



# January 2010 Newsletter

National Park Hospitality Association

[www.parkpartners.org](http://www.parkpartners.org)

*This newsletter is also available in PDF format on [www.parkpartners.org](http://www.parkpartners.org)*

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## **HOT NEWS: NPS responds to NPHA request for changes in rate approval process**

NPHA has just received a response from the National Park Service regarding NPHA's November 13 letter requesting several important changes to the rate approval process. More information on this development will be coming soon.

To read the NPS response, [click here](#).

To read NPHA's November 13 request, [click here](#).

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## **Register for NPHA's Annual Meeting**

The National Park Hospitality Association will gather in Washington, D.C., on March 7-10 for an informative annual meeting. NPHA is currently working on several important issues – from the SERA process to promotion initiatives to the proposed Director's Order 35B on full recovery of utility costs – and this meeting will provide critical opportunities for members and allies to discuss the progress that has already been made and where we can go from here. NPHA members will have invaluable opportunities to meet with top-level agency and Department of the Interior officials and to talk with key members of Congress. Learn about the new National Parks Promotion Council, the work of NPHA's Task Force on Rate Approvals and Standards and the results of the meetings with NPS regional directors. Please plan to attend this important meeting!

Overnight accommodations and most meetings will be at The Ritz-Carlton Pentagon City, just over the river from Washington, D.C. A block of rooms has been reserved for NPHA members. Please call The Ritz-Carlton at 703-415-5000 or 800-241-3333 to reserve your room. Specify you are attending the "NPHA Meeting" to receive the special nightly room rate of \$249.00 plus tax (currently 10.25%). Reservations may also be made on the Reservations page of [www.ritzcarlton.com](http://www.ritzcarlton.com) by entering the unique group code NPHNPHA.

**You must make your reservations by Tuesday, February 16!**

- [NPHA 2010 Annual Meeting Registration Form](#)
- [NPHA 2010 Annual Meeting Overview](#)

Please contact Mindy Meade at 202-682-9530 or by email at [mmeade@funoutdoors.com](mailto:mmeade@funoutdoors.com) if you have any questions.

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## Submit your comments on proposed Director's Order 35B

NPHA needs your help in compiling its formal response to proposed Director's Order 35B, which would create a new policy of passing through to concessioners in national park units the full capital and operating costs of providing utilities. If adopted, the proposal has serious potential impacts for concessioners and park visitors. It is vitally important to share with the National Park Service the negative effects the order will have on concessioners.

Many concessions are in remote locations, where both investments in utilities and operating costs are high, and the demand for water, electricity and other services is limited. If full utility costs are imposed, costs of services ranging from overnight accommodations to meals, groceries and souvenirs could rise – in some cases dramatically. Although the proposed policy suggests that NPS would normally permit the new and higher costs to be passed through to the public, price sensitivity and weak demand – especially in remote park areas – may instead make the increased costs a new, unplanned burden on concessioners. Concessioners also note that they have little influence on key decisions regarding utility investments in parks and are at a disadvantage on utility costs when compared to visitor facilities operating outside parks, where public agencies providing utilities typically receive federal grants and subsidies for water treatment plants and other utilities.

NPHA has already compiled a list of issues to raise in its formal response to the proposal, [found here](#). Please send any additional comments to [mmeade@funoutdoors.com](mailto:mmeade@funoutdoors.com) as soon as possible. Concessioners are also encouraged to submit their own comments directly to NPS. **NPHA has secured a 60-day extension on the original comment deadline of January 4, 2010. Comments are now expected to be due the first week in March**, preceding NPHA's Annual Meeting in Washington. A copy of the proposed policy is available at: [www.nps.gov/policy/DO-35Bdraft.htm](http://www.nps.gov/policy/DO-35Bdraft.htm).

