National Park Service Second Century Campground Strategy

Prepared for the
National Park System Advisory Board
March 2020 Meeting*

*note: meeting canceled

National Park Service (NPS) Campgrounds at a Glance

Low cost accommodations at 1,421 campgrounds

7.9 million stays in 2018

$331.6 million in deferred maintenance

NPS Campgrounds at a Glance

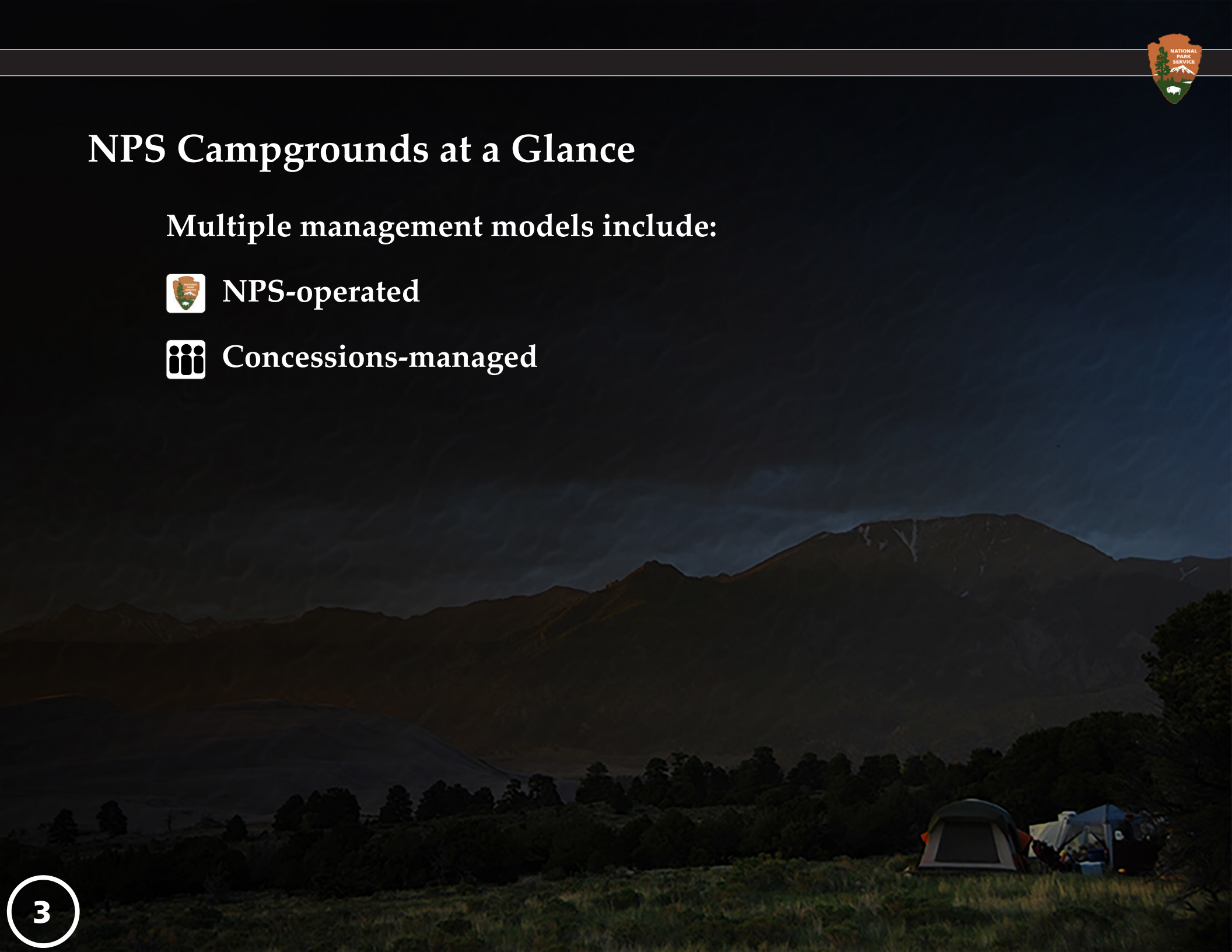
Range of facilities and amenities includes:

