



July/August 2013 Newsletter

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OCTOBER 2013 NPHA MEETING PLANS

NPHA's 2013 fall meeting will begin with committee meetings at 3:00 PM on Sunday, October 27 and continue through Tuesday evening, October 29. Among the key topics of the meeting will be:

- 1) the National Park Service Centennial Campaign;
- 2) preparing for changes in NPS operation during 2014 because of budget pressures;
- 3) developing a blueprint for allowing concessioners to better serve 21st Century national park visitors;
- 4) strategic plan for NPHA; and
- 5) a new, concessioner-friendly Director's Order 21.

The meeting will be based at the Georgetown University Hotel and Conference Center, operated by ARAMARK. We anticipate opportunities to meet with new leadership at the U.S. Department of the Interior, with key Members of Congress and with NPS leaders. The NPS Concessions Management Advisory Board plans an all-day meeting on October 30 at the U.S. Department of the Interior. Details on the meeting, including the meeting registration form, can be downloaded [here](#). Room reservations should be made now. The room reservation cut-off is September 27. To make your reservation, [click here](#).

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DIALOGUE WITH NPS ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR MCDOWALL, COMMERCIAL SERVICES CHIEF ERICHSEN LAUNCHED

Nearly 50 NPHA members and allies registered for the first NPHA Dialogue with NPS Concessions Program Leadership, held by phone on July 24. NPHA Chair Joe Fassler moderated the call, outlined its purpose and introduced NPS Associate Director Lena McDowall and NPS Chief of Concessions Ben Erichsen. Lena used the call to share key goals and introduce Ben, who discussed his career experience, his orientation process at the agency and his overall operating style. He described himself as a “facilitator” and expressed excitement about opportunities to work cooperatively with concessioners. Among the key topics discussed were the three working groups created under the Concessions Management Advisory Board and methods to pursue the addition of appropriate visitor services by concessioners. The underway evaluation of a relatively small increase in passengers brought to Dry Tortugas National Park by the concessioner’s high-speed ferry was an example not only of how this can happen – but also of the challenges proposals face, even when there is substantial support and visitors, NPS and the concessioner all clearly benefit. The animated conversation used the full hour scheduled for the call and Lena extended an offer to NPHA to plan additional sessions – at least quarterly. Notice of the future sessions will be sent to all NPHA members.

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CENTENNIAL UPDATE

The Centennial of the National Park Service is less than three years away, and substantial progress is underway to make that occasion far more than simply a celebration. The agency has received more than 300 unsolicited proposals for programs, events and projects linked to the Centennial and is now officially soliciting suggestions from corporations, non profits, and other governmental agencies. A select number of proposals will be chosen as national activities, most with an ongoing role in helping the agency achieve its Second Century goals. Proposals for Centennial efforts should be submitted by October 20, 2013. See www.NextCenturyforParks.org for details on submission guidelines. Ideas will be reviewed by NPS and National Park Foundation staff. In addition to national efforts, many park units are gearing up for the Centennial with specialized programs and projects. Typically, the local efforts are being developed by the local friends group and the park superintendent – and concessioner involvement is welcomed. This could be a perfect stimulus for expanding park-specific Guest Donation Programs.

Among the most important efforts underway is the development of a Centennial Campaign, envisioned as multi-year with very significant resources. Grey, a major advertising and communications firm, has been contracted to lead the campaign development. Initial funding has been provided by the National Park Foundation, but

additional funding sources are anticipated for the campaign. Grey has conducted qualitative and quantitative research and will roll out the campaign strategy and creative in the fall of 2013. The campaign is very likely to have two components: continuation and activation of current park visitors and supporters and outreach to more urban, younger and more diverse Americans, especially families meeting these characteristics.

