



July 2011 Newsletter

National Park Hospitality Association

This newsletter is also available in PDF format on www.parkpartners.org

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Important Notice

Is there someone in your office who wants to receive our newsletters and isn't? Send their email addresses to jmitchell@funoutdoors.com – *thank you!*

NPHA Discusses Future of National Park Campaign with Director Jarvis

NPHA participated in a lively discussion about outreach and promotion on July 27 with National Park Service (NPS) Director Jon Jarvis and other top NPS officials, as well as leaders of the National Park Foundation, National Parks Conservation Association and Department of the Interior. Managers of the Go RVing, Discover Boating and Take Me Fishing campaigns briefed the group on the successful elements of their marketing strategy and explained how their strategy could be applied to a proposed national park campaign linked to the 2016 centennial.

James Ashurst of the Recreation Vehicle Industry Association, Carl Blackwell of the National Marine Manufacturers Association and Frank Peterson of the Recreational Boating & Fishing Foundation used video, PowerPoint and the internet to explain their organizations' campaigns to an attentive audience. All three recreation community outreach and promotion campaigns have been underway for 10+ years, and each is

funded at \$10 million per annum or more. They generate billions of impressions and millions of web visits annually.

The briefings produced valuable information to help in formulate a national parks campaign and opened the door to immediate partnerships. The three initiatives all sell experiences, not equipment. They differ in funding structures, governance and size, but all are gravitating toward social media, mobile apps and providing practical information – “how to” information. All seek to invite a more diverse array of Americans outdoors. All agree that national parks are lures, nationally and internationally. All rely on activating current enthusiasts to help recruit new outdoors enthusiasts.

Andrew Edgerton of Gallup was invited to participate by NPHA and helped generate interesting discussions about how NPS and its partners might sharpen use of existing and new data and arguments linking park visits to better health, education improvements – even just to thriving lifestyles. The group also addressed ways to share information and content seamlessly across websites and mobile apps. The group discussed barriers to reaching those with little or no tradition of park visits, and found substantial agreement that understanding motivation and interests – which are sometimes cross-cutting across ethnicity – can be a more effective marketing tool than targeting groups demographically.

The group heard how each of the programs had a link to recreation equipment sales. For Go RVing, funding comes from seals required by the industry safety certification program. For Discover Boating, revenues are tied to boat engines. For Take Me Fishing, the revenues are actually federal funds, but are generated by sale of fuel used in recreational boats and by a federal excise tax on fishing equipment – and the program is administered by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service – a sister agency of NPS.

NPHA was delighted by the full and active participation in the meeting by the Director as well as Sue Waldron, NPS Director of Communications. The group was challenged by the message that the evolution of social media required rapid change and evolution – and the warning against making content too burdensome to be used.

All three speakers made clear that their programs seek to go beyond building awareness to actually triggering experiences. And they think experiences in parks serve their purposes – and ours.

The presentations and subsequent conversations were captured on video and will not be released to the general public, but will be available to help us move forward – and to make sure that the idea of a national parks campaign is a topic of the first-ever America’s Summit on National Parks, November 2-3, 2011, in Washington, D.C.

For more details and if you have ideas or questions, feel free to contact Derrick Crandall at dcrandall@funoutdoors.com.

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NPHA Annual Meeting to be Held in Washington, D.C., in Early November

The NPHA Board of Directors agreed unanimously to move the fall meeting (previously approved for October 16-19 at Asilomar Conference Center) to Washington, D.C., to link to the America’s Summit on National Parks. NPHA will be a co-organizer of the

Summit with the National Parks Conservation Association and the National Park Foundation. More information on the Summit is below. Summit organizers are eager for active and broad NPHA member participation in the Summit. Several NPHA members are already considering sponsorship of Summit sessions and events.

NPHA's fall meeting is likely to involve sessions on November 1, preceding the Summit, as well as on the morning of the 4th, following the Summit's conclusion. More details will be available shortly.

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America's Summit on National Parks Announced: November 2-3 in Washington

Leading national park interests have announced plans for a first-ever America's Summit on National Parks on November 2-3, 2011, in Washington, D.C. The Summit will bring together leaders from traditional national park-focused organizations and those from additional constituencies vital to keeping America's National Parks relevant and appreciated in the future. The National Park Service has agreed to play a major role in the session, including presenting its Five-Year Action Plan, which is intended to help the agency prepare for success following its 100th anniversary in 2016.