- 25′ RV pull-throughs to unstaffed back-country sites
- 36 campgrounds with electric hook-ups
- 426 campgrounds with water stations
- 131 campgrounds with year-round hot showers
- 33 campgrounds with Wi-Fi

NPS Campgrounds at a Glance

Multiple management models include:

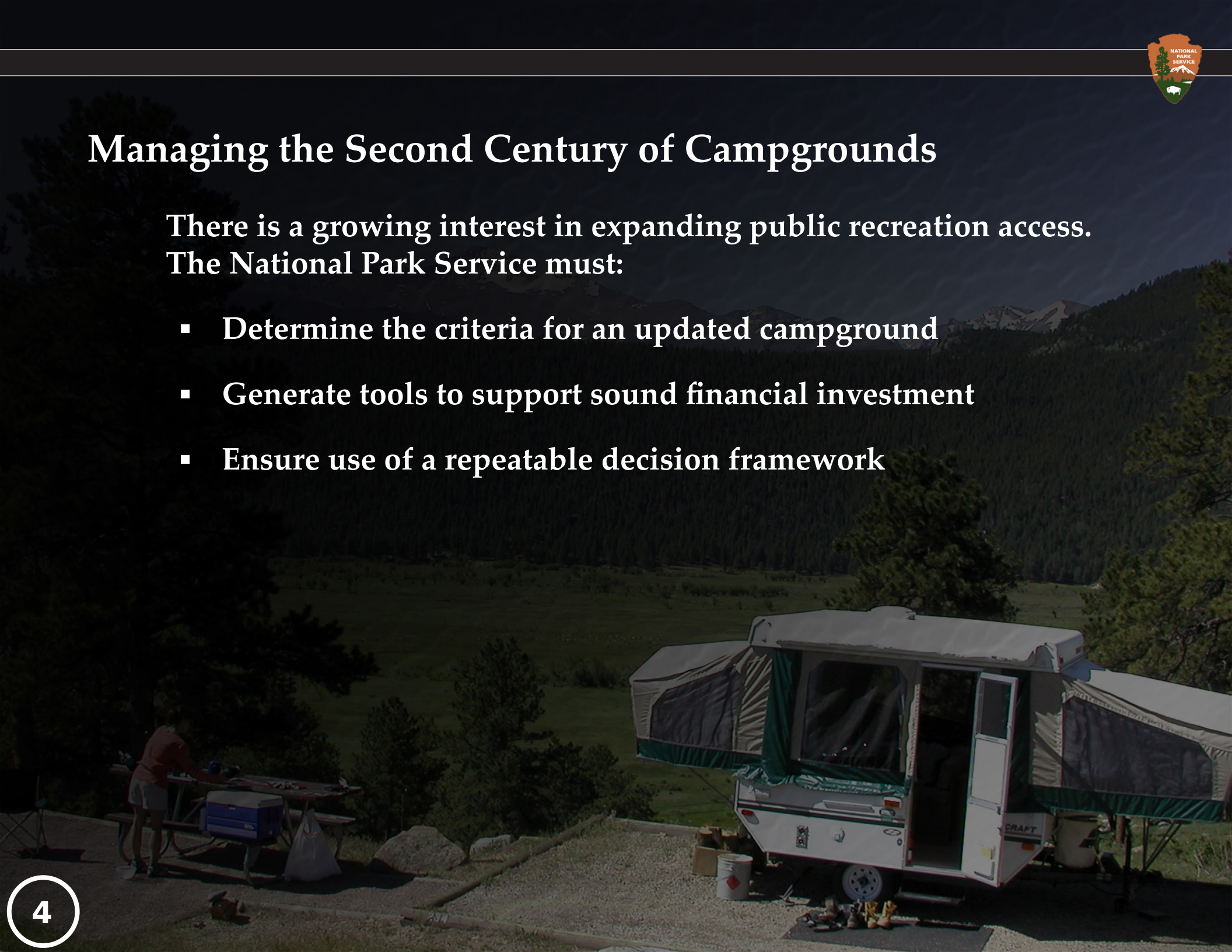
- NPS-operated
- Concessions-managed



Managing the Second Century of Campgrounds

There is a growing interest in expanding public recreation access. The National Park Service must:

