



August 2009 Newsletter

National Park Hospitality Association

www.parkpartners.org

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America's First Family Heads to Two National Parks This Weekend

America's First Family is headed to two national parks this weekend. And while they will bring along a small army of security and communications staffers, they will enjoy experiences remarkably similar to those enjoyed by millions of other American families who will visit one of the nearly 400 national park units this year.

The Obama family plans to visit both Yellowstone National Park – the nation's first park – and Grand Canyon National Park to do some hiking, biking and gazing at natural vistas and wildlife. Their visit will coincide with the third and final weekend of the summer when fees will be waived by the National Park Service, thanks to action earlier this summer by Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar, who is expected to accompany the First Family. However, it seems likely that the President planned to visit parks this summer regardless of the fee waiver. In remarks this spring at the U.S. Department of the Interior, the President recalled his family travels to parks across the nation at age 11 and told the audience that he wanted his daughters - and every American son and daughter - to have the experience of seeing our parks. (To see a video of the President's remarks, [click here](#).)

The White House has included the fee-free weekend connection prominently in its announcements of the First Family visits. First announced by Interior Secretary Salazar in early June, the program has generated several thousand news stories in national and regional media and created a special opportunity for cooperation between NPS and NPHA. Largely as a result of NPS links on the web and references in its releases, visits to the NPHA website soared in June and July – exceeding 300,000 visits in June alone. NPS information on the fee-free weekends is at: www.nps.gov/findapark/feefreeparks.htm. The NPHA site

about special concessioner lodging, food and other service offers is found at:
www.parkpartners.org/Special-2009-Offers.html.

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NPHA supports nomination of Jon Jarvis to be NPS Director

The National Park Hospitality Association strongly supported the nomination of Jon Jarvis to be Director of the National Park Service in a letter to the U.S. Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources. Mr. Jarvis is a 30-year veteran of the National Park Service and currently serves as Regional Director of NPS' Pacific West Region. The Committee held a hearing on the nomination on July 28 and subsequently voted to recommend his confirmation by the full Senate. Senate action did not occur prior to the Senate's summer recess but is expected in September.

"We applaud Mr. Jarvis' frequent call for partnerships and collaboration in America's national parks, and concessioners are excited about being part of this partnership," said NPHA Chairman Joe Fassler. "We strongly believe that Jon Jarvis offers the nation unique talents and capabilities. He has the academic background to understand the role of science in park management, and thirty years of experience to understand the impact of park visits on people and communities. Because he is known by and has the support of so many National Park Service employees, he can hit the ground running. Because he has an interest in major future goals – like demonstrating environmental excellence in operation in parks and continuing the tradition of world class infrastructure within the parks – he can, and we believe will, enlist us and others in making the future of parks bright."

At the confirmation hearing, Mr. Jarvis was questioned on a wide variety of issues that he will likely face as NPS Director, including snowmobiles in Yellowstone, helicopters over Crater Lake and guns in the national parks.

To read NPHA's letter supporting Mr. Jarvis' nomination, [click here](#).

To read Mr. Jarvis' statement before the U.S. Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources, [click here](#).

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Register now for NPHA's Park Partners Forum in Yosemite: October 18-20

The National Park Hospitality Association will hold its 2009 Park Partners Forum at Tenaya Lodge in Yosemite National Park on October 18-20, 2009 (Sunday meeting start, with departure on Wednesday by 10 AM). The Park Partners Forum will include general sessions addressing topics key to the future of the concessions industry, vendor displays, educational sessions, appearances by important industry allies and an opportunity to observe partnership opportunities underway at Yosemite involving park concessioners. The general sessions will highlight current efforts at outreach and marketing – and opportunities for even greater efforts in the days ahead. A panel of key NPS officials, including regional directors, will share thoughts on agency priorities and challenges. The NPS Commercial Services Program will help with educational programs and join in a roundtable discussion with participants. Other planned events include a trip into Yosemite National Park for an educational and fun afternoon and an evening at The Ahwahnee and Wawona Hotels.

