



May 2009 Newsletter

National Park Hospitality Association

www.parkpartners.org

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In this issue:

- [NPS Acting Director responds positively to NPHA requests](#)
- [Salazar appoints Robert Stanton as Deputy Assistant Secretary for Policy, Management and Budget](#)
- [NPS, NPHA and Igloo agree on new effort](#)
- [NPHA Executive Committee meets, takes important actions](#)
- [Task Force on Rate Approval meeting with NPS in Denver a success](#)
- [Marketing Committee reports many opportunities](#)
- [Pillars of Support: Coca-Cola donates money for recycling program on the Mall](#)
- [Salazar announces \\$750 million in stimulus funding for NPS](#)
- [NPHA insurance program update](#)
- [Federal Parks and Recreation Newsletter: Obama budget substitutes Treasured Landscapes Initiative for Centennial Initiative](#)
- [Mark your calendars! Park Partners Forum: October 18-21 at Yosemite](#)
- [News](#)

NPS Acting Director responds positively to NPHA requests

National Park Service (NPS) Acting Director Dan Wenk has responded to NPHA's letter outlining the requests and suggestions offered during the NPHA/NPS meeting at Interior in March, and it is clear NPS is ready to work with NPHA on improving visitor services, increasing communication and cooperation between the NPS and concessioners, and making more and better information about park visits readily available. And we appreciate Mr. Wenk's comment, "Concessioners have the potential to reach almost every visitor to those parks with concession facilities, providing them with an unparalleled visitor experience."

NPS has agreed to several specific NPHA suggestions, including immediate steps to improve the visibility of concessioner services on www.nps.gov. Mr. Wenk has asked the regions to work with park units to ensure that all concessioner-provided services are readily found through individual park pages. NPS also agreed that a new Standards Evaluation and Rate Approval (SERA) process has been delayed too long, and further agreed to address short-term improvements in concession management at a recent meeting convened by NPHA's Task Force on Rate Approval. NPS plans to use a committee of the newly-reauthorized NPS Concessions Management Advisory Board to host open and active conversations about effective, less burdensome mechanisms to oversee concessioner operations.

NPHA Chairman Joe Fassler praised NPS Acting Director Wenk's follow-up to the March meeting and other promising signs of increased communication and cooperation between concessioners and NPS. He believes NPHA is engaged more positively with senior National Park Service officials than at any previous period during his career, and he underscored the goal of NPHA to both respect and be respected by NPS and other park-related organizations.

To read NPHA's letter to Mr. Wenk and his full response, [click here](#).

[Return to top](#)

Salazar appoints Robert Stanton as Deputy Assistant Secretary for Policy, Management and Budget

Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar appointed former National Park Service Director Robert G. Stanton as Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Interior for Policy, Management, and Budget on May 14. Mr. Stanton served as NPS Director from 1997 to 2001, where he oversaw major planning and resource preservation programs at the White House, Yellowstone, Yosemite, Gettysburg and other national parks, and inaugurated and oversaw the National Resource Challenge, a plan to revise and expand the agency's natural resource programs.

"Since beginning his career as a National Park Service ranger 47 years ago, Bob Stanton has dedicated his life to improving the conservation and management of our treasured landscapes and national icons," Secretary Salazar said. "The Department of the Interior will benefit greatly from his vast experience, extraordinary management skill, and dedication to our public lands."

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

[Return to top](#)

NPS, NPHA and Igloo agree on new effort

The National Park Service (NPS) recently gave the green light to an effort developed through the NPHA marketing committee under which Igloo will produce several unique consumer products that are "green," attractive and tied to an NPHA outreach and marketing program. Using the initial slogan "America's Parks: History, Nature and Fun," and three attractive items, the program will begin in the summer of 2009 and is expected to grow substantially. NPHA Marketing Committee Chairman Terry MacRae envisions the development of a unique mark for concessioner goods and services that will build public awareness of the partnership between NPS and concessioners that delivers great memories to all visitors and will highlight the traditional role concessioners have always played in park outreach and marketing efforts, which stretches back prior to 1900. To see the new image and the order form for products, [click here](#) and enter your password – nphaonly.