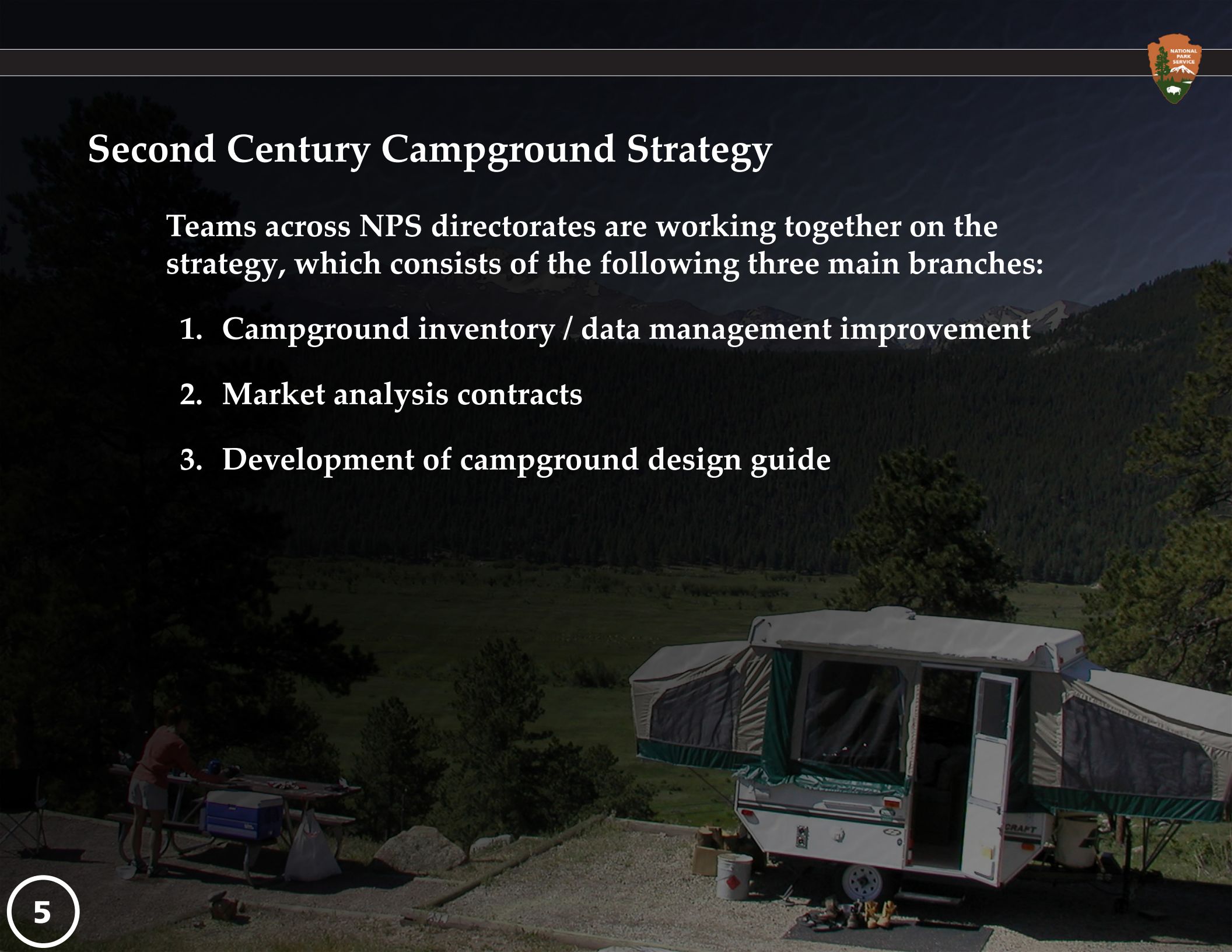
- Determine the criteria for an updated campground
- Generate tools to support sound financial investment
- Ensure use of a repeatable decision framework



