

The Urban Agenda in the National Capital Region

By *Mary 'Missy' Morrison*

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On Monday, November 16th, the National Capital Region hosted its Urban Agenda “One NPS” Workshop at Wolf Trap National Park for the Performing Arts. The workshop was a huge success and well attended. Parks and programs from across the region including Rock Creek, Prince William, Piscataway and Fort Washington Parks, Greenbelt Park, Chesapeake and Ohio Canal, Potomac Heritage Trail, National Mall and Memorial Parks, and regional program staff. The participants, 38 in all, participated in discussions on how the Urban Agenda and the One NPS concept may be implemented in the NCR, further defining the region’s overall Urban Agenda strategy and contributing valuable feedback to the national discussion.

Launched in April 2015, the Urban Agenda proposes a bold strategy and presents three principles by which the NPS should be operating as it reaches into metropolitan regions where most Americans live, work and play: Be Relevant to All Americans, Activate “One NPS”, and Nurture a Culture of Collaboration. Ten model cities, including Washington, D.C., will provide examples and demonstrations of how the NPS can align its full portfolio of resources and apply the three principles while reinforcing existing connections and building new ones with communities. The other nine cities are Boston, Detroit, New York City, Philadelphia, Jacksonville, Richmond (CA), Richmond (VA), St.

Louis and Tucson. In each city, Urban Fellows will act as catalysts to implement the Urban Agenda, helping to develop and maintain partnerships among the NPS, other federal agencies, city, and community organizations.



NCR employees use their wits and ingenuity to complete the Marshmallow Challenge during the One NPS workshop.

The One NPS principle focuses on the need to engage the entire NPS in coordinated conservation, education, economic, and recreation efforts. Imagine the collective power of the NPS if we truly performed as a "system" of national parks and programs! One of the first steps toward engaging parks and programs in this effort is the “One NPS” workshop. The purpose of the workshops is to bring together park and regional program staff to explore a common understanding of the principles and identify new opportunities for collaboration. The workshops are being held across the country, and facilitated by the Urban Fellows in each model city along with support from the NPS Stewardship Institute, the Golden Gate Institute, and the Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance Program.

The NCR workshop consisted of a presentation of the broad Urban Agenda program principles and the One NPS concept by the DC Urban Fellow, Missy Morrison, and facilitated discussions throughout the day to understand and demonstrate how the principles could be applied. Four projects were presented by park staff from around the region who volunteered to have their projects “workshopped” by participants and a collaboration exercise, presented by Wendy O’Sullivan, “The Marshmallow Challenge”, demonstrated the challenges of collaboration. Congratulations to team “May the Fours be with You” for constructing the winning marshmallow tower!

The workshop discussions will help focus our implementation of a strategy for collaboration in the region, and the results of our workshop will be shared with region parks and programs and nationally through the Urban Fellows in our model cities.

For additional Urban Agenda information and to participate in the national discussion through the Urban Matters Network, visit the NPS Urban Agenda website: <http://www.nps.gov/subjects/urban/Urban-Agenda.htm>
Stay tuned as we develop more opportunities to share and collaborate around issues related to the Urban Agenda. You can stay in touch with the Urban Fellows and the D.C. Urban Fellow on twitter @DCUrbanfellow, and you can use the #NPSUrban to share events and news about all the great work you are doing in our urban national parks.