

NEWS



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Park Concessioners Address Park Service Centennial and Expanded Visitor Services During Annual Meeting

Washington, D.C. (March 19, 2014) -- The National Park Hospitality Association (NPHA) met with leadership of the National Park Service and key allied organizations during a snowy March week to discuss ways to attract more visitors to national parks and assure that visitors have great experiences during those visits. Park visitation was down in 2013 but NPHA and a wide array of park interests outlined important initiatives underway which will redefine national parks and attract more visitors – including younger, more urban and more diverse visitors.

Highlights of the meeting included:

- Reports on a pilot effort in Shenandoah National Park now underway to restore a historic structure under a partnership involving the National Trust for Historic Preservation, The Corps Network, Delaware North Companies and the National Park Service (NPS). Eight conservation corps members, mentored by skilled restoration architects and craftsman, are rehabilitating a visitor facility at sharply lowered costs than with normal contracting and with many important serendipities, including new skills attained by the youth.
- Discussions about new strategies to enhance national park interpretation and education programs, including active involvement by concessioners. NPHA has a representative on a new advisory body aiding NPS Associate Director Julia Washburn in the development of a new interpretation and education business plan.
- An update on the NPHA **RentMyTent** program being developed in cooperation with The Coleman Company which will allow thousands of visitors to camp in national parks beginning this summer using tents and other camping equipment reserved through NPHA members.
- A review of efforts underway to expand cellular and Wi-Fi connectivity in visitor services areas of national parks.
- In-depth conversations with NPS Director Jon Jarvis addressing the challenges of 2013, including Sequestration and Shutdowns, and the important opportunities ahead
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Park Concessioners Address Park Service Centennial, Expanded Visitor Services Add One, March 19, 2014

to continue the essential role of concessioners in serving visitor needs in national parks long into the next century of NPS operations.

- A presentation on the exciting efforts underway by Brand USA, the Congressionally-chartered corporation charged with increasing international visitation to the USA. Brand USA is sponsoring an IMAX film which will celebrate the Centennial of the National Park Service and is also using America's Great Outdoors as its overall promotion focus for the next two years.
- An update on the NPS and National Park Foundation (NPF) efforts to use the 2016 Centennial of the NPS to build awareness of, connection to and actions on behalf of America's national parks. Grey of New York is leading development of a comprehensive campaign using the overall theme of **Find Your Park**, and involving targeting of Millennials for special invitations to connect with parks.
- A conversation with NPF President Neil Mulholland about cooperative efforts on the Grey campaign, on the guest donations program and on a new undertaking to define private investment strategies in national parks under the leadership of the Urban Land Institute.
- A review of key legal issues involving the October Shutdown and the 1998 Concessions Act, including recent court actions; and
- A conversation with key park partners including leaders from the National Parks Conservation Association, the Association of Partners for Public Lands, the U.S. Travel and Tourism Advisory Board, NatureBridge and health and Latino partners.

NPHA's board elected Terry MacRae as Chairman and added Alex Klein as a new Vice Chairman of the organization. Mr. MacRae is CEO of Hornblower Cruises and Events, serving visitors to park sites in San Francisco and New York City. He has led NPHA efforts in the marketing field. Mr. Klein is Vice President and General Manager of Grand Teton Lodge Company and Flagg Ranch Company, both in Wyoming. A full listing of NPHA officers and board members is attached.

The National Park Hospitality Association (NPHA) is the national trade association of the businesses that provide lodging, food services, gifts and souvenirs, equipment rentals, transportation and other visitor services in the National Park System. Concessioners have played an important role in creating lasting national park memories for more than 125 years. Concessioners operate in more than 100 national park units with combined sales exceeding \$1 billion annually and \$70 million+ in franchise fees paid to the National Park Service. The in-park concessioner workforce of some 25,000 persons assists visitors an estimated 100 million times annually. Information on national park concessioners is at www.parkpartners.org.

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