Second Century Campground Strategy

Teams across NPS directorates are working together on the strategy, which consists of the following three main branches:

1. Campground inventory / data management improvement
2. Market analysis contracts
3. Development of campground design guide



Managing the Second Century of Campgrounds

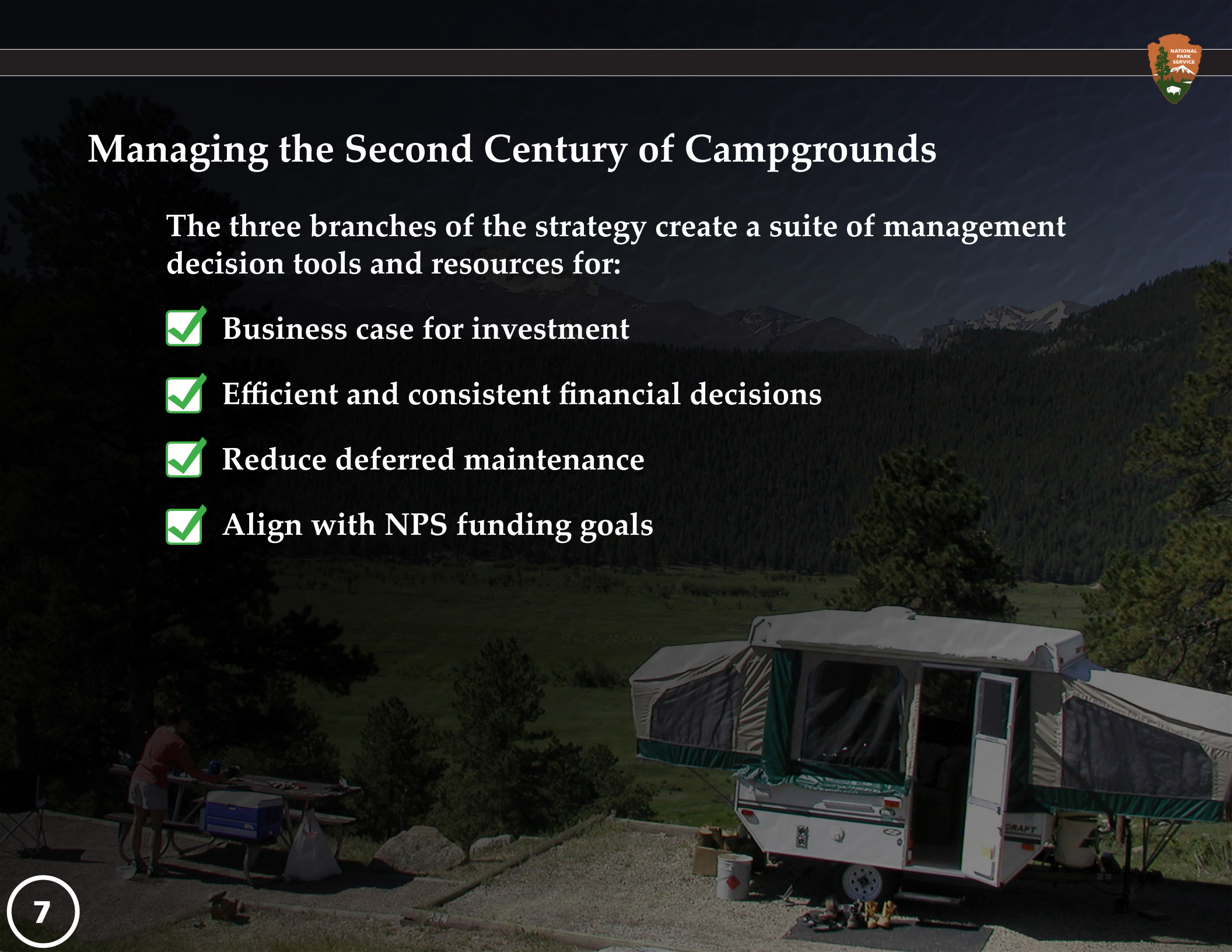
Strategy development has been funded and initiated; it won't:

