



August 2012 Newsletter

National Park Hospitality Association

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Grand Thoughts at the Grand Canyon: NPHA Fall Meeting

The National Park Hospitality Association will host a unique program called ***Grand Thoughts at the Grand Canyon*** between October 16 and 22 on the North Rim of the Grand Canyon. The program will build upon the successful January 2012 America's Summit on National Parks and will continue preparations for the 2016 Centennial of the National Park Service.

The NPHA Fall Meeting will be held on the initial days of the week-long session, beginning on the evening of October 16 and concluding midday on October 19. In addition to NPHA's Board of Directors meetings, a NPHA all-members meeting and a meeting of the National Parks Promotion Council will be held. Associate members and allies will man exhibits in the Forever Resorts-operated Grand Canyon Lodge.

NPHA has invited members and staff of and donors to the National Park Foundation, the National Parks Conservation Association, the National Park Friends Alliance and allies in the health and travel and tourism fields. Discussions will be inspired by the remarkable venue for this meeting – and will be enriched by the diversity and quality of the participants. Each of the seven days will feature a theme and will draw leaders in industry and government for keynote presentations, followed by small group discussions. Daily themes will include: Telling America and the World About Our Parks; Connecting Urban Parks with Remote and Iconic Parks (with a Superintendent's Roundtable); Harnessing Technology in America's Parks; Funding America's Parks; Building Unity in America Around Parks; and Learning in Parks for All Ages. Many of

the discussions will focus on the NPS Centennial strategy: [A Call to Action](#). Updates on special guests and programs are available [here](#). To obtain details or register for the program, contact NPHA at 202-682-9530 or click [here](#).

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CMAB Meeting

The National Park Service Concessions Management Advisory Board will meet on September 18 at Skyland Lodge in Shenandoah National Park from 9:00 am to 4:00 pm. In response to NPHA's request, the meeting will "include an Open Discussion of Incentive Programs for Concessioners." In addition, NPHA has asked the board to review past NPHA suggestions, including the creation of a special mark for the exclusive use of NPS concessioners. The CMAB has recently lost a key member, Ruth Coleman, who stepped down following her departure from California State Parks. Find information on the meeting [here](#).

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September 19 Healthy Park Food Seminar and Showcase

The National Park Hospitality Association and Sysco will jointly host the pilot for a series of seminars and food showcases to broaden understanding of the National Park Service Healthy and Sustainable Food Program, to increase awareness of the variety and quality of healthy products available to concessioners, to increase skills in preparing and marketing healthy foods and to identify products and develop programs to increase voluntary choices of healthy foods. The initial session will be held on September 19, from 8:00 am to 5:00 pm at the Denver Merchandise Mart, 451 East 58th Avenue in Denver, and is being organized by Delaware North Companies Parks & Resorts.

The free one-day event will begin with a healthy breakfast demonstration featuring items suitable for all levels of concessioner operations: fine dining to cart. Presentations by NPS, concessions industry, and food experts will include: the National Park Service Healthy and Sustainable Food Program; available Sysco support, including menu planning and meal nutritional evaluation tools; food preferences of today's domestic and international visitors; marketing healthier food options to today's parks visitor; trends in rating food sustainability/nutrition/wellness; and feedback to Sysco on concessioner needs and desires.

Participants will be given a specialized map of the Sysco Food Show being held in the Mart showing vendors identified by Sysco as especially attuned to the Healthy Food in Parks initiative. Participants will have ample time to visit the show floor, creating an opportunity to speak with vendors and sample products. The Denver Sysco Food Show is the largest show held by Sysco with 300+ displays.

The program is designed to support efforts by NPS staff at the regional and park levels, operating-level employees of NPHA members and park concessioners providing food services who are not currently NPHA members. Attendance is limited to 75 and requires preregistration – click [here](#) for details.

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Made in America Status

NPHA organized a task force to consider calls from Congress and others to increase Made in America offerings at retail operations in national parks. Significant progress has been made, and this progress needs to be shared with the National Park Service and the Congress. U.S. Senator Jon Tester (D-MT) recently announced plans to pursue this issue legislatively, and there is continuing interest in this topic in other Hill offices.

