



March 2010 Newsletter

National Park Hospitality Association

www.parkpartners.org

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NPHA holds successful Annual Meeting in Washington

The National Park Hospitality Association held its Annual Meeting March 7-10 in the Washington, D.C. area at The Ritz-Carlton, Pentagon City, with special sessions at the U.S. Department of the Interior and on Capitol Hill. Concessioners, allies and National Park Service (NPS) employees participated in discussions with top Interior Department officials and key Members of Congress. Conversation topics focused on several key opportunities and challenges currently facing the concessions industry, including proposed Director's Order 35B, revisions to the SERA process, alternative LSI valuation, the formation of the National Parks Promotion Council and more. The concessioners' political action committee – CONPAC – hosted two very important gatherings with Senator Mark Udall (D-CO) and Representative Mike Simpson (R-ID), who voiced their support for concessioner issues and initiatives. Allies such as the National Park Foundation and the National Parks Conservation Association also voiced support for increasing communication and partnership opportunities among all parties with a vested interest in protecting and enhancing visitation to our national parks. Meeting participants were also treated to a unique excursion to Gettysburg National Military Park, hosted by NPHA members Gettysburg Tours and ARAMARK Parks and Destinations.

The full report on the NPHA 2010 Annual Meeting will be available shortly on www.parkpartners.org.

Mark your calendars! NPHA 2010 Park Partners Forum, October 17-20, Doubletree Guest Suites (a Guest Services property), Naples, Florida.

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Concessioners meet with top Interior Department officials at Annual Meeting



NPHA Chairman Joe Fassler with NPS Director Jon Jarvis

Concessioners met with top Interior Department officials during their Annual Meeting to discuss several challenges and opportunities facing the concessions industry. NPHA board members highlighted concessioner activities, including improved communications with park visitors through new technologies, the newly formed National Parks Promotion Council, participation in implementation of the new SERA process and excitement about opportunities linked to 2016. Concessioners also discussed several concerns, including the proposed full pass-through of utility costs to concessioners, the proposed revised LSI valuation, implementation of the guns in parks law and the continued low visibility of concessioner

offerings on official NPS websites.

NPS Director Jon Jarvis expressed his strong affection for concessioners and their excellent visitor services, saying, "We cannot do our jobs without you." Director Jarvis described his four areas of priority for NPS: workforce, stewardship, education and relevancy. He also outlined a new Administration initiative that will strategically work to reconnect Americans to their public lands, and he applauded efforts to work with the medical community to offer "park prescriptions" for obesity and other ailments. Tom Strickland, Interior Chief of Staff and Assistant Secretary for Fish and Wildlife and Parks, also praised concessioners for their offerings and facilities. He said he understands the challenges facing concessioners, stating, "There's no reason you can't run a successful business and serve the public." Mr. Strickland offered support for increasing efforts to make sure that funds stay in the park where they are collected. Ray Rivera, Director of the Interior Department's Office of Public Engagement, talked about Interior's commitment to increasing youth involvement on public lands, and introduced the concessioners to Robin Snyder. Ms. Snyder, a stellar NPS staffer on assignment with Interior's Office of Youth, encouraged concessioners and other partners to help streamline the process of incorporating a huge increase of youth employees on the public lands.

Further details on the summit between concessioners and Interior Department officials will be included in the full report on the 2010 Annual Meeting.

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NPS announces first of 2010 fee-free periods; NPHA encourages concessioners to participate!

During meetings with top Interior Department officials and key National Park Service representatives this past week, NPHA learned that the first of several fee-free periods at national parks this year will be April 17-25. These dates coincide with National Parks Week 2010 (more information at: www.nps.gov/npweek). Information on additional fee-free periods is expected to be released later in the spring. Unlike last year's fee-free weekends – which took place during peak summer weekends – this year's fee-free periods will likely encourage visitation during the shoulder seasons and off-peak days.

Concessioners were proud to join the National Park Service last year in the fee-free weekend effort, enhancing the weekends by offering valued-added experiences at their operations. Examples of special opportunities offered during last year's fee-free weekends included free photographs at iconic park locations, special rates on day-trip packages, vouchers for items purchased at retail shops, and more.