- Change every campground
- Make all campgrounds the same

Managing the Second Century of Campgrounds

The three branches of the strategy create a suite of management decision tools and resources for:

- ✓ Business case for investment
- ✓ Efficient and consistent financial decisions
- ✓ Reduce deferred maintenance
- ✓ Align with NPS funding goals



Campground Inventory / Data Management

Cross disciplinary NPS team includes:

- Park Planning Facilities and Lands
- Commercial Services
- Conservation and Outdoor Recreation
- Office of Communications – Digital and nps.gov
- recreation.gov

Campground Inventory / Data Management

Goals include:

- Develop comprehensive and reliable data set
- Incorporate data-driven decision making
- Standardize data across public lands reservations
- Increase availability of digital reservations
- Expand reservation details to improve visitor experience (views, site size, site power, etc.)

Campground Inventory / Data Management

Recreation.gov user benefits include:

- Reserve and pay for more than 100,000 campsites
- Reservations for sites, tickets, permits, and lotteries
- Real-time visitor updates

Campground Inventory / Data Management

Recreation.gov park benefits include:

- No up-front cost to parks
- Reduction in cash handling
- Consolidated reporting to support management decisions

Market Analysis Contracts

Contracted work is underway to develop analysis requirements, including:

- Discussion of fiscal and operational realities
- Total life-cycle costs, including operations and maintenance
- Safety and accessibility
- Policy and regulation

Market Analysis Contracts

Contract task order deliverables include:

- Industry analysis report
- Financial strategy tool
- Operating decision framework tool
- Pilot park site visits

