

NEWS



Contact: *Derrick Crandall 202-682-9530*
dcrandall@funoutdoors.com

Date: **September 24, 2012**

Grand Thoughts at the Grand Canyon Gets Grander With Addition of Park Director, Park Foundation CEO and Others

The Director of the National Park Service, Jon Jarvis, confirmed that he will lead a group of top agency officials participating in the October 16-22 Grand Thoughts at the Grand Canyon program, a week-long exchange of ideas designed to help America's parks flourish in the 21st Century. National Park Foundation President and Chief Executive Officer Neil Mulholland also announced plans to participate in the program. Grand Thoughts is being coordinated by the National Park Hospitality Association in cooperation with Grand Canyon National Park and will meet at the Grand Canyon Lodge, located on the North Rim of the Grand Canyon.

Grand Thoughts is a continuation of "big picture" thinking about America's national parks and the American park idea which commenced in January 2012 at the first America's Summit on National Parks. Both efforts focus on 2016 – the 100th anniversary of the creation of the National Park Service. The October 16-22 meeting is expected to draw more than 200 park community leaders to the Grand Canyon Lodge on the North Rim. The operator of the Lodge will earmark 30% of all accommodations receipts for a new NPS Centennial Account to be held by the National Park Foundation and used for anniversary-related programs and projects.

Grand Thoughts will feature TED-like lectures and break-out sessions focused on inspiring and honing big ideas to keep parks relevant in 21st Century America. Among the topics to be covered are: the NPS's A Call to Action Strategy; National Park Guest Donation Programs; Healthy Parks Healthy People; Dark Skies; a newly announced multi-year NPS Centennial Communications Campaign; Strategies for Expanding and Sustaining Funding for National Parks and National Park Programs; and Harnessing Technology to Improve Park Visits.

Participants in Grand Thoughts will include a broad representation of the businesses serving park visitors with lodging, food, transportation and retail needs. Concessioners in U.S. national parks operate under contracts with the National Park Service and employ an estimated 25,000 workers in parks, mostly in direct visitor-contact positions. The National Park Service receives in excess of \$100 million annually in franchise fees from concessioners, who also play a major role in maintenance and operations of historic structures in national parks. In addition, concessioners assist parks by adopting healthy foods, green operations and other best practices.

For more information on and registration forms for Grand Thoughts at the Grand Canyon, go to www.parkpartners.org/Grand-Thoughts.html.

###