We encourage concessioners to once more join in this effort by offering value-added experiences to park visits during these fee-free periods. Your participation demonstrates to the National Park Service and to the American public that you are valuable partners in providing quality experiences in the national parks. Please submit your special offers to Mindy Meade by COB Friday, March 19. NPHA will again compile the special offers and seek to obtain a link to our offers on official NPS sites promoting the fee-free periods.

To see the deals offered by concessioners last year, visit: www.parkpartners.org/Special-2009-Offers.html.

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National Parks Promotion Council officially launches at Annual Meeting

The National Parks Promotion Council (NPPC) officially launched at the NPHA Annual Meeting with its formal incorporation as a 501(c)(6) nonprofit on March 8. The NPPC will assist the National Park Service and other stakeholders in connecting Americans to their parks, particularly youth and other segments of the population currently under-represented among park visitors. Four NPPC committees were formed in the areas of research, finance, membership and marketing. NPPC will shortly name its first full Board of Directors – 15 leaders, including four representatives from businesses or other organizations engaged in tourism/hospitality.

NPPC's immediate concerns include defining priority promotional projects, securing long-term funding, developing membership, and defining needed research. Its committees will help guide those efforts. NPPC co-founder Terry MacRae of Hornblower Cruises described the NPPC for NPS Director Jon Jarvis and other NPS leaders at the special session on March 9, and NPPC Interim Director John Poimiroo reminded the NPS group about the historical role of NPS in promotion, linked the National Parks Promotion Council to recent Administration efforts on jobs and the economy, noted the various stakeholders who will be involved with NPPC, and outlined what NPPC intends to accomplish.

The NPPC was officially announced at a special reception on Capitol Hill in conjunction with the launch of another exciting initiative – ED OUT – which will bring kids out to public lands for recreation and education during the last days of the 2010 academic year. U.S. Representatives Nick Rahall, Chairman of the U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Natural Resources, and Sam Farr, Co-Chair of the Congressional Travel and Tourism Caucus, both endorsed promotion of national parks and the importance of outreach to youth when NPHA members "hit the Hill" on Tuesday evening.

Now that the organization is up and running, the real work has begun! If you or anyone else would like to be involved with the NPPC, please contact NPHA. The NPPC's official website will be launched shortly.

To read further details on ED OUT, [click here](#).

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CONPAC hosts gatherings with key legislators during Annual Meeting



Senator Mark Udall with concessioners

CONPAC – the concessioners’ political action committee – hosted events for two legislators with much influence over National Park Service appropriations and policies during the NPHA Annual Meeting. Concessioners met with U.S. Senator Mark Udall (D-CO) and U.S. Rep. Mike Simpson (R-ID) to report on the Annual Meeting and to identify upcoming opportunities for concessioners.

Senator Udall is the son of the late U.S. Rep. Mo Udall, who was the principal author of the first concessions act. He offered strong support for continuing the role of concessioners in parks.

Mr. Simpson was particularly sensitive to the business challenges posed by Director’s Order 35B and the alternative valuation of LSI. NPHA was delighted to host former Secretary of the Interior Dirk Kempthorne at its Capitol Hill reception as well as at the event with Rep. Simpson. Secretary Kempthorne made clear that his championship of parks continues unabated, and shared thoughts on engaging the new House Interior Appropriations Subcommittee Chair, U.S. Rep. Jim Moran (D-VA), in park and concessioner issues.

More details on the CONPAC sessions will be available in the full report on the 2010 Annual Meeting.

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NPHA gains support from top park allies in Washington

The leaders of two very important park allies praised partnerships and increased communication with concessioners at the NPHA Annual Meeting. Neil Mulholland, the new President of the National Park Foundation (NPF), voiced his desire to increase cooperation between NPF and concessioners. He applauded concessioners for being the face of the national parks, noting that concessioners are often the only park-related contacts visitors have in the parks. He promised concessioners that one of his top priorities is getting full accountability for contributions made to the Guest Donation Program, which allows overnight guests at concessioner operations to make a donation to NPF to be used at the park where it was collected. He said he has reevaluated the foundation’s activity and that they are now focusing on three areas: youth – connecting future stewards and concessioners’ future customers to their national parks; increasing philanthropic capacity at the park level – especially helping parks without friends groups and alliances; and maintaining parks and their resources for future generations. Mr. Mulholland is particularly supportive of utilizing new media in achieving his goals, and noted his career in the broadband media arena. Tom Kiernan, President of the National Parks Conservation Association (NPCA), praised the ever-improving relationship of NPHA, NPF and NPCA. He noted that the Administration’s upcoming America’s Great Outdoors Initiative – expected to be announced in April – will include many listening sessions across the country, and urged NPHA to join NPCA in contributing ideas to this new initiative. NPCA strongly supports the past, present and future role of concessioners in the national parks, Mr. Kiernan said, and wants to see concessioners strongly engaged in the future of the national parks. Both Mr. Mulholland and Mr. Kiernan spoke positively about the need to promote the national parks.