Market Analysis Contracts

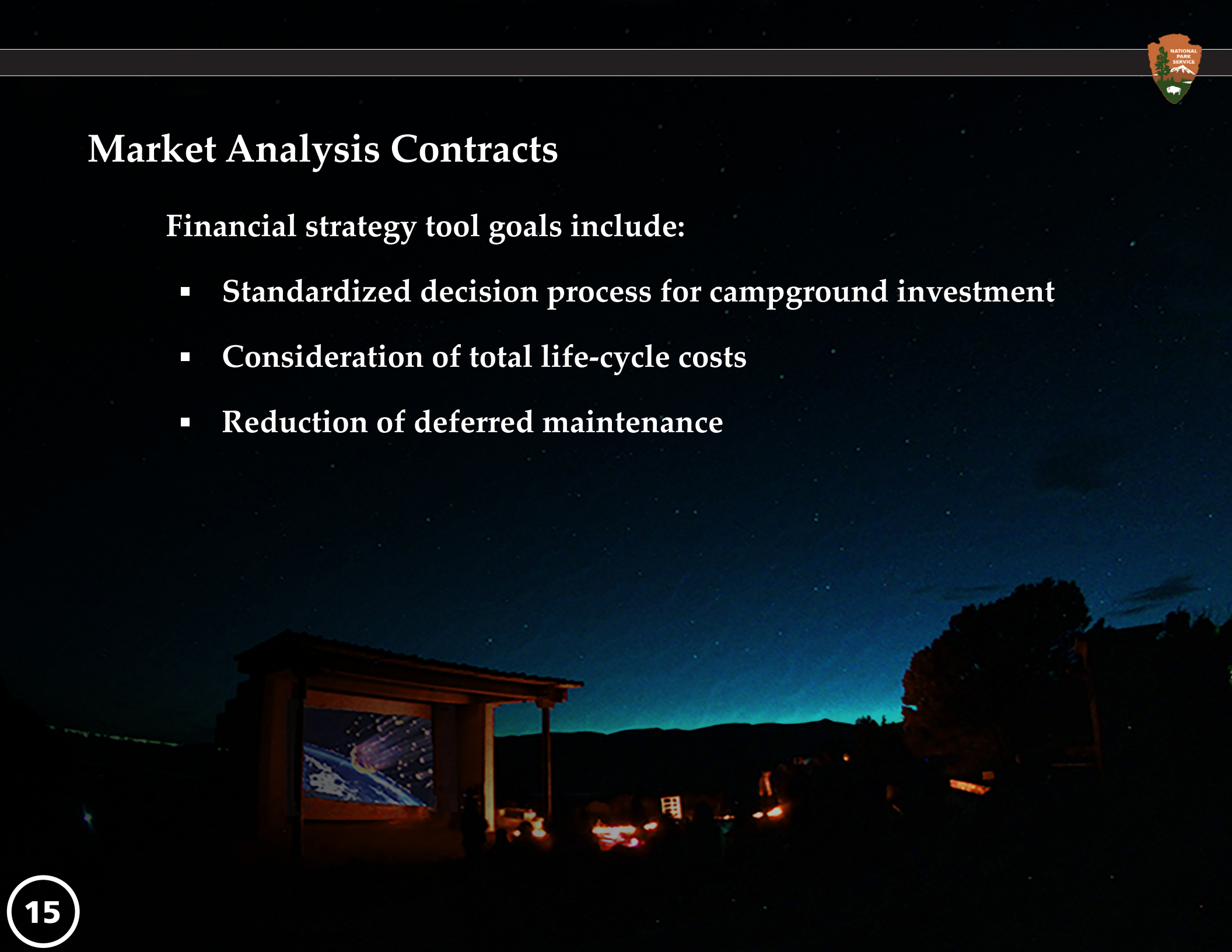
Industry analysis goals include:

- Increase understanding of current and future visitor expectations
- Summarize national and regional camping markets
- Survey practices of other public land management agencies

Market Analysis Contracts

Financial strategy tool goals include:

- Standardized decision process for campground investment
- Consideration of total life-cycle costs
- Reduction of deferred maintenance



Market Analysis Contracts

Operating decision framework tool goals include:

- Consistent consideration of appropriate campground operating model
  - NPS operated
  - Third-party operated / concession contract
  - Visitor Enhancement Improvement Authority (VEIA) contracts
- Cost-benefit analysis

Market Analysis Contracts

Pilot park inclusion for development and testing of tools. The following six pilot parks were selected:

Lake Mead National Recreation Area

Olympic National Park

Great Smoky Mountains National Park

Big Bend National Park

Blue Ridge Parkway

Glen Canyon National Recreation Area

Market Analysis Contracts

Pilot park campgrounds include:

- Range of seasonal and year-round campgrounds
- Array of sizes from 5 to 244 sites
- Diversity of management models
- Variety of amenities (showers, utilities, etc.)
- Both remote and developed locations

Development of Campground Design Guide

Standard design elements are needed for efficiency and consistency. A design guide should:

- Simplify process for park managers
- Include rehabilitation, expansion, and reduction considerations
- Centralize code compliance resources (including Mission 66)