Advice on selecting Centennial efforts and the Grey campaign is being solicited by the NPS through a 31-member Centennial Advisory Committee, formed as a committee of the National Park System Advisory Board. The committee is chaired by Gretchen Long of Wilson, Wyoming, and includes top leadership of such partner organizations as the National Park Foundation, National Parks Conservation Association, National Parks Friends Alliance and NPHA. Meetings of the full committee and its executive group, which included NPHA, are occurring frequently. For details, contact Derrick Crandall at dcrandall@funoutdoors.com.

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CMAB UPDATE

The NPS Concessions Management Advisory Board will meet on October 30 at the U.S. Department of the Interior. The meeting is open to all interested persons. The agenda will include reports by the three working groups created following the fall 2012 meeting at Shenandoah National Park to address:

- 1) simplified procedures for small concessioners
- 2) concessioner recognition and incentives
- 3) innovative commercial visitor services

All three of the working groups are now active, and concessioners are playing a role in each. CMAB action on recommendations is expected for several of the groups at the October meeting. For details on specific efforts, contact the following staff:

Simplified procedures for small concessioners: Anne Altman @ anne_altman@nps.gov

Recognition/Incentives: Kurt Rausch @ Kurt_Rausch@nps.gov

Innovative commercial visitor services: Deb Hecox @ debra_hecox@nps.gov

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NPHA STRATEGIC PLAN FOR 2014-2018 UNDER DEVELOPMENT

NPHA's Executive Committee is developing a Strategic Plan for the organization for 2014 and beyond. The planning effort has included a review of key accomplishments since 2007, when NPHA undertook a substantial change in operations. The effort also has included an examination of potential priority actions for the next five years, including the 2016 Centennial of the National Park Service. In addition, the review includes consideration of ways to provide the association with the resources needed to

undertake priority missions, like maintenance of active communications with NPS officials and leaders of other national park partner organizations. A proposed Strategic Plan will be presented to the NPHA Board on September 16 in a conference call. Further discussions and adoption of the plan are central agenda items for the October 27-29 NPHA meeting in Washington, D.C.

A background memorandum prepared by NPHA staff on accomplishments and key future opportunities is available [here](#).

Among the key issues being discussed by the Executive Committee are:

- 1) Ways to make the NPS Centennial effort, including a proposed national campaign being designed by Grey, beneficial to concessioners;
- 2) Strategies for overcoming real challenges created by the 1998 concessions act at a time when private investment in park visitor infrastructure is especially necessary;
- 3) Opportunities for concessioners to play a central role in new financial models for parks and the NPS overall; and
- 4) Overcoming a disconnect between national agreement on agency/concessioner cooperation and field-level relationships.

NPHA resources for future operations are likely to be generated by changes to dues structure and rates and by additional funding channels and might even be connected to major initiatives such as a national research and marketing program.

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KEY TRANSITIONS

John Wessels, until recently NPS Intermountain Regional Director, has left the agency to join the American Battle Monuments Commission (ABMC) as the Director, Overseas Operations, headquartered in Paris, France. He left the NPS effective August 24. John has been supportive of closer coordination between NPS and concessioners and a leader in innovative thinking within NPS, including on financial models that make the agency more able to meet its missions in a sustainable way.

Christie Goldfuss has been selected as the new NPS Deputy Director for Communications and Community Assistance. She replaces Mickey Fearn. She has been at the Center for American Progress as Director of its Public Lands Project. She has been on the staff of the House Committee on Natural Resources, where she focused on policies and legislation affecting the U.S. Forest Service and the Bureau of Land Management. Earlier in her career, she was a television reporter in California and Nevada covering many stories from communities neighboring public lands. Through telling those stories, she became interested in lands policies. She received a bachelor's degree in political science at Brown University. She can be reached through the Director's office phone – 202-208-3818 – and through Claire_Rozdilski@nps.gov.

Gail Adams has left her position as the U.S. Department of the Interior's Director of

Intergovernmental and External Affairs for a position in the private sector in Houston. Gail played a key role in development of the President's National Strategy on Travel and Tourism, highlighting the importance of parks and other federal lands and waters in attracting international visitors. She also played a central role in facilitating National Park Service participation in IPW – the International Pow Wow. Replacing her on an acting basis will be Deputy Director Terri Johnson who can be reached at 202-208-7513 or Terri_Johnson@ios.doi.gov.