[Return to top](#)

NPHA Executive Committee meets, takes important actions

NPHA's Executive Committee met via conference call on May 7 to discuss many important topics and take action on several key issues. Much of the conversation focused on the positive response of the National Park Service to NPHA requests and initiatives outlined in Acting Director Dan Wenk's letter to the association (see related story). Gerry Gabrys and John Schoppmann shared enthusiastic reports on a recent showing of the new NPHA video *Partners in Parks – United for America* to a group of influential Washington lawyers and lobbyists. The video stimulated useful discussions about how to improve concessions/NPS relations and expand opportunities for quality concessioner services. NPHA urges all members to use the video with their staffs, park officials in the parks that they operate and with local allies, including gateway communities. For copies of the video to use and leave with these VIPs, contact Mindy Meade at 202-682-9530 or mmeade@funoutdoors.com.

In other news, the Executive Committee approved the 2009 budget and the full board will send approval via written ballot before it is made available to the NPHA membership through the newsletter. CONPac has planned an event for Congressman Sam Farr (D-CA), a member of the Appropriations Committee and the Co-Chair of the Congressional Travel and Tourism Caucus, in his congressional district on June 6. Both the Unilever and Igloo initiatives are making excellent progress, and it was announced that proceeds from the Igloo initiative will be used to fund NPHA's Task Force on Increasing Visitation. NPHA has also had several discussions with the National Park Conservation Association regarding important partnership opportunities, including exciting plans to work together on the Central Park debut of Ken Burns' documentary on the national parks this fall.

[Return to top](#)

Task Force on Rate Approval meeting with NPS in Denver a success

NPHA's Task Force on Rate Approval met with NPS Commercial Services staff in Denver on April 22 to discuss steps to improve the current rate-approval process. Commercial Services Chief Jo Pendry and many of her staff members joined concessioners from across the country to discuss strategies for achieving better and more consistent rate-approval decisions, focusing on a survey of 2007-2008 reviews in more than 50 park units. Task Force Chairman John Rutter described the four-hour meeting as very useful and productive.

The meeting focused on two types of issues: operational issues that should be addressed immediately to overcome identified problems, and a longer-term effort to replace the current oversight of concessioner operations with a less burdensome and more effective system. Mr. Rutter praised the participation of NPS staff in the session, saying the NPS showed real interest in overcoming identified problems and even offered to contact park superintendents and concessions specialists with reminders about suggested procedures and responses to unusual circumstances, such as the rapid escalation in energy costs in 2008. Training of both concessioners and NPS staff was also discussed, and NPS explained that its 2009 training session for superintendents and concessions specialists would be videotaped, edited and made available to concessioners. NPS suggested a special training program for concessioner representatives in 2010, an idea which was well received by the task force members. Concessioners also pledged to work actively with the NPS Concessions Management Advisory Board on planned NPS Standards Evaluation and Rate Approval (SERA) efforts, which will consider major changes in establishing standards and evaluation procedures for concessioners, beginning with food and lodging activities.

To read the agenda from this meeting, [click here](#).

[Return to top](#)

Marketing Committee reports many opportunities


The NPHA Marketing Committee is preparing a report to the Executive Committee on emerging opportunities – and steps NPHA should take to sort through and act on those of the highest priority. Committee Chairman Terry MacRae lists some of the exciting opportunities as: links to the new Ken Burns/Dayton Duncan PBS special that will run on PBS in September and again next spring, ranging from an information center at a New York City Central Park premiere to evening programs/video screenings at concessioner lodges; a new "app" to help find great park opportunities from iPhones and iPod Touches; a new partnership with the National Park Conservation Association, which will begin in June with a special feature in the NPCA e-newsletter on special park visitor opportunities in 2009; and new overtures to park gateway community marketing organizations and state tourism

offices. Mr. MacRae invites all NPHA member companies to designate a senior marketing staff member to the committee, which plans to meet by phone later this month and in person during June. Volunteer by contacting Terry MacRae (tmacrae@hornblower.com) or Derrick Crandall (dcrandall@funoutdoors.com).

[Return to top](#)

Pillars of Support: Coca-Cola donates funds for recycling on the Mall

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.



NPHA Associate Member Coca-Cola is donating \$1.1 million to revamp several national parks and to help launch a recycling program on the National Mall. The Atlanta-based company put a \$500,000 down payment on a sustainable and long-term recycling program on the National Mall, and the remaining \$600,000 will support enhanced trail programs in seven national parks.

