

National Park System Advisory Board
ECONOMIC VALUATION SUMMARY REPORT
November 2012

Background

This study quantifies the broad public benefits that flow from the larger purposes of the modern National Park Service as it moves to its second century. To do that, it measures the total economic values of the national parks and cooperative assistance programs that constitute the National Park Service. In 2016, our Nation will mark the one-hundredth anniversary of the National Park Service, an occasion that is expected to attract high public interest and to stimulate a national dialogue about the success of the national park idea - and its growing contributions to society. This study's valuation of the National Park Service, its programs as well as the parks, will offer invaluable research to inform and shape this dialogue. This study will complete a first-ever, comprehensive valuation to more accurately portray the *entire* economic contribution of all the activities of the National Park Service.

Addressing the Task

To illustrate those values we use case studies of specific parks and programs, and develop research analyses of general public economic values that are suitable for publication in peer reviewed journals. This study builds on existing research of the economic contributions associated with National Park Service visitor spending and payroll to include the critically important and relevant values that are not represented by those market activities.

Progress Report

A team convened to develop study goals and objectives, and to discuss study design, management, and deliverables. The team organized the entire study in two phases. Phase 1 produces a "blueprint" that identifies the specific economic values to be measured, the valuation methods to be utilized, and the major procedural steps required for the study. Phase 2 implements the study blueprint.

As a preliminary step in this study, research was conducted that produced a conceptual framework describing the total economic values to be measured by the study and a case study of Joshua Tree National Park to illustrate those values. Additionally, the study team conducted an extensive literature review and synthesized significant amounts of information about the parks and programs in order to design the survey questionnaires that will be used in the valuation in Phase 2. This synthesis is described in a status report prepared by the study team, part of Phase 1.

The study team has begun to conduct focus groups to determine the public understanding of the parks and programs, and to evaluate certain technical details for conducting the general public valuation survey. Finally, the core study team has assembled an advisory panel of leading economists and other experts.

Realizing Our Vision

Recommendations for moving the study forward include completing Phase 1 and continuing fundraising activities for the conduct of Phase 2. An additional recommendation is to brief National Park Service management periodically on the status of the study.

Follow Our Work

This section will include web links to a full report and other backup information.