

**National Park System Advisory Board
Meeting (Videoconference) Minutes
December 10, 2020**

The **National Park System Advisory Board** (Board) convened for a videoconference meeting at 11 a.m. EST, on Thursday, December 10, 2020. In accordance with the provisions of Public Law 92-463 (5 U.S.C. app.) the meeting was open to the public throughout its duration. Board Chairwoman Mary Pope Hutson and Board Staff Director Joshua Winchell conducted the virtual meeting from the Rachel Carson Room in the Department of the Interior Building, 1849 C St., NW, Washington, D.C.

Board Members Participating:

Andrew “Tuck” Beckstoffer, Joseph Emert, Hon. William Hewes, Mary Pope Hutson (Chairwoman), Ellis Ivory, Dr. Zelma Lansford, Dr. Les Moore, Philip Pearce.

Designated Federal Officer (DFO) for the Board:

Joshua Winchell, Staff Director, National Park System Advisory Board, National Park Service (NPS).

Other Participants:

Margaret Everson (Counselor to the Secretary, Exercising the Delegated Authority of the Director, NPS); Shawn Benge, Deputy Director of Operations, NPS; Reginald Chapple, Acting Assistant Director, Partnerships and Civic Engagement, NPS; Joy Beasley, Associate Director, Cultural Resources, Partnerships, and Science, NPS; Alma Ripps, Chief, Office of Policy, NPS; Shirley Sears, Office of Policy, NPS; Jeremy Buzzell, Chief, Accessibility and Housing Support Programs, NPS; Tamara Delaplaine, Landscape Architect/Project Manager, NPS; Deborah Douglas, Organizational Development Specialist, NPS; Heather Eggleston, Manager, National Natural Landmarks Program, NPS; Sherry Frear, Chief, National Historic Landmarks Program, NPS; Patty Henry, Historian, National Historic Landmarks Program, NPS; Laurie Jenkins, Regional National Natural Landmarks Coordinator, NPS; Astrid Liverman, Historian, NPS; Paul Lusignan, Historian, NPS; Ellen Rankin, Architectural Historian, NPS; Stephanie Roulette, Office of Communications, NPS; Elizabeth Stern, Office of Communications, NPS; Bill Tallbull, Management Analyst, NPS; Justin Unger, Associate Director, Business Services, NPS; Miriam Bunow; Joanne Goodwin; Rob Hotakainen; Jimmy Kagan; Wendy Kinser-Maxwell; Jeannene Mironack; Victoria Miller; Terry Riley; Tim Roberts; Michael Strutt; Christina Truilo.

Note: Meeting agenda, slide presentations, and documents shared at the meeting are posted to the Board’s website: <https://www.nps.gov/resources/advisoryboard150.htm>

CONVENING the Meeting – December 10th

Meeting was called to order by Chairwoman Hutson at 11 a.m., EST on December 10, 2020.

Introductions and Roll Call

- Hutson thanked NPS staff for advancing package of National Historic and National Natural Landmark proposals that have been in pipeline for some time and discussed the importance of campground access and NPS workforce suicide awareness and prevention.
- Winchell took roll and confirmed members present (see “Board Members Participating” list, above) and confirmed quorum.
- Hutson welcomed Margaret Everson and Shawn Bengé to the meeting, thanked them for their efforts implementing the Great American Outdoors Act and acknowledged their challenge in leading the NPS during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Remarks from Margaret Everson, Counselor to the Secretary, Exercising the Delegated Authority of the Director, NPS

- Everson thanked Hutson for the introduction and announced the hiring of a number of senior NPS leaders: Chip Jenkins, Superintendent for Grand Teton National Park; Cicely Muldoon, Superintendent for Yosemite National Park; Justin Unger, Associate Director for Business Services; Dorothy FireCloud, Native American Affairs Liaison; and Rita Moss, Associate Director Workforce and Inclusion.
- Everson provided an update on the Department of the Interior’s implementation of the Great American Outdoors Act (GAOA). Everson mentioned the establishment of a taskforce including Assistant Secretaries with relevant jurisdictions: Assistant Secretary for Fish and Wildlife and Parks Rob Wallace; Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs Tara Sweeney; Acting Assistant Secretary for Land and Minerals Management Casey Hammond; Acting Assistant Secretary for Policy, Management and Budget Scott Cameron; Interior Solicitor Dan Jorjani; and Deputy Secretary Kate MacGregor. NPS Deputy Director Shawn Bengé serves as liaison to the NPS and Acting NPS Associate Director for Park Planning, Facilities and Lands Mike Caldwell also serves on the workgroup. Everson stated that one of the big questions discussed by the workgroup is, in relation to GAOA, “what does success look like?”, “are we squeezing every dime out of every GAOA dollar?” Everson stated the workgroup made an initial “peer review” of roughly 20 percent of the deferred maintenance projects and said that the Internal Park Service Investment Review Board have been meeting frequently to look at all projects. Everson also mentioned ongoing, regular calls with park superintendents to keep updated on deferred maintenance projects.
- Everson discussed Secretary Bernhardt’s Secretary Order on the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) which focused on the 4 percent LWCF funds for federal lands acquisition. The other 60 percent goes to the “state side” projects. Everson mentioned hearing from many people on the federal side and the state side and the need to work well together to ensure connectivity of all public lands. Everson emphasized the need to prioritize investing in places that help ensure connectivity. Everson also discussed prioritizing habitat and recreational opportunities.

