

National Park System Advisory Board 2013 Report

Task 1: Plan for a Future National Park System

National Park Service responsibilities for managing parks and programs have grown over the past century in response to opportunities rather than a clear design. An agency of the scope, scale, and influence of the NPS must implement its own Systemwide, long-term plan to meet the needs of a rapidly changing 21st-century and safeguard a full representation of the nation's resources. A new, comprehensive plan is needed to integrate all NPS units and programs, tell multiple stories, and engage all Americans in their shared heritage.

Addressing the Task

The NPSAB Planning Committee was established in 2010 consisting of 15 members with extensive and diverse experience. Work groups focused on analysis of gaps in representation of ecological systems and cultural resources, new park partnership models, large landscape-scale conservation, and urban engagement.

Progress Report

The committee developed a comprehensive report to provide a foundation for a new National Park System plan. The full report identifies 18 major recommendations reflecting the committee's analysis of issues, opportunities, and other examples of system plans. Major concepts focus on integrating parks with other protected areas; sustaining the integrity of parks by engaging effectively in conservation at the large landscape scale; improving connections among parks, NPS programs, and urban populations; and developing NPS institutional capacity for system planning and partnerships.

The report compares past practices with recommended future directions and examples of vision statements and conservation targets from international, state, and other planning efforts. Guided by the principles of representation, resilience, redundancy, and restoration, a change from current NPS criteria, the committee evaluated new mapping and analytical methods to identify gaps, as well as vulnerability and protection potential for ecological systems. National parks and NHLs were analyzed by significance topic, and suggestions were made for addressing underrepresented stories. Case studies on large landscape-scale conservation provided insights into legal and administrative changes required to enhance effectiveness. A review of the inventory of major metropolitan areas with NPS units within a 50-mile radius noted some obvious gaps. The limited capacity of many small NPS units in urban areas was discussed, and recommendations were developed to address transportation and social obstacles for urban populations. The committee also evaluated multi-stakeholder management models for NPS units and boundary configurations that encompass private lands, offering recommendations on the NPS role as a partner and the importance of authority to ensure consistency with NPS standards and policies.

Priorities Through 2016

Enhance NPS capability for dynamic system planning that engages communities and other agencies. Provide administrative support and develop new skills for effective partnerships, especially on a large landscape scale. Establish prototype urban program offices. Update criteria, conduct studies that advance untold stories, and identify priorities for new or expanded parks, landmarks, and other designations.

Follow Our Work

Download the complete National Park System Advisory Board Planning Committee report and appendices at www.nps.gov/resources/advisoryboardreport.htm. Visit the *Call to Action* website (*Item 1*).