Rates are \$176 per night, single or double occupancy. Reservations can be made by phone

at (800) 635-5807 or online at www.tenayalodge.com, using group code 30F5A3. If you are an NPS employee, please use the code 30F8T8 to receive the federal per diem rate of \$126 per night. The NPS Concessions Management Advisory Board meeting is scheduled for October 21-22 at the Ahwahnee Hotel in Yosemite National Park, but the meeting is tentative, pending the approval of the Advisory Board Member appointments. More details on this meeting will be sent to you as soon as they are available.

Registration and room reservations must be completed by Tuesday, September 15!

- [Park Partners Forum Registration Form](#)
- [Overview of the Park Partners Forum including all relevant travel and lodging information](#)

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September 15 Gateways to Parks and Tribal Lands Forum planned at Interior

The Interior Department will host an important event on September 15 focusing on the relationship between gateway communities and parks and tribal lands. The session involves a number of regional tourism-related organizations as well as at least three federal departments: Interior, Transportation and Commerce. In addition to Interior Secretary Ken Salazar, Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood has agreed to participate – and other Cabinet members may join in too. Participation will be limited to about 125 persons, and a number of concessions industry leaders have been invited to participate. If confirmed by the Senate, NPS Director nominee Jon Jarvis is likely to address the group – one of his first public appearances as Director.

NPHA will be actively involved in the session, sponsoring the event's continental breakfast and having a display relating to the NPHA Marketing Committee's work. In addition, NPHA will participate in at least one of the day's panels.

The session seeks to explore ways to make park and tribal lands important economic contributors to nearby communities while also securing local support for park protection efforts. NPHA expects that the meeting will include discussion on 2010 efforts which, like the fee-free weekends of 2009, will encourage park visitations.

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Reminder: Submit your activities to NPS Parktips!

Each month, the National Park Service (NPS) publishes *Parktips* – a compilation of newsworthy items on the upcoming happenings in the National Park System. As a result of the positive discussions between NPHA members and NPS at NPHA's Annual Meeting in March, both parties agreed to work together on efforts to publicize the activities and events of park concessioners. Submitting articles to *Parktips* is a perfect way for concessioners to strength their relationship with NPS while advertising their many newsworthy events!

A new edition of *Parktips* is posted on the first week of each month at www.nps.gov/news - just click on the "Story Leads" link to access *Parktips*. Please submit your articles to elise_m_cleva@nps.gov by the 25th of each month for them to appear in the following month's *Parktips*. You can view past issues of *Parktips* for examples of articles.

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Pillars of Support: Xanterra leads the way in green initiatives in Yellowstone

NPHA is proud to highlight concessioners' contributions to parks and cooperation with the National Park Service. NPHA members provide contributions of goods, services and labor for the benefit of the American public and the national parks in parks across the nation. NPHA shares stories of concessioner achievements to underscore the partnership between NPHA members and the National Park Service, protecting parks and serving visitors.



Before and after: Yellowstone trash (above) transformed into compost (below)

NPHA Member Xanterra Parks & Resorts at Yellowstone has an ambitious program to prevent the majority of waste from the three million annual visitors from ending up in a landfill – not an easy task given the scope of its operations and the over eight million pounds of waste generated by visitors. However, Xanterra has made it a priority for the company to protect the irreplaceable resources of Yellowstone. The company developed a series of ambitious 2015 Environmental Vision Goals, which included a waste-diversion target of 50%. In 2008 – seven years before the target date – Xanterra's Yellowstone operation not only achieved, but also greatly exceeded this goal. The company diverted a remarkable 72% of its solid waste from landfill disposal through aggressive efforts in recycling, composting, material reuse, green procurement and donations of used equipment. Initiatives in green procurement and a comprehensive waste-sorting program also enabled the West Yellowstone Compost Facility to convert an estimated 2.2 million pounds of Xanterra's waste into compost. For example, in 2008 the company implemented

a sustainable amenities program (the first in the National Park system) that features bottles made from a corn-based biodegradable material; as a result, the 280,000 bottles used annually by park visitors are now transformed into compost instead of being sent to the landfill. To learn more about Xanterra's 2015 Environmental Vision Goals and initiatives, [click here](#).

Share your positive role in our parks with Mindy Meade at mmeade@funoutdoors.com!

