



January 2009 Newsletter

National Park Hospitality Association

www.parkpartners.org

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News flashes

The Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee held its confirmation hearing for Sen. Ken Salazar today, and the discussions focused on energy and Interior department ethics – especially involving energy leasing. Mr. Salazar also resigned his Senate seat this morning at 10:45 am, a very clear indication that his confirmation is “in the bag.” We have also learned that the new Chief of Staff at Interior will be Tom Strickland, a Colorado attorney who served as US Attorney in Denver and was the Democratic challenger to Wayne Allard in 1996 and 2002 US Senate races. Mr. Strickland was managing partner of the Denver office of Hogan & Hartson until accepting the job of executive vice president and chief legal officer of UnitedHealth Group. Mr. Strickland has strong recreation ties: he was a founder and board member of Great Outdoors Colorado, the lottery-funded endowment for Colorado's public parks system, and served on the National Recreation Lakes Study Commission.

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Register for NPHA 2009 Annual Meeting

The National Park Hospitality Association (NPHA) will gather in Washington, D.C., on March 8-10 for an extremely important annual meeting. This meeting could not come at a better time to get NPHA's relationship with the new Administration and the new Congress off to a fast start. NPHA members will have invaluable opportunities to meet with top-level Department of the Interior officials and Administration representatives and to participate in a special session with the Congressional Travel and Tourism Caucus entitled *Partnership Efforts in National Parks Aid Economy, Health and National Unity*. At this forum, NPHA will debut its new video on the role concessioners currently play both in providing necessary services and embracing world-class environmental and hospitality performance standards, and about visions of the industry for continuing efforts in partnership with the National Park

Service and others to connect visitors with the natural, cultural and historic resources of national park units.

Overnight accommodations and most meetings will be at the Madison Hotel. A block of rooms has been reserved for NPHA members. Please call the Madison Hotel at 1-800-424-8577 to reserve your room. Specify you are attending the NPHA 2009 Annual Meeting or use the room block code **NPH93A** to receive the special nightly room rate of \$264.00 (Single/Double) plus tax. ***You must make your reservations by Friday, February 6!***

- [NPHA 2009 Annual Meeting Registration Form](#)
- [NPHA 2009 Annual Meeting Overview](#)

Please contact Mindy Meade at 202-682-9530 or by email at mmeade@funoutdoors.com if you have any questions.

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NPHA launches limited medical insurance plan

The National Park Hospitality Association (NPHA), in partnership with "A-" rated insurance company Dynastar Benefits Group, has developed a limited medical benefit plan for NPHA members to offer to their employees. Limited benefit medical plans can be a cost-efficient solution to provide employee benefits or a tool to use in conjunction with a consumer-driven health plan, and they can help to attract and retain employees and boost employee satisfaction. A limited benefit medical plan is a group-sponsored employee health plan that can provide capped medical and prescription drug benefits to members. They were originally developed in the late 1980s to provide benefits to employees who were not eligible for an employer's major medical plan, including seasonal employees, contractors and part-time associates. Although the benefits are not comprehensive, limited benefit medical plans can include meaningful benefits for basic medical services such as doctor office visits, diagnostics, x-ray and lab testing, wellness checkups and screenings, outpatient medical services, emergency room care and inpatient benefits.

NPHA's indemnity-based plan reimburses a fixed dollar amount for covered medical services to help meet basic health insurance needs. The benefits that are guaranteed are issued with no pre-existing conditions exclusions, meaning that if purchased, an employee can receive medical and prescription benefits on an employee's first day of eligibility. With premiums starting at approximately \$10 per week for employee-only coverage, it is something to consider while evaluating your current employee benefit plan.

For more information contact Scott Airmont of Dynastar Benefits Group at 719-684-6933 or by email at sa@dynastarbenefits.com.

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Nearly \$27 million for Centennial Challenge projects and programs in 2009

On January 13, Secretary of the Interior Dirk Kempthorne and National Park Service (NPS) Director Mary A. Bomar announced \$27 million in Centennial Challenge projects for 2009, \$10.5 million from the federal government combined with \$16.5 million in philanthropic giving. For the second year of its Centennial Challenge, NPS will continue to match federal funds with contributions from park partners to prepare national parks for another century of conservation, preservation and enjoyment. A new year brings new opportunities to discover

species, renovate museums, get kids outdoors and improve transportation in America's national parks.

Director Bomar, who will retire on January 20, said, "In these economic times, creative efforts like the Centennial Challenge provide a great return on investment for both the American taxpayer and the philanthropic community. Where else can you be guaranteed to at least double your money?"

To read the full story and to see the list of Centennial Challenge projects and programs for 2009, [click here](#).

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Travel Leaders announces 2009 travel trends

On January 2, Travel Leaders unveiled the 2009 results of their authoritative annual Travel Trends Survey. The U.S. recession is playing a significant factor in various trends, and while Travel Leaders experts have indicated a slide in comparable year-over-year bookings, over 80% are either optimistic or neutral about the year ahead. Conducted November 20-December 15, 2008, the 2009 Travel Trends Survey includes responses from 547 Travel Leaders owners, managers and front line travel experts throughout the United States.

