



February 2009 Newsletter

National Park Hospitality Association

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NPHA 2009 Annual Meeting right around the corner!

There is still time to register for the National Park Hospitality Association's 2009 Annual Meeting! The meeting will be held at the Madison Hotel in Washington, D.C., on March 8-10. Registrations will be accepted through **Friday, February 20**, so please be sure to submit your registration forms as soon as possible!

We have planned an action-packed meeting featuring several key top Interior officials and Capital Hill leaders as well as members from the Second Century Commission. We are also delighted to announce that Congressman Norm Dicks (D-WA), Chairman of the Interior Appropriations Subcommittee, will be our special guest at Monday evening's CONPac Century Reception.

To download the registration form for the Annual Meeting, [click here](#).

Please note: The March meeting of the Concessions Management Advisory Board has been cancelled due to a problem with the timing of the Board's Charter.

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Campaign on concessioner role to launch at NPHA Annual Meeting

The National Park Hospitality Association's (NPHA) Annual Meeting will kick off an important informational campaign on concessioners' roles in the national park system. The campaign will serve to educate the National Park Service, the general public and others on the crucial role concessioners have historically provided and will continue to provide in offering memorable park visits and services to the American people. The campaign features a promotional video on the history and highlights of concessioner contributions and

partnerships in national parks, which was made possible through the generous contributions of financial support and photography from more than a dozen NPHA members.

The video will officially debut at the Annual Meeting, where it will be shown to top Interior Department and National Park Service officials and to Congressional allies. The video will also be available after the meeting for NPHA members to present to their local gateway communities, National Park Service partners and other potential partners to help spread the word on the importance of concessioner contributions to the greatness of the national park system and to help underscore the logic in increasing cooperation between all partners who can help to attract visitors to America's parks and Great Outdoors.

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Rep. Farr urges recreation community to unify travel and recreation opportunities

U.S. Representative Sam Farr (D-CA) was the special guest at the January 2009 Recreation Exchange hosted by the American Recreation Coalition. Mr. Farr, longtime champion of the outdoors and tourism, spoke on opportunities for outdoor recreation and travel through the economic stimulus package being readied by Congress. Those opportunities could increase marketing, planning and partnerships. The Congressman called for a new effort to fight the "silo mentality" he finds in federal agencies and even local tourism organizations that ignores the public's interest in finding great things to do across agency and municipal boundaries. Mr. Farr also had high praise for programs like the National Park Service's Centennial Challenge Fund, which matches government appropriations with private funding, saying, "If we put our heads together, we get more bang for our buck!"

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

Mr. Farr's message is strongly aligned with the mission of the National Park Hospitality Association's Task Force on Increasing Visitation. Efforts on how the task force can work cooperatively with the Congressional Travel and Tourism Caucus will be discussed at the Tuesday session of the NPHA Annual Meeting with the Caucus on Capital Hill.

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American Recovery and Reinvestment Act has \$750 million for parks

President Obama signed the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act in Denver today – and it has significant benefits for national parks. The final bill has \$750 million for the National Park Service, including \$146 million for deferred maintenance and critical repairs, \$15 million for a historic preservation fund, and \$589 million for construction and infrastructure projects – plus additional road funding. While substantial, the bill does not specifically include provisions included in the House-passed bill – including \$100 million for the Centennial Challenge Fund – and was far lower than the nearly \$2 billion proposed in the original House version.

Key lawmakers have vowed to push for more National Park Service funding in annual spending bills. House Interior Appropriations Subcommittee Chairman Norm Dicks (D-WA), who proposed the higher stimulus funding level for the Park Service, will try to boost agency funding through the appropriations process. "We'll have to continue to address the backlog with a higher allocation in the fiscal 2010 budget," said George Behan, Mr. Dicks' Chief of Staff, referring to the agency's estimated \$9 billion maintenance backlog.

Senate Energy and Natural Resources Chairman Jeff Bingaman (D-NM), who also expressed disappointment that parks and other public lands programs did not receive funding at higher levels, also plans to push funding other ways. "This is not the only spending train that will be moving through the Senate in this Congress," said spokesman Bill Wicker. "We have to go through the whole budget and appropriations process, so that will present the next good opportunity for us to look for ways to provide the level of funding that the National Park Service and other public lands agencies clearly deserve."

The \$750 million in new funding must be spent quickly – mostly within 18 months. Firm spending plans must be submitted within 120 days or the agency could lose funds. The National Park Hospitality Association plans to address ways for concessioners to assist National Park Service officials in managing projects funded under the stimulus legislation.

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Update on NPHA Task Force on Rate Approval

The National Park Hospitality Association's (NPHA) Task Force on Rate Approval met by conference call on February 6. The task force's goals are to help concessioners (1) understand current National Park Service (NPS) practices and procedures for rate approvals, (2) be aware of training opportunities available for the NPS and for its staff on rate approval and related efforts, (3) discuss the underway SERA process designed to improve the NPS rate approvals process, and (4) discuss task force members' views on reforms and changes in the rate approval process that would be fair to all parties (NPS, concessioners and the public), efficient in administration and well-understood.