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Notice from NPHA insurance vendor Dynastar: Offering voluntary benefits can help increase employee retention for next season

All companies know the value of retaining good employees. Making voluntary benefits available is an excellent way for employers to retain and recruit the right employees – and NPHA's Insurance Program is designed to make good programs readily available to you. To assist in this effort, NPHA has teamed with Dynastar Benefits Group, a leading voluntary benefits broker that specializes in insurance benefits for seasonal and part-time employees. Dynastar can customize benefits that meet your company's particular needs, including affordable health insurance, accident insurance and disability insurance, all at special group rates. Introduce these new benefits now, before employees leave for the season, to take full advantage of the recruiting potential of the NPHA Insurance Program.

[Click Here](#) to visit the NPHA Insurance Program website to learn more or contact Dynastar

Representative Shawn Mehl at (719) 313-9578 today to learn more about the options available to help your company retain and recruit its most valuable asset – its employees.

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National Park Foundation names Neil J. Mulholland as President and CEO

The National Park Foundation (NPF), the national charitable partner of the National Park Service, announced on July 22 that Neil J. Mulholland has been selected by the Foundation's Board of Directors to serve as President and CEO. Mr. Mulholland, a Denver-area business executive, entrepreneur, and community advocate, will provide the vision, leadership and overall direction for NPF and advance its strategic mission – to strengthen the connection between the American people and their national parks. Mr. Mulholland officially assumed the top leadership position on August 10 and is based out of the NPF's Washington, D.C. offices.

"Neil Mulholland brings vast experience and expertise to the Foundation that will allow it to continue to be a strong partner with the National Park Service as we near the 100th anniversary of the National Park System in 2016," said Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar, who serves as chairman of the Foundation's board. "Together, we will ensure our National Park System continues to be the finest system of parks in the world."

Mr. Mulholland is the fifth person to hold the title of President of the National Park Foundation since the organization received its Congressional charter in 1967 at the urging of then First Lady Lady Bird Johnson and celebrated philanthropist Laurance Rockefeller.

To read more on Mr. Mulholland, [click here](#).

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2009 National Take Pride in America® Award winners honored

Senior White House and Department of the Interior officials honored 16 groups and individuals on July 17 as the top national winners of the Take Pride in America® awards for outstanding accomplishments by volunteers. "These individuals and groups are outstanding representatives for the hundreds of thousands of Americans who volunteer with the land management agencies at the state, local and national level and who participate in the Take Pride in America program," said Deputy Secretary of the Interior David Hayes. The traditional categories for the awards recognize corporate, nonprofit and school volunteers and programs as well as those at the federal, state and local levels.

In addition, National Park Service Acting Director Dan Wenk presented a special "Spirit of Take Pride" Award posthumously to Brian O'Neill, Superintendent of Golden Gate National Recreation Area in San Francisco from 1986 until his death in May 2009. Mr. O'Neill, who was at Golden Gate for almost three decades, built the park's volunteer program to its present level of 22,000 volunteers and was a noted park leader nationally. The award was accepted by Mr. O'Neill's son, Brent O'Neill, an NPS Environmental Protection Specialist at the George Washington Memorial Parkway.

To see the complete list of awards, [click here](#).

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Federal Parks and Recreation Newsletter: NPS visitation finally gets a boost; reasons assessed include Fee-Free Weekends

After a decade of decline, visitation to the National Park System is up substantially nationwide this year. Explanations for the uptick range from cheaper gas to less expensive recreation choices in a tough economy to better marketing by the NPS to fee-free days. Whatever the reason, from January through July NPS has hosted five million more visitors nationally than last year, a percentage increase of 2.66 percent.

Some attributed the increases to fee-free weekends in June and July and the buzz those announcements caused. ***But to the Counselor to the National Park Hospitality Association, Derrick Crandall, the publicity created by fee-free days may have had as much impact as the fee-free weekends themselves. "As I've repeatedly said, I'm not sure fee-free days were the right marketing tool," said Mr. Crandall. "But it did stir up media interest and welcome interest among the American people. It wasn't just the fee-free days. The publicity reminded the American public what a great value the national parks are."*** NPS held its first fee-free weekend June 20-21, its second fee-free weekend July 18-19 and the next is this weekend, August 15-16.

To read the rest of this story, learn about 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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News

- [National Parks: Get in free this weekend! All entrance fees waived on August 15 & 16](#)
- [How to survive – and maybe enjoy – family road trips](#)
- [Park ranger asks: Where are the black visitors?](#)

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

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