

National Park Service

Stewardship

I N S T I T U T E





incubating creative strategies

National Park Service | Stewardship Institute

The National Park Service Stewardship Institute (formerly the Conservation Study Institute) is a collaborative for change, from the way it is organized, to how it works. The origin of the Stewardship Institute is rooted in the idea that the National Park Service is an organization of great public purpose and that its people—charged with the stewardship of some of America’s greatest treasures—need to be supported, challenged, and provided opportunities for renewal.

At the Stewardship Institute, we help National Park Service leaders move the organization in new directions. Our approach is collaborative, convening people of diverse training and experience, stewarding the National Park Service into the 21st century.



sharing

innovative

ideas

A Stewardship Collaborative

The Stewardship Institute is a small team and a large network, actively engaged in keeping the National Park Service at the leading edge of conservation stewardship. Rooted in scholarship, the Institute pushes beyond the realm of abstracts and theories and into real-world, field-based application. The Institute advances learning through cultivating networks of inspired people. Such networks are among the National Park Service's strongest assets, and growing and nurturing them is one of the Institute's priorities. These networks are composed of staff from national parks and programs from across the country as well as partners from nonprofit organizations, foundations, other government agencies, local governments and universities. Through these partnerships, the Institute is able to collaborate at scale and address organizational needs faster and more systemically.

We believe that:

- **Illuminating outstanding practices and ideas from parks, programs, and partners around the country empowers the sharing of innovation.**
- **Proactive engagement with experts from within and outside of the National Park Service creates new, cutting-edge directions in our stewardship work.**
- **Good processes deliver great outcomes—program analysis, organizational development, evaluation, and facilitation of effective stakeholder engagement bring ideas off the drawing board and into our parks and communities.**

A Focus on the Future

The Institute has served as a catalyst for the National Park Service's *Call to Action* on leading innovation. As part of this work, the *Collaborative for Innovative Leadership* emerged from a series of deep conversations related to NPS culture, leadership and collaboration. With the Institute providing a facilitation and communication "backbone," the informal *Collaborative* focuses on accelerating the spread of ideas, encouraging innovation, and inspiring peer-to-peer collaboration across the Service.

The Institute applies principles of collaboration in all of its focus areas:

- **Collaboration and Engagement**
- **Leadership for Change**
- **Research and Evaluation**

Collaboration and Engagement Collaboration is required to respond to the ever-changing stewardship issues that today's conservation leaders face. We have demonstrated effective engagement by focusing on facilitating collaboration and dialogue among leading-edge thinkers from all levels of the conservation community. These dialogues ensure time and space for reflection and meaningful exchange. They create avenues for bringing new thinking in from the edges, often yielding transformative outcomes.

EXAMPLE

Urban Matters

With more than 80% of the nation's population living in metropolitan areas, it is imperative to enhance NPS relevance and its ability to serve diverse populations. The Institute facilitated an Urban Caucus, followed by the training of a team of field strategists that formed the Urban Matters community of practice. Hundreds of people from across the country engaged in numerous online community conversations. The communities focused on showcasing pioneering urban initiatives, collaborative approaches, and innovative ideas for the NPS in urban areas. The dialogue has led to the crafting of an NPS Urban Agenda outlining strategies intended to rally people around urban parks and programs and leverage partnerships.



Leadership for Change The world has changed profoundly in the century since the genesis of the national park idea. The National Park System continues to evolve and the issues facing our parks have become more diverse and complex. The Institute works closely with NPS leadership programs and initiatives, academia, and partners on providing practitioners 21st century skills that foster collaborative, adaptive, and resilient leadership.

EXAMPLE

Superintendents Leadership Roundtable

The Superintendents Leadership Roundtable (SLR) enhances the capacity of NPS leaders to meet the challenges associated with the increasing complexity of park management. Participants learn to better negotiate complicated issues, embrace innovation, and build the commitment of a diverse public for the stewardship of our national system of parks. Approximately 1/3 of NPS superintendents have participated annually in facilitated peer-to-peer dialogue. Throughout the year, the Institute supports a superintendent community of practice with webinars, conference calls, online resources, and interactive media.



Research and Evaluation The Institute believes that research and evaluation are the cornerstone to strong and effective programs. We use evaluation to advance understanding of effective leadership and explore how programs produce desired impacts and outcomes. Institute projects must have a clear application and evaluation element to facilitate organizational learning. Research is crafted to be applied to park and program operations.

EXAMPLE

Engaging Diverse Communities

The Institute and its partners developed the *Beyond Outreach Handbook: A Guide to Designing Effective Programs to Engage Diverse Communities*. Through in-depth evaluation of youth programming at Santa Monica Mountains and Boston Harbor Islands national recreation areas, the Institute was able to distill promising practices for engaging diverse youth. This Handbook is a tool to assist National Park Service practitioners and their partners in developing and sustaining programs that successfully connect diverse communities with their local national parks. It guides practitioners through an assessment that identifies gaps in readiness and informs the development of effective strategies.





inspiring responsible stewardship

A Place for Inspiration

The Stewardship Institute is based within an extraordinary landscape at Marsh-Billings-Rockefeller National Historical Park in Vermont. Through the three generations of conservationists reflected in its name, the Park tells the story of conservation history and the evolving nature of land stewardship in America. As a model for preservation and sustainability, the Park offers inspirational meeting spaces for groups to gather, roam the carriage paths through the forest, tour the historic buildings and gardens, and easily walk to local accommodations in the town of Woodstock.

But if you can't get to Vermont, we'll come to you! The Institute is grounded at the Park yet its scope is national, with partners around the country and connections around the world. Participants and programs reach throughout the National Park Service and its partnership network.

Stewardship Institute Partners

Alliance for National Heritage Areas ■ Appalachian Trail Conservancy ■ Billings Farm & Museum ■ Center for Park Management, National Parks and Conservation Association ■ City Parks Alliance ■ The Conservation Fund ■ Department of the Interior ■ Eppley Institute for Parks and Public Lands, Indiana University ■ George Wright Society ■ Harvard University ■ Institute at the Golden Gate ■ Lincoln Institute of Land Policy ■ Living Landscape Observer ■ Marsh-Billings-Rockefeller National Historical Park ■ National Park Foundation ■ National Park System Advisory Board ■ North Carolina State University ■ NPS Appalachian Trail Office ■ NPS Centennial Program ■ NPS Learning & Development Office ■ NPS Regional Offices* ■ NPS Parks & Programs Nationwide ■ NPS Policy Office ■ NPS Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance Program ■ NPS Workforce Enrichment Program ■ Partnership for Public Service ■ Practitioners Network for Large Landscape Conservation ■ Pinchot Institute for Conservation ■ QLF Atlantic Center for the Environment** ■ Regional Plan Association ■ Shelburne Farms** ■ Sonoran Institute ■ Student Conservation Association ■ Trust for Public Lands ■ University of Montana ■ University of Vermont** ■ USDA Forest Service ■ Wallace Stegner Center ■ Woodstock Foundation

*The Stewardship Institute is a program supported by the Northeast Regional Office
The above represents a partial list of Institute partners. **Founding partner in the Conservation Study Institute

Stewardship Institute | 54 Elm Street, Woodstock VT 05091
802.457.3368 | www.nps.gov/stewardshipinstitute