Glacier Park Inc. will conclude its 30+ year service as the concessioner at Glacier National Park at the end of 2013. Taking over operations in the park will be Xanterra. The decision by the National Park Service surprised many and has generated numerous media accounts. The most comprehensive story appeared in the **Flathead Beacon**. To read this story, click [here](#).

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BIPARTISAN AGREEMENT AT SENATE HEARING: SUPPLEMENTAL PARK FUNDING NEEDED

The U.S. Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources held a three-hour session on supplemental funding for America's national parks on July 25, 2013, that was both unusual and encouraging. The hearing took place at the full committee level – unusual when the topic, national parks, is clearly in the jurisdiction of a single subcommittee. Both the Chairman and Ranking Member of the full committee and the Chairman and Ranking Member of the National Parks Subcommittee took part in the hearing. Eleven U.S. Senators participated in the hearing, six Democrats and five Republicans.

U.S. Senator Tom Coburn (R-OK), a major force in the Senate on restraining federal spending, was the lead-off witness. The interaction among the committee members was friendly and overwhelmingly supportive of actions to attack the deferred maintenance backlog in parks and develop a more fiscally sustainable national park program in conjunction with the NPS Centennial. Senator Coburn has vigorously challenged new additions to the national park system as counter-productive to adequately caring for existing park units. Committee Chairman Senator Ron Wyden (D-OR) made it clear that he supported continued additions of special areas but shared Senator Coburn's concerns about the \$12 billion backlog of maintenance, about \$7.5 billion of which is described by the NPS as critical.

Senator Coburn cited studies showing that deferring maintenance increased ultimate costs by five times. This year, NPS reports that at least \$300 million in preventive maintenance will not be done – creating the potential for an additional \$1.5 billion in ultimate costs.

Jobs linked to parks and outdoor recreation were referenced and championed by more than half of the Senators – in a very bipartisan fashion. There were frequent and

positive references to the role of concessioners today and in the continuing success of national parks post-2016 by NPS Director Jon Jarvis and Senators. The lead-off public witness was Gerry Gabrys of Guest Services Inc., appearing on behalf of NPHA. The Ranking Member of the committee, Senator Lisa Murkowski (R-AK), specifically singled out Gerry and NPHA for helpful, specific funding suggestions, including increasing services to park visitors and extending the length of concessions contracts. To read the NPHA testimony, click [here](#). To watch the full hearing, click [here](#).

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CONSERVATION CORPS AND CONCESSIONERS: OPPORTUNITIES FOR PARTNERSHIPS

One of the most significant boosts to our national parks came through the Civilian Conservation Corps during the Depression era in the 1930's. Key American leaders including former Secretary of the Interior Dirk Kempthorne have now become champions for replicating that program, seeking to provide a million youths an opportunity for non-military national service each year.

During the Depression, tens of thousands of young men – mostly from our cities – left home for extended assignments in the Great Outdoors. They built buildings and trails and bridges and more. Today's visitors to national parks – and many other public places – still enjoy the excellent work done by the CCC crews. And the legacy of CCC efforts is not just about buildings. The lives of the crew members were changed. They became lovers of our parks. And they passed along this love of parks and the Great Outdoors to their families. In fact, one of the CCC crew members was the father of the current National Park Service Director.

Widespread unemployment among youth in the early 21st Century has helped spark a growth in conservation corps performing “fee for service” projects on public lands. Conservation corps have also taken on roles of helping young veterans re-enter civilian life and of helping troubled teens onto paths toward sound citizenship. An estimated 20,000 youths each year are now involved in projects involving federal and state lands. But public funding alone will not allow the program to meet a goal of offering spots for at least 100,000 youths annually.