The recycling effort supports the Interior Department's goal of diverting 50 percent of solid waste from landfills through recycling by 2010. The Trust for the National Mall aims to exceed that goal and direct at least 50 percent of solid waste towards recycling programs by next year. Coca-Cola's investment will also support enhanced trail programs in national parks including Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, Overmountain Victory National Historic Trail, Chattahoochee River National Recreation Area, Golden Gate National Recreation Area, Olympic National Park, and one yet-to-be-determined park. The Coca-Cola Co. has been a national parks partner since 2007. NPHA applauds Coca-Cola's actions to support the Interior Department's environmental goals. Keep up the good work!

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

[Return to top](#)

Salazar announces \$750 million in stimulus funding for NPS

Interior Secretary Ken Salazar announced April 22 that more than 750 park projects will receive \$750 million in stimulus funding to create jobs, to restore and protect America's national parks and to preserve our history and heritage for future generations. The funding is part of more than \$3 billion the Department of the Interior is investing in the nation's economy under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009.

"From the Civil War to the Great Depression, America's best ideas for protecting our national parks and open spaces have often come when our nation has faced its greatest challenges," said Secretary Salazar. "Today, by investing \$750 million to restore and protect America's most special places, we are creating a new legacy of stewardship for our national park system while helping our economy stand up again. These projects – at places like Ellis Island in New York and Dinosaur National Monument in Utah – are ready to go and will create jobs in communities across the country."

All of the announced projects are long-standing priorities of the National Park Service (NPS) based on its capital planning process. With an array of projects identified as critical by stakeholders, the NPS worked through a rigorous merit-based process to identify investments that met the criteria put forth in the Recovery Act: namely, that a project addresses the Department's highest priority mission needs, generates the largest number of jobs in the shortest period of time, and creates lasting value for the American public.

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

[Return to top](#)

NPHA insurance program update

A postcard mailing has been sent to all NPHA members as a reminder about the valuable insurance program available to NPHA members starting this month. Non-member concessioners will also receive the mailing to help raise awareness about NPHA and the many benefits of association membership.

The postcard mailer features the Limited Benefit Medical Program that was introduced at the Park Services Forum in October 2008. Limited Benefit Medical Programs offer seasonal and part-time employees with basic health care coverage at affordable group rates. The plans are voluntary, so employees can choose whether or not they would like to enroll.

Contact Scott Airmont of Dynastar Benefits Group at 719-684-6933 for more details regarding health insurance or the additional employee benefits programs available through NPHA's partnership with Dynastar. To learn more, visit our personalized insurance website at www.parkpartnersinsurance.com.

[Return to top](#)

Federal Parks and Recreation Newsletter: Obama budget substitutes Treasured Landscapes Initiative for Centennial Initiative

When the Obama Administration laid out the details of its fiscal year 2010 budget request on May 7, the National Park Service Centennial Challenge was missing in action. Instead, the Obama Administration recommended a Protection of Treasured Landscapes initiative that would operate about the same as the Centennial Challenge program. The Obama Administration requested for FY 2010 a \$25 million appropriation to match a like amount of non-federal contributions to be used to upgrade the National Park System. Despite no mention of the \$2 billion Centennial Challenge program, the budget does recommend a major increase in spending for National Park Service operations and maintenance. Much of that money by definition could be used to prepare the parks for a centennial in 2016. The budget would increase NPS operations spending by \$100 million, from \$2.132 billion to \$2.266 billion. Some of that could be used for upgrading the national parks.

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.

[Return to top](#)

Mark your calendars! Park Partners Forum: October 18-21 at Yosemite

Be sure to save the dates for this year's Park Partners Forum – October 18-21 at Tenaya Lodge at Yosemite National Park! Building on the successes of the 2008 Park Services Forum in Henderson, Nevada, our plans include vendor displays, a large number of educational sessions, general sessions with high profile guests and a focus on increasing our visibility and partnerships among other critical park partners. We expect to have three to four National Park Service regional directors as well as representatives from gateway communities and more. Other exciting events currently include an afternoon trip into Yosemite National Park, dinner and dessert at the landmark Ahwahnee and Wawona Hotels and more!

Registration materials will be available through the newsletter later in the summer.

[Return to top](#)

News

- [Popular GGNRA superintendent and dear NPHA friend Brian O'Neill dies](#)
- [Secretary Salazar creates new Office of Youth at Interior](#)
- [National parks one of top five bargain destinations for summer 2009](#)

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

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[Return to top](#)