The task force reviewed NPS Guideline 48, the guidance provided to national park units in overseeing rate approvals and related concessioner administration, and how it predates the NPS Concessions Management Improvement Act of 1998 and does not include several provisions covered by separate memorandums issued by the NPS Concessions program, specifically, SEC. 406 "Reasonableness of Rates" of the 1998 act. The task force examined existing NPS training and guidance manuals and agreed unanimously that joint training and workshops at the national and regional levels were vital to improve consistency and predictability of the rate approval process. The task force also reviewed the SERA (Standards, Evaluation and Rate Approval) process underway by NPS and agreed unanimously that NPS should actively involve NPHA in this effort.

The task force will meet again by conference call before the NPHA board meeting on March 8 to agree on specific recommendations for the board.

To read the full report on the meeting, [click here](#).

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News on Obama Administration appointments

The Obama Administration has more than 8,000 posts to fill – a process that will take until at least summer. Yet each week, new nominations are announced, and the announcements include many people who have worked on recreation issues in past Administrations. We now know that John Berry, who was a contender for the Interior Deputy Secretary spot that went to David Hayes (who also held that post in the last days of the Clinton Administration), will become Director of the Office of Personnel Management. Mr. Berry now serves on the Outdoor Resources Review Group and at its meeting late in January discussed ways he could use his new post, which oversees federal healthcare and other benefit programs, to encourage Americans to be more active outdoors.

Other new appointments include: Laura Daniels-Davis, who served as Mr. Hayes' Chief of Staff during the Clinton Administration and will return to the Department of the Interior (DOI) in that spot; Michael Connor, staffer on the Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources and the likely new Assistant Secretary for Water and Science; Chris Wood, now with Trout Unlimited but at one time a top advisor to the Chief of the Forest Service and currently the clear favorite for Under Secretary of Agriculture for Natural Resources and the Environment, overseeing the Forest Service.

As is customary with Administration changes, expect a handful of DOI career employees to be appointed as "acting" heads of DOI's subagencies for the next several months until new DOI leaders can be nominated and confirmed. The following individuals are in key "acting" positions, many for several months while nominees are announced and then confirmed:

- Rowan Gould, *Acting Director, Fish and Wildlife Service*
- Walter Cruikshank, *Acting Director, Minerals Management Service*
- Ron Wenker, *Acting Director, Bureau of Land Management*
- Dan Wenk, *Acting Director, National Park Service*
- Amy Holley, *Acting Assistant Secretary for Water and Science*
- Rich Cardinale, *Acting Assistant Secretary for Land and Minerals Management*
- George Skibine, *Acting Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs*
- Jane Lyder, *Acting Assistant Secretary for Fish and Wildlife and Parks*

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Partners Outdoors 2009 "Uses the Transition to Thrive!"

Partners Outdoors 2009 met with tremendous success as more than 120 partners in both the private and public sectors gathered in Cambridge, Maryland, and Washington, D.C., to share ideas, resources and best practices to accomplish this year's meeting goal: Using the Transition to Thrive. Heavy emphasis was placed on partnerships and cooperative actions, the need to remove barriers to enjoyment of the outdoors by all Americans, and how seamless public/private efforts can protect special places and provide transformational experiences.



One hot topic in particular included ways to get major figures in the new Administration, including the First Family, out recreating on America's public lands. Special guest Ray Rivera, the new Director of External and Intergovernmental Affairs at the Department of the Interior, told the group that plans to get the Obamas out in a national park this summer are already underway. It helps that new Interior Secretary Ken Salazar, shown here being pulled over by a deputy sheriff while campaigning for Obama last summer, is an experienced RV driver!

For the Partners Outdoors 2009 Conference Report and downloadable meeting resources, [click here](#).

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National Park Service issues year-end visitation report

The National Park System received 275 million recreation visits in 2008, representing a 0.3% total decrease in recreation visits from 2007. While the Midwest and Southeast Regions reported both percentage decreases and declining total visitation, the National Capital and Northeast Regions experienced large visitation increases this year. The

numbers are also a mixed bag in terms of various recreation activities. While the National Park Service saw overall declines in concessioner camping and RV camping, some locations had great increases. Yosemite National Park reported 13,500 more stays in Concessioner Lodging, 20,800 more in Tents and 8,400 more RV overnight stays. Lake Mead National Recreation Area also had 66,300 more Concessioner Campground overnight stays and 40,100 more Tent and RV overnight stays.

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

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Federal Parks and Recreation Newsletter: Omnibus lands bill faces tough House floor procedure

House leaders have delayed consideration of an omnibus lands bill (S. 22), and when the House does take up the bill, it will do so under a shaky procedure called Suspension of the Rules, which requires a two-thirds majority to pass. With conservative western Republicans opposed, the House must still come up with 291 votes to pass the bill.

The bill, sponsored by Senate Energy Committee Chairman Jeff Bingaman (D-NM), contains 161 individual measures. It would designate three new national parks, several national trails, more than 1,000 miles of wild and scenic rivers, 2.2 million acres of wilderness and ten national heritage areas. The bill would also permanently authorize both a Preserve America program founded by First Lady Laura Bush and a Save America's Treasures program established by then-First Lady Hillary Clinton.

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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- [NPHA Associate Member Redwood Creek Wines offers \\$50,000 grant with 2009 Greater Outdoors Project](#)
- [Outdoor participation up, down among youth](#)
- [Preschoolers more sedentary than thought](#)

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