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Pillars of Support: Lake Mead concessioner named Marina of the Year

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.



Las Vegas Boat Harbor marina complex in Hemenway Harbor of Lake Mead, NPS Photo

NPHA Member Las Vegas Boat Harbor, a concessioner at Lake Mead National Recreation Area, has been named marina of the year by the industry magazine *Marina Dock Age*. Each year, the publication honors two marinas for their outstanding management results, marketing activities, community and industry involvement, customer satisfaction and environmental efforts. Family-owned and operated Las Vegas Boat Harbor Inc. won the division for marinas with more than 250 slips. Las Vegas Boat Harbor currently has nearly 1,500 slips and describes itself as one of the largest inland marinas in the United States.

The Gripentog family has operated the marina for nearly 53 years. To keep Lake Mead looking clean and beautiful, the marina employs a variety of activities ranging from handing out free trash bags to the public to putting power meters on slips to encourage energy conservation.

"We're proud to have the marina of the year right here at Lake Mead National Recreation Area. The Gripentogs have a long history with the lake and National Park Service. It's a well deserved award," said Lake Mead Superintendent Bill Dickinson. Congratulations to Las Vegas Boat Harbor and to the Gripentog family!

For more information on Las Vegas Boat Harbor's award, [click here](#).

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

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White House posts video of President Obama's Yellowstone trip

The White House has just posted a video of President Obama's visit to Yellowstone last summer, as well as video and still clips of other Presidents who have visited the park. The video highlights the importance of America's national parks to our country's history and tradition. The First Family's visit to Yellowstone and the Grand Canyon last summer, along with Interior Secretary Salazar's series of fee-free weekends and the NPS' assistance to Ken Burns in producing the PBS television series on the national parks, have all helped reinvigorate promotion of the national parks and other public lands. We encourage you to share these video clips to spread the message of the importance of national parks!

Short version:

www.whitehouse.gov/photos-and-video/video/mr-president-goes-yellowstone

Long version:

www.whitehouse.gov/photos-and-video/video/mr-president-goes-yellowstone-extended

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Federal Parks and Recreation Newsletter: Senators fault Obama's LWCF increase

The Senator who oversees Interior Department and Forest Service appropriations signaled March 9 that she may not be willing to go along with a major increase in spending for the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF). At a hearing on the Fiscal Year 2011 Obama Administration budget request for the Interior Department, Senator Dianne Feinstein (D-CA) first took note of major spending increases in the report. This includes a proposed 31 percent increase for LWCF. Then she said, "Each of these is an important priority, we understand that. My concern is in order to pay for these, the Administration is proposing cuts elsewhere that may well be untenable." Senator Feinstein chairs the Senate Subcommittee on Interior and Related Agencies and will be in charge of writing a FY 2011 appropriations bill.

Among the reductions she worried about were \$164 million in construction costs at the National Park Service, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Bureau of Land Management, and the Bureau of Indian Affairs. "That's a 33 percent reduction for these agencies," she said, noting much maintenance work is conducted through the construction line item. "That is a problem." And Senator Feinstein worried about unfunded fixed costs of \$108 million that Interior Department agencies would be forced to eat. "The budget proposes having the various agencies absorb \$108 million in unfunded fixed costs," she said. "These include Congressionally mandated pay raises, increases in employee health benefits, increased rent in utilities. Each of these must be paid for, but in this budget they are not. Where does the Park Service come up with the \$32 million to cover fixed costs?"

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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- [Smart phones have changed the way we travel](#)
- [Social Media Awards winner Williams hopes Gowalla gets people exploring](#)

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