to become involved by visiting www.nps.gov/nationalmallplan to learn more about the NPS' efforts. This website will provide direction on how to provide feedback and concerns, and to obtain updates on the plan's progress.

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