Actions taken to date include:

- 1) Preparations for a new survey of major concessioners to update information on percentages of "American-made" items offered for sale, and developing a new definition which would allow inclusion of products like books and DVDs where the majority of value is generated in the USA;
- 2) A draft NPHA guide to sourcing "Made in America" items which will be updated quarterly and available on-line;
- 3) Development of a simple way for vendors offering "Made in America" items to make contact with all NPHA members with retail operations;
- 4) Consultation with key manufacturers/suppliers of items to investigate barriers to the availability of domestically produced items; and
- 5) Discussion of group buying to support domestic manufacturers – especially regarding 2016 "NPS Centennial" items.

The NPHA Made in America Task Force has scheduled meetings to pursue the action steps above and to guide development of a white paper explaining concessioner goals and challenges involving Made in America items, including those posed by NAFTA and other governmental actions. To find out more or join the Made in America Task Force, contact Derrick Crandall at dcrandall@funoutdoors.com.

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House Hearing on Small Concessioners

U.S. Representative Rob Bishop (R-UT), Chairman of the House Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests and Public Lands, presided at an oversight hearing on Concession Contract Issues for Outfitters, Guides and Smaller Concessions held on Thursday, August 2, 2012. Witnesses included National Park Service Deputy Director Peggy O'Dell and several small NPS concessioners.

The Chairman noted that the NPS has the double mission of being both a good steward of parks and of ensuring public access and enjoyment of these areas. He started, “To carry out both of these statutorily imposed missions, the Park Service has often found it best to use concession contracts and commercial use authorizations with private companies – most of them small businesses – to provide many of the services visitors need and expect. Today, however, increased fees, bureaucracy, and regulation are driving up the cost of running private businesses in national parks making profitable operation difficult and threatening the continuation of visitor services that make visitor access possible and affordable for American families while providing thousands of local jobs.”

A key issue for the Chairman is an increase in liability insurance requirements from \$500,000 to \$5,000,000. He also expressed concern that NPS is requiring expensive capital improvements to government facilities that were not contemplated by the concession contract and with costs that are impossible to recoup over the short course of the standard 10-year contract. He also noted that, while the 1998 concessions act requires the National Park Service to provide "simplified procedures" for concessions contracts, new contracts have expanded greatly in length and complexity.

To read the full statement by Chairman Bishop and the testimony offered by witnesses, click [here](#).

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New Survey of 2012 Likely Voters Finds Unity in Support for National Parks

A new survey of more than 1,000 likely 2012 voters tells us that national parks are viewed as embodying the American experience, and voters want to see national parks enjoyed, honored, cherished, and cared for, not left to crumble into disrepair. Four in five voters report having visited a national park at some point in their lives, and nearly nine in 10 say they are interested in visiting in the future. Especially exciting is the high interest in visiting parks reported by those under 30 and from a Hispanic background. The national parks constituency is not only sizable, it is avid in its support. And support spans the political, ideological, and demographic spectrum. Nearly nine in 10 voters see national parks as an important and appropriate federal responsibility. Even in these challenging fiscal times, very few voters from either side of the political aisle say the federal government should be cutting back on funding for national parks. Commissioned by the National Parks Conservation Association and the National Park Hospitality Association, survey results are available online [here](#).

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White House Hosts Meeting on Travel and Tourism

The White House Business Council held an initial American Economic Competitiveness Forum in early August. ARC was among about 40 entities invited to participate in a

four-hour-plus event that was part victory lap – as Administration participants noted support that had aided the tourism industry's notably faster and stronger economic recovery and creation of jobs than the overall economy – and part open discussion with Cabinet members, the President's National Economic Council's Director Gene Sperling and others.

National parks and the Great Outdoors were frequently referenced throughout the meeting – and especially by Interior Secretary Ken Salazar, who participated actively in about half of the meeting. But he was far from a soloist – Acting Secretary of Commerce Rebecca Blank labeled herself a "parks lover" and both other Administration and tourism industry attendees (including Brand USA officials) talked about parks as a vital component of domestic and international tourism. In fact, two tourism industry participants offered candid comments to Secretary Salazar, telling him that more infrastructure (including hotel rooms) was needed in parks to provide quality park experiences. He invited follow-up discussions on that topic. For a full report on the meeting, click [here](#).

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