- Everson concluded with comments on how the NPS has adapted to the pandemic and how much it has learned since March. NPS staff and leadership have been very creative in adjusting to ensure that staff and visitors remain safe at the same time keeping the grass mowed and the bathrooms open. The NPS has moved some interpretive information online, or moved information outside when it had been housed inside a visitor center. Everson gave an example at Mount Rainier where rather than having visitors come inside to get information, rangers are walking the trails and bringing information to visitors where they are. At a visit to Kitty Hawk [Wright Brothers National Memorial], Everson witnessed how they kept their visitor center open through thoughtful social distancing protocols inside. Everson emphasized that the NPS continues to monitor the situation, and continues to review its plan so the NPS can do what's best for its employees and visitors. The demand for outdoor experiences during the pandemic is and will continue to be high, with NPS campgrounds consistently and fully booked.

Remarks from Shawn Bengé, Deputy Director of Operations, NPS

- Bengé opened his remarks with a discussion of the NPS transportation realm and transit systems, with roughly a hundred transit systems and rapid systems at 60 parks serving 45 million passengers annually. The NPS has made a conscious effort to broaden and strengthen its partnership with the Federal Highway Administration to include transportation innovation. One new NPS effort is a pilot project on automated shuttles with the first pilot of three happening in Yellowstone. The Yellowstone pilot is scheduled to be operational for the 2021 visitor season, serving the Canyon Lodges to the Canyon Building Center.
- Bengé provided an update on NPS housing and discussed how NPS is developing a plan on how it will improve the quality of housing in the NPS. He shared that NPS has roughly 5,500 housing units across the system in approximately 200 parks. Bengé also mentioned that the NPS has just finished a housing prototype catalog which includes a suite of standardized designs to choose from including single-family units all the way through apartments and dormitories. Bengé expects this catalogue will save NPS money and time because the NPS won't have to design and redesign housing for every situation.
- Bengé commented on the NPS strategic framework for America's 250th celebration. The framework document will be completed in Spring 2021 and will serve as both a vision and also a blueprint, with sideboards to help define the terms of the NPS role in the commemoration. An executive committee and a core team working on the document have focused on the overarching question of what a truly inclusive commemoration looks like and what would it take for the NPS to help achieve it.
- Hutson asked Bengé about the status of historic preservation staffing and training, whether there is currently sufficient capacity to tackle the historic preservation workload. Bengé responded that many historic preservation staff recruitment packages are ready to

move forward and that the NPS expects to onboard between 18 and 21 new staff within the next couple months.

- Everson completed the NPS update by sharing a late-breaking announcement that the 423rd unit of the NPS - Medgar and Myrlie Evers Home National Monument - had just been established by Secretary Bernhardt.

Remarks from Justin Unger, Associate Director, Business Services, NPS

- Unger provided a slide presentation (posted on the Board's website, *see note above*) on the Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act (FLREA).
- Unger first provided a brief legislative history of FLREA and described the three types of fees: (1) Entrance fees that vary based on mode of entry; (2) "expanded amenity fees" i.e., camping, boat launching fees; and (3) special recreation permit fees. Unger also described the process by which fees are established which include publication of a notice in the Federal Register informing the public about the NPS intent to implement a fee, and civic engagement efforts such as public meetings and press announcements. A similar process is involved in changing a fee.
- The NPS uses four rough groupings to help assess fees which include a lowest price tier associated with national historic sites, military parks, and national preserves; national seashores or recreation areas; traditional national parks, and a small number of what are considered the "iconic" parks with large scale overnight lodging. One hundred and eight of 423 NPS units collect some form of entrance fee, with highest fee at \$35; a 7-day vehicle pass for a group of four; annual pass is \$70. Revenue in 2019 was roughly \$300 million, which dropped to ~\$260 million in 2020 likely due to pandemic.
- For expenditures of fee revenues, parks that collect fees need to spend 55 percent of their dollars in deferred maintenance. In 2019, 58 percent of fee revenue was spent on facility maintenance activities; 5 percent on habitat restoration; 8 percent interpretation and other services; less than 1 percent on law enforcement. Collection costs are roughly 12 percent.
- Unger emphasized the need to speed up transactions at the point of sale, which includes both decreasing credit card processing times and using mobile card readers to process cards of those still waiting in line, and increasing ability for cashless transactions.
- Chairwoman Hutson asked a question how NPS is dealing with the revenue loss resulting from the pandemic. Unger responded that there were no major impacts in 2020, but NPS is examining seasonal workforce needs, scaling back projects. Unger noted that parks have a history of being careful in their spending, but carryover balances could be impacted in 2021 and 2022. Hutson also asked whether NPS can get demographic information from visitors at point of sale. Unger responded no.