The Summit will be held in downtown Washington at the Ronald Reagan Building. Co-organizers are the National Parks Conservation Association, National Park Foundation and National Park Hospitality Association. Among the topics which will be addressed will be strategies for boosting and improving national park experiences – reversing a decline in annual park visits over more than two decades – and new strategies for partnerships and cooperation. Park friends groups, education and health community entities and tourism organizations will join key NPS staff, federal and state elected officials and park advocates at the two-day session. Participation will be limited to approximately 300 persons and is by invitation only.

For details, click here. For information about becoming an invitee, contact Julia Mitchell at jmitchell@funoutdoors.com.

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NPS Concessioner Accessibility Achievement Award Nominations Are Now Open

The National Park Service (NPS) is now accepting nominations for the Concessioner Accessibility Achievement Award - Improving Accessibility in Commercial Services. This award is one of eight Accessibility Awards given out by the NPS. The Concessioner Accessibility Achievement Award recognizes exemplary efforts that significantly improve accessibility for visitors with disabilities to concessioner-operated programs and facilities within the national parks.

Projects and programs may address programmatic accessibility (access to programs and services) as well as architectural access. Successful projects will demonstrate innovation, creativity, and success in providing more than just minimum requirements for accessibility, going above and beyond the normal requirements.

Nominees must fill out the NPS National Accessibility Achievement Award Nomination Form and submit a limited amount of relevant photographs, publications, audiovisual

aids, or other documents that directly relate to the program or project and that contribute to the judges' understanding of the nomination.

For more information and access to the nomination guidelines and the nomination form, please visit: <http://concessions.nps.gov/caaa.htm>.

Nominations for this award will be accepted from July 1 until August 31, 2011.

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Forecasting Washington Actions – and Consequences for Your Operations in National Parks – Very Challenging

NPHA would really like to offer you sound counsel on how decisions in Washington will shape your operations in national parks this summer and fall. But we can't. From debate on debt ceilings to the Fiscal Year 2012 National Park Service (NPS) budget – even to available funding for roads and transportation programs in parks – our crystal ball is very cloudy.

We felt certain that a two-year deal on the debt limit would be achieved as recently as last week. Now it appears that a short-term action will occur and the debate will continue about budget cuts and increased revenues for months. And the debate on the House floor about the FY 2012 budgets for Interior, Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and related agencies is so acrimonious (with more than 200 floor amendments) that our original sense that next year's budget would be approved and would be kind to NPS operations is now less certain. Other programs in the bill, including EPA's operations, are hit hard in the House bill and many of the floor amendments are seeking to increase spending on "environmental" programs. Most of the amendments propose offsetting cuts to other programs in the same budget "bucket," because there is a cap on overall spending on Interior and related agencies. The same problems will emerge this fall if a Senate appropriations bill has major differences with the House in budget priorities – a contentious conference committee could block agreement on a FY 2012 budget and lead to either a shut-down or a continuing resolution, subjecting all programs to flat or decreased funding. And debate over a new, multi-year surface transportation law is so far behind – nearly three years – that we now face either another short-term extension of the current law (which expires October 1), with most programs reduced by 30%, or no bill, which would give the appropriations process total control over a \$50 billion program.

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NPS Signaling Plans to Continue Fee-Free Days

Both the National Park Service (NPS) concessions staff and Communications Office have contacted concessioners and NPHA staff for information on the results of past fee-free days and for recommendations for which dates in 2012 should be selected. NPHA staff has urged NPS to clarify its objectives for the program, noting that the program has worked quite well to gain visibility for parks but has less obvious results on actual visitation. The 2011 fee-free dates are/were the weekend of Martin Luther King Jr. Day (January 15-17), National Park Week (April 16-24), the first day of summer (June 21), National Public Lands Day (September 24), and the weekend of Veterans Day (November 11-13).

NPS remains interested in tying concessioner offers to the fee-free dates – and the offers do not need to be discounts. Special programs and offers – visiting artists and films, family portraits and more – seem well-suited to trigger visits, especially since park visits are reasonably priced when compared to many other leisure choices. And NPS has expressed interest in exploring ways to direct the offers to specific groups – military, economically disadvantaged, and others.

NPHA has applauded Secretary Ken Salazar and NPS Director Jon Jarvis for instituting this outreach and promotion initiative in 2009, and has invited discussions about how the initial success of the program could be continued. If you have ideas on how the fee-free offers program can work effectively in 2012 and beyond, please contact Derrick Crandall at dcrandall@funoutdoors.com by August 20.

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