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## NPHA meets with NPS on SERA process

NPHA members met with key National Park Service officials on January 19 to discuss the progress of SERA (Standards, Evaluations, and Rate Approval) and the views of NPHA's Task Force on Rate Approvals members on how SERA can bring about significant improvements to visitor services in national parks and the administration of the concessions program. The meeting outlined the general strategy and schedule of the SERA process and plans for

concessioner involvement.

NPHA's Task Force on Rate Approvals and Standards also met on December 21. The group established its priority actions for following up with NPS regarding the November 13 letter to Director Jon Jarvis, considered a draft document urging the SERA process to meet objectives included in the NPS Concessions Management Improvement Act of 1998, and discussed plans to report on the group's progress at the NPHA Annual Meeting. [Click here](#) for a report on the task force's December 21 meeting.

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## **NPS reports projected FY09 total concessioner revenues and franchise fee payments**

The National Park Service has shared some impressive numbers with NPHA regarding the projected concessioner revenues and franchise fee payments for Fiscal Year 2009. Concessioners brought in \$1.082 billion in business and returned \$58.2 million to the National Park Service in franchise fee payments. These figures demonstrate that concessioners not only contribute substantially to the country's economic activity, but also are important partners in keeping the national parks financially healthy.

Congratulations for serving so many visitors so well, and keep up the good work!

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## **1948 *New York Times* article on travel bureau of NPS provides support for National Parks Promotion Council**

Sixty-two years ago this month, the *New York Times* published an article, titled "U.S. Travel Program – Revived Federal Agency Will Promote Tourism as a Year-Round Industry," that reported on the reformation of the U.S. Travel Division of the National Park Service. While the article specifies that the office was not intended to exclusively promote travel to national parks, many of the goals of the office are shared by NPHA's new National Parks Promotion Council. To quote the Director of the U.S. Travel Bureau James L. Bossemeyer, "Our efforts will be directed to pointing out to people the wealth of places worth visiting in this big country, regardless of the time of year, and to encouraging development of the proper facilities for accommodating them."

The national parks have a long history of marketing efforts. Early Western railway advertisements marketed the parks and encouraged visitors to use train travel to come West and explore new parks. The National Park Service marketed the parks in the 1930s using many Works Progress Administration projects in park promotion efforts. Walt Disney and others showcased the national parks on television in the 1950s as a central part of federal tourism efforts. And current NPS research shows marketing is the single best driver to increase park visitation.

These past efforts all provide support for the creation of the National Parks Promotion Council (NPPC), which will unite diverse organizations, public and private, that support strengthening the relationship between Americans and their national parks, including through increasing visitation to park units. A successful organizational meeting for the council was held in San Francisco on January 13 and drew a high-level group of state tourism directors, gateway community officials, outdoor industry leaders and others who are supporting the effort. The NPPC will report on its progress at the NPHA Annual Meeting in March.

To read the 1948 *New York Times* article, [click here](#).

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## **Federal Parks and Recreation Newsletter: Fiscal year 2011 appropriations guessing game has begun**

Is there anything left in the till for fiscal year 2011 appropriations bills, given big spending increases in fiscal 2010 appropriations bills and in a big economic stimulus law before that? The Obama administration will provide the first hints when a fiscal 2011 budget comes out on February 1. But early speculation suggests that, at the federal level, the Interior Department will do so-so and the Forest Service not as well.

Rich Dolesh, public policy director for the National Recreation and Park Association, said state and local governments are hopeful that Secretary of Interior Ken Salazar will follow up on his repeated speeches championing secure, full funding for federal, state and local land acquisition. "The Secretary promised in a number of forums to increase the Land and Water Conservation Fund to full funding," said Mr. Dolesh. "I hope there will at least be incremental progress and I hope he lives up to his promises."

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**

- [Yellowstone National Park had a record year for tourism](#)
- [American Girl's 2010 Girl of the Year has a message: Go Outdoors](#)
- [National Wildlife Federation recommends New Year's resolution to get kids outside](#)

For more information or to send questions/comments, please email: [mmeade@funoutdoors.com](mailto:mmeade@funoutdoors.com)

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