"What we have witnessed with the U.S. economy is unlike anything we have seen in decades, and it is having a major impact on the traveling public and the travel industry," stated Roger E. Block, President of Travel Leaders. "Despite the daily drumbeat of negative news on our economy and the general perception that everyone is staying home, it speaks volumes that when asked 'What are the top ways leisure travelers are saving money?' the five most frequent responses from our experts were (in order): being flexible with dates, staying at all-inclusives, using frequent flyer miles, taking a cruise and booking only if there is a promotion or deal."

To read the full story and to see the complete results of the Travel Leaders' 2009 Travel Trends Survey, [click here](#).

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NPHA Task Force on Increasing Visitation meets, sets goals

The National Park Hospitality Association's (NPHA) Task Force on Increasing Visitation to Parks met by conference call on January 14, 2009. Task force Chairman Terry MacRae led the group in discussions on why NPHA is the most logical entity to take on marketing of parks to reverse visitation decline and how to best carry out the task force's objectives. Currently, there is no significant, coordinated marketing effort focusing on national parks, and NPHA members have important assets available to aid a marketing effort, including the direct capabilities of larger concessioners, local tourism interests, and chambers and state tourism programs, especially in the Rocky Mountain states.

The task force agreed that a strong promotional program under the auspices of NPHA is the strategy most likely to be practical and produce clear results in the near and mid-term, and they discussed examples of other successful campaigns to emulate. The group identified several likely areas of resources, discussed possible domain names, brand strategies and campaign identities, and it was agreed that a robust internet effort was the logical first step for the campaign.

The task force has prepared recommendations to the NPHA Executive Committee and Board, will prepare a report for the NPHA Annual Meeting in Washington and will also plan for a first meeting of the standing committee at that session. Chairman MacRae will also discuss the task force direction with key NPS staff, including Dean Reeder, Jo Pendry and Jon Jarvis.

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Optimistic message from National Association for Interpretation

A National Association for Interpretation blogger is urging interpretive groups to make the most of the economic recession by using it as an opportunity to improve their business practices. In an entry entitled, "A crisis is a terrible thing to waste," Jim Covell encouraged members to look beyond today's operating budget concerns and see the silver lining in the fact that more American families are being conservative with their leisure dollars and staying closer to home. Mr. Covell warned interpreters to stop thinking that they will always have to work with inadequate resources and instead realize that they "may be poised for a significant increase in demand for our programs in the coming year, and we should take this opportunity to market the tremendous value in the programs we offer to the public."

Mr. Covell offers findings from a study that compared community science centers and nature centers that were thriving with those that were struggling. Thriving organizations featured expanded hours, fresh and diverse programs, audience segmentation, community connections, and the ability to adapt quickly to new challenges. By improving in these areas, Mr. Covell believes interpretation will thrive in the economic downturn. "While many managers are focused on helping their organization survive, a bit of boldness and initiative may be a welcome ray of light. And would you rather have them contemplating how to eliminate your program or thinking about the value, energy and creativity you add to the organization?" We could all benefit from more forward thinking like this!

To read the full blog entry, [click here](#).

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Federal Parks and Recreation Newsletter: Salazar confirmation seen likely; interests weigh in

The Senate Energy Committee has put on the fast track the confirmation of one of its own members for Secretary of the Interior, Sen. Ken Salazar (D-CO). The committee held a hearing on Salazar's nomination on January 15, and a committee vote is expected shortly. "It should be smooth sailing," said a committee spokesman. "I haven't heard anyone raise any concerns. Chairman [Sen. Jeff] Bingaman (D-NM) is a big supporter of Sen. Salazar. He has a strong reputation as a bipartisan centrist. It should be very cordial."

It helps Sen. Salazar that ranking committee Republican, Sen. Lisa Murkowski (R-AK), who served with Salazar for the last four years on the panel, said she was "pleased" by his nomination. "We've always gotten along well," Murkowski said of her relationship with Salazar. "We've always been able to talk about the issues and he is thoughtful and reasonable in his approach to so many different issues, whether it be over public lands, energy or native issues."

To read the rest of this story, progress of key legislation and more, go to your member-benefit copy of the *Federal Parks & Recreation Newsletter* on the NPHA website and use your password: nphaonly [\[Click here\]](#).

Federal Parks & Recreation Newsletter – a free service for NPHA members – provides biweekly, up-to-date information on park and outdoor recreation policy developments.

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- [National Park Service Director Mary A. Bomar to retire](#)
- [Bill signed, creates five commemorative quarters based on national parks](#)
- [How the city hurts your brain](#)
- [2008 Director's report highlights NPS activities](#)
- [Eastern National announces addition to Passport® To Your National Parks Program](#)

For more information or to send questions/comments, please email: mmeade@funoutdoors.com

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