Development of Campground Design Guide

Improve accessibility and universal design

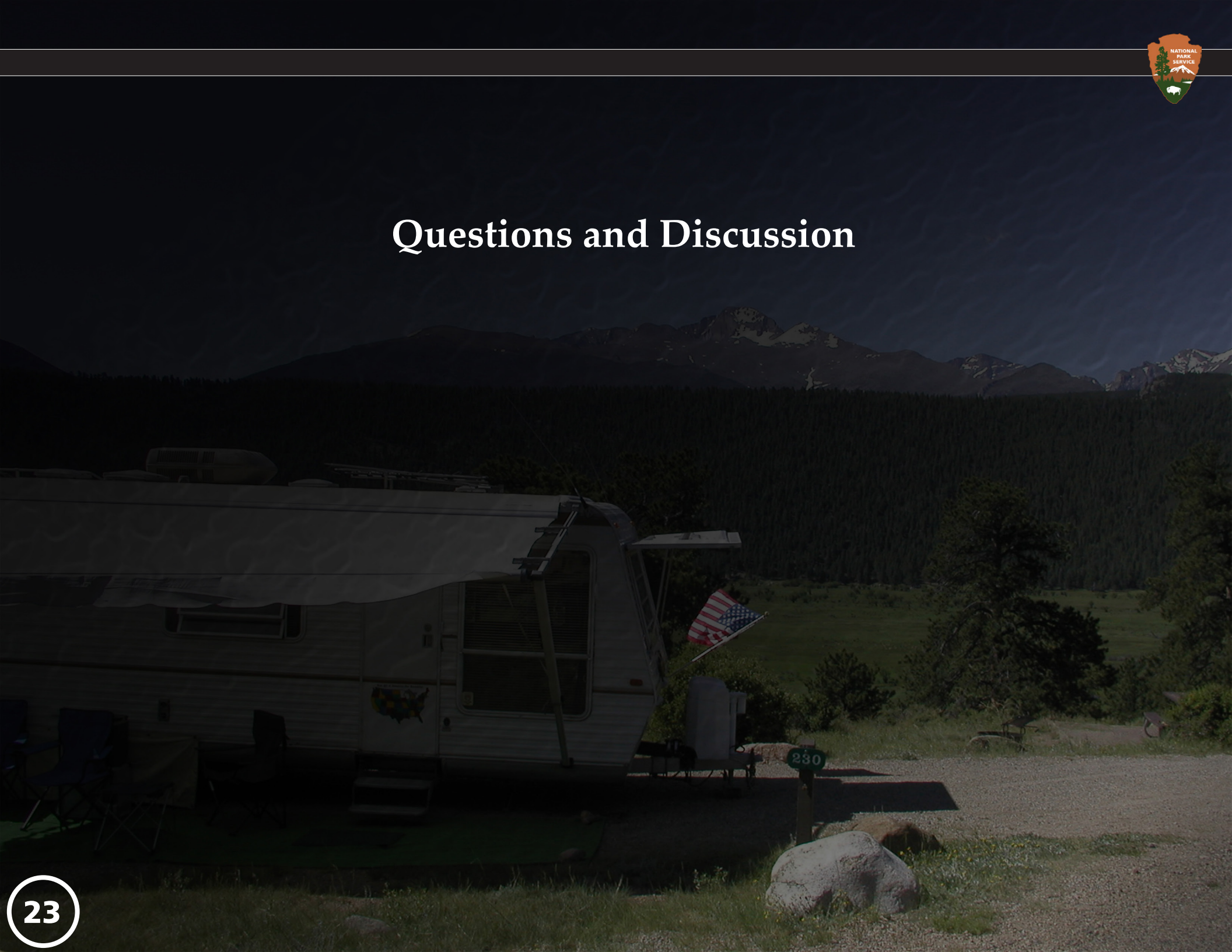
- accessibility refers to a minimum standard to meet legal regulations; e.g., sidewalk slopes
- universal design is the design of buildings, products, or environments to make them accessible to all people regardless of age, disability, or other factors

Development of Campground Design Guide

Seven principles of *universal design*:

1. Equitable use
2. Flexibility in use
3. Simple and intuitive use
4. Perceptible information
5. Tolerance for error
6. Low physical effort
7. Size and space for approach and use

Development of Campground Design Guide

We request the
NPS Advisory Board
provide recommendations
for improving accessibility
and universal design in
campgrounds for inclusion
in the NPS design guide.

Questions and Discussion