National Natural Landmarks Committee Report, Mayor Billy Hewes, Chair

- Chair Hewes introduced the Lanphere and Ma-le'l Dunes National Natural Landmark (NNL) designation proposal, mentioning that it was introduced at the previous Board meeting but a public comment received at the last minute from the Humboldt Bay Municipal Water District necessitated additional community outreach. Hewes mentioned that the NPS NNL program quickly reached out to the commenter, addressed the

concerns, and – as a result – the commenter submitted a follow-up letter fully in support of the designation. Hewes passed the presentation over to Heather Eggleston, NNL Program Manager.

- Eggleston provided a slide presentation (posted on the Board’s website, see note above) describing Lanphere and Ma-l’el Dunes in California.
- Eggleston reviewed detailed information about its characteristics found in the documents posted to the Board’s website in advance of the meeting. Eggleston also brought to the Board’s attention public comment received in support of Lanphere and Ma-le’l Dunes, the district’s letter raising concerns about its designation, and detailed the NNL program’s outreach to the commenter and resolution of their concerns. Eggleston concluded with the reversal of the district’s concerns and submission of the district’s revised letter expressing support for the designation.

National Historic Landmarks Committee Report, Joe Emert, Chair

- Chair Emert briefed the Board on the National Historic Landmarks (NHL) Committee, stating that the Committee reviewed 11 nominations for NHL designation and will make recommendations to the Board. Emert introduced Joy Beasley to present to the Board information on each of the recommended sites.
- Beasley gave a slide presentation (posted on the Board’s website, *see note above*) summarizing the following 11 candidates the committee recommended to the Board for designation: (1) Tolson’s Chapel and School, Sharpsburg, Maryland; (2) Dudley Farm, Newberry, Alachua County, Florida; (3) Monroe County Courthouse, Monroeville, Alabama; (4) Mary Baker Eddy House, Lynn, Massachusetts; (5) University of Wisconsin Arboretum, Madison, Wisconsin; (6) Frieda Fromm-Reichmann Cottage, Rockville, Maryland; (7) Fort Ouiatenon Archeological District, Tippecanoe County, Indiana; (8) Hueco Tanks, El Paso County, Texas; (9) Klagetoh (Leegito) Chapter House, Klagetoh, Navajo Nation, Arizona; (10) Colorado Fuel and Iron Company Administrative Complex, Pueblo, Colorado; and (11) Surf Ballroom, Clear Lake, Iowa.

Workforce Planning Committee, Les Moore and Zelma Lansford, Co-Chairs

- Co-Chair Les Moore read the NPS mental and emotional health programs recommendation letter submitted to the Board by the committee (letter submitted to the Board and public via the Board website prior to the meeting).
- The letter is a detailed set of recommendations for consideration to improve the existing mental and emotional support programs available to NPS staff. This is a follow-up to the introductory letter submitted by the Board from its September 2020 meeting. Moore talked about the committee examining suicide awareness and prevention and wellness resiliency and morale improvement. Moore discussed the NPS Wellness and Resiliency Branch and the possibility of expanding it, as well as bring it closer to the NPS Director’s office. Moore mentioned the branch’s interaction with the U.S. Public Health Service and the desirability of supporting that interaction on an ongoing basis.
- Moore described the letter as a proposed expansion of the NPS Wellness and Resilience Branch and the creation of several positions to include a mental health program manager and a professional counselor with a chaplain or other specially trained personnel to assist

the director in morale, suicide prevention health and response to traumatic events. Moore stated these recommendations related to the Board's earlier recommendations on the health.