The new effort is being led by Retired General Stan McChrystal under the Franklin Project of the Aspen Institute. The corps of national leaders involved is diverse and potent, including Barbara Bush, Tom Brokaw and Harris Wofford. The effort was recently showcased at a White House event featuring President Barack Obama and former President George H.W. Bush and celebrating the recognition of the 5,000th “Points of Light” honoree.

NPHA was recently invited to a top-level briefing and brainstorming session hosted by Dirk Kempthorne and asked to develop ideas for use of conservation corps members in parks, perhaps paralleling use of J1 visa workers. NPHA was able to tell senior White

House and other leaders about efforts already underway to use conservation corps youth on historic preservation projects in Shenandoah National Park under a partnership linking Delaware North Companies, the National Park Service, the National Trust for Historic Preservation and The Corps Network, the national association for conservation corps. One key note: corps participants are not restricted to just outdoor, physical projects – they can take on websites and interpretation and more. To become involved, contact Derrick Crandall at dcrandall@funoutdoors.com.

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MADE IN AMERICA INITIATIVE

There has been renewed interest by some Members of Congress in legislation which would allow the sale of only American-made items on some federal lands, including retail stores in national parks and at Smithsonian Institution museums. NPHA formed a Task Force on Retail Operations last year to address this and other issues. The Task Force has developed an action strategy, now being implemented, and approved a NPHA statement on NPHA's Commitment to "Made in America." Excerpts from the statement follow:

The members of the National Park Hospitality Association have made a strong, voluntary commitment to support U.S. sourcing of items they offer for sale to park visitors. This commitment is part of the concessioners' broader, proactive agenda of undertaking initiatives that provide long-term benefits to the country, including "green" practices regarding energy and water use and waste minimization, encouragement of healthy lifestyles through menu options and distribution of information regarding physical activities during park visits, and support for sustainable agriculture.

We applaud support of American-made products by elected officials. Today, we are able to offer many more American-made products than even five years ago. However, sales in national park gift stores are not enough to shape competitive, global markets. Legislation requiring merchandise which is unavailable will have an adverse, unintended result: loss of American jobs in parks.

Specific steps NPHA is taking on this issue include:

- 1) Periodic surveys to document the domestic content of items offered for sale in park stores.
- 2) Reaching out to domestic producers of clothing, souvenirs, and other merchandise through trade shows, retail operations, and other channels.
- 3) Creation of a NPHA directory of vendors of made in America items and creation of a form on the NPHA website that gives vendors of U.S. goods a single access point to showcase their products to concessioners across the country.

- 4) Active support for the sale of American Indian art and crafts in park stores.
- 5) Highlighting U.S. made products with promotional signs and product markings.
- 6) Providing for consumer choice – allowing visitors to make their own decisions where domestically produced merchandise carries a substantial premium in price.
- 7) Providing park visitors with information about the U.S. content in items, especially when there are no domestic options, as is the case for many books, CDs and DVDs. The information provided helps visitors understand that, in most instances, the domestic content – intellectual materials and preparation work – of these items is a substantial portion of the product's value.
- 8) Offering park visitors creative alternatives to on-premise sales of items, including sale of downloadable books and videos, accessed by local WiFi and upon visitors' return home.

To read the entire NPHA statement on Made in America efforts, click [here](#).

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TIPS ON HOW TO STAY INFORMED:

Read the *Federal Parks and Recreation newsletter*, provided as a member service, at <http://parkpartners.org/Federal-Parks-and-Recreation-Newsletter.html> (password is “nphaonly”).

For information on upcoming prospectuses and other actions of the NPS Commercial Services Office, check regularly at <http://concessions.nps.gov/>.

To reach an NPS employee, use the NPS locator at <http://www.nps.gov/directory/>.

For reports on park unit visitation, current year and historic, as well as information on overnight stays, go to <https://irma.nps.gov/Stats/>.

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

To unsubscribe, please send an email to tgeorgevits@funoutdoors.com with the subject "NPHA Unsubscribe."

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