- Moore focused on the following components of the recommendation letter: utilization of U.S. Public Health Service; expansion of mental health specialist, regional counselor or chaplain and other specially trained personnel to assist superintendents through the CARES Act that are reserved for the U.S. Public Health Service; communication at all levels of the organization of the importance of suicide prevention, resilience, and morale monitoring; training and awareness of the health benefits of mental health services and counseling so that we can help prevent and identify individuals and have individuals that can help others who are going through stressful times or some post-traumatic stress disorder; utilization of mental health specialists and professional counselors and chaplains where resilience and morale by superintendents and program managers and other team leaders implement into the supervisory skills workshop and new supervisor development program; reevaluation of the structure and alignment in order to focus on mission accomplishment, resilience, suicide prevention, and decreased stress in the workforce. This will require a structural alignment and coordination between the Visitor and Resource Protection Directorate (which includes the Office of Risk Management and the Office of Public Health), and the Workforce and Inclusion Directorate with staff leaders in the Wellness and Resilience Branch; and ongoing coordination and communication of program successes and achievements of shared goals among programs and directorates to see how it's actually being implemented and how effective it has been in the mental health and the emotional health areas and suicide prevention and resiliency.

Visitor Experience Committee Report, Philip Pearce, Chair

- Pearce reviewed the work history of the Visitor Experience Committee. He stated that in January 2020, the committee was requested by the Board to review and update Director's Order #42 on accessibility for visitors with disabilities to the National Park System including programs and services. The committee's report to the Board recommended a practical model for the NPS facilities and features may be made to at least comply with minimum standards and requirement of accessibility laws and guidelines, and to even go beyond the minimum standards wherever possible. The report explained how the recommendations could be applied to another Board request to the committee - drafting recommendations on the development of a system-wide, campground planning guide, particularly as it relates to accessibility. The Board reviewed the committee report and submitted final recommendations to the NPS in June 2020, ultimately recommending the NPS lay out a process for ensuring accessibility that begins with the early inception and planning of a project, and continues through until it is completed and ready to be open to the public. Pearce shared that the NPS reviewed the Board's proposed accessibility model, and very successfully incorporated the model's core concepts into their draft campground guide. The NPS inclusion of the accessibility model provides an assurance of accessibility at future campgrounds, as well as existing campgrounds that may be in need of renovation.

- Pearce introduced NPS staff Jeremy Buzzell and Tamara Delaplane to discuss the NPS implementation of the Board’s recommendations on accessibility and the campground design guide, respectively.
- Buzzell thanked the Board and Pearce for the accessibility recommendations and discussed the importance of engaging both accessibility compliance experts, as well as the people who do historic preservation compliance, those who do environmental compliance, and those who do structural fire compliance to help ensure the total project outcome is compliant. Buzzell stated the updated NPS accessibility guidance will take a project and break it down into component pieces and then - within each - have a mapped out flow chart or a process that marks out all the checkpoints needed to ensure accessibility in the end product. This improved process will be made available online and will have training developed – something highlighted in the Board’s recommendations - to help implementation. The NPS created a new educational program called the Disability Dialog series, where the NPS brings in people from the disability community to talk about their experiences, and more than 200 staff have participated since March 2020. Further, the NPS has contracted the Eppley Center at Indiana University to do 10 one-hour webinar training sessions. The Board’s access recommendations included a training component, and the NPS has subsequently stepped up its “training game” so that it can provide a training baseline that field staff can rely on.
- Delaplane stated that the NPS introduced the concept of including accessibility very early in the document and is included in the universal design definition, as well as links to resources. The guide also reflects Board recommendations by including plan reviews and completed construction reviews for accessibility as part of general procedures. Ensuring general procedures incorporate accessibility means that things like the accessible route, firm and stable surfaces, and appropriate reach ranges are achieved even if specific implementation examples – such as “hammock anchors” – aren’t in the guide. The draft design guide was out for public review from the end of September until December 4. The NPS is in the process of pulling together, reviewing, compiling, and organizing all the comments received. The NPS has had more than 200, maybe as many as 300, comments from different segments of the population and industry. The NPS will be working on incorporating the appropriate updates in the document through this winter with the final document will be available in the spring of 2021.
- Pearce thanked Delaplane for her work and commented that she and the NPS did an amazing job of taking the model the Board proposed in June and incorporating it into the draft campground design guide. Board Member Emert commented on the importance of information accessibility through 508 compliance - something emphasized in the Board’s recommendations. Emert added that the NHL sites this Board has approved are the first “508 compliant” NHLs.

Public Comment

- No requests for public comment were received.

Decisions and Actions

- Approval of Minutes – The Board unanimously approved minutes from its September 16-17, 2020 meeting.
- National Historic Landmark Nominations – The Board unanimously approved the recommendations from its NHL Committee to recommend to the Secretary the designation of 11 new National Historic Landmarks.
- National Natural Landmark Nomination – The Board unanimously approved that Lanphere and Ma-l’el Dunes be recommended for designation by the Secretary as a National Natural Landmark.
- Letter on suicide prevention and awareness programs for NPS staff – The Board unanimously approved the letter without changes.

ADJOURNMENT

Chairwoman Hutson thanked Board members and meeting attendees and adjourned the meeting at 4:30 p.m., EST, on December 10, 2020.