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GREAT OUTDOORS MONTH 2014 HAILED AS MOST SUCCESSFUL ONE YET

Great Outdoors Month 2014 is in the books and what a successful month it was! With thousands of events hosting hundreds of thousands of participants across the country, Great Outdoors Month 2014 will go down as the most successful one yet.

The celebration kicked off on May 17 – National Kids to Parks Day – at Pea Ridge National Military Park in Arkansas with a campout under the stars. Camping equipment was generously donated by The Coleman Company, and the event included the participation of Walmart, the Benton County Boys & Girls Club, the Boy Scouts of America and many others. A video recapping the event can be seen [here](#).



Youth camp out at Pea Ridge National Military Park in Arkansas

To go along with the event, Arkansas Governor Mike Beebe worked with the Arkansas Department of Parks and Tourism to create a PSA urging citizens to get outside and enjoy the Great Outdoors during Great Outdoors Month. The PSA can be seen [here](#).

A similar PSA was also issued by Idaho Governor Butch Otter in conjunction with the Idaho Department of Commerce, and can be seen [here](#).

Celebrations continued with the first Capital Campout of Great Outdoors Month, held on May 30 at MacLennan Park in Topeka, Kansas. Governor Sam Brownback hosted the event, which saw more than 30 youth from around Kansas camp out near the Governor's residence, many of them for the first time. Three other Capital Campouts were held by Govs. Jay Inslee in Olympia, Washington; John Hickenlooper in Denver, Colorado and Nathan Deal at Sweetwater Creek State Park just outside Atlanta, Georgia. The campouts were generously supported by partners like The Coleman Company, Walmart and SC Johnson's OFF!® brand.



Kansas Gov. Sam Brownback hosts Capital Campout in Topeka

On June 7, the American Hiking Society held the 22nd annual National Trails Day®, the largest one yet! The event included more than 145,000 people participating at 2,113 sites in all 50 states, Washington, D.C. and Puerto Rico. A full report on the event in pdf form can be found [here](#).



NPS Director Jon Jarvis speaks at Partners Outdoor 2014

The annual Partners Outdoor conference was held in Washington, D.C. at the U.S. Department of the Interior as part of Great Outdoors Week on June 9-11. The event included keynote speeches from key public and private sector figures like National Park Service Director Jon Jarvis and Vail Resorts' Rick Cables. They were joined by top-notch general session panelists addressing funding recreation in the Great Outdoors, hosting all Americans in their Great Outdoors and working better as partners in the Great Outdoors. Major portions of the program were live streamed, watched by nearly 1,000 across the nation, and can be seen [here](#).

More than 100 people celebrated the spirit of service to the outdoors with the Inaugural Great Outdoors Week Day of Service event – planned by The Corps Network and held at the FDR Memorial on the National Mall. Conservation corps members and volunteers worked with National Park Service staff, were fed by Guest Services Inc., and were transported to worksites aboard Old Town Trolleys provided by Historic Tours of America. The Great Outdoors Week Day of Service will expand in future years, inviting all Americans and especially youth to undertake service projects in the Great Outdoors. A video recapping the event is available [here](#).



Day of Service volunteers eat lunches provided by Guest Services Inc.



National Sponsor OFF!® at Get Outdoors Georgia Day

The 7th annual National Get Outdoors Day, coordinated by the U.S. Forest Service and the American Recreation Coalition, was the largest one yet, with 171 official sites in 39 states and the District of Columbia. Tens of thousands of people came to enjoy traditional and non-traditional outdoor activities. The success of 2014's event would not have been possible without support from GO Day's National Sponsor OFF!®, as well as hundreds of partners at the state and local level.

Great Outdoors Month 2014 was capped off by the largest ever Great American Backyard Campout®, hosted by the National Wildlife Federation. Approximately 200,000 campers enjoyed sleeping under the stars at more than 12,000 locations across all 50 states.

A full report on Great Outdoors Month 2014 in pdf form, including links to video and information on National Fishing & Boating Week and National Marina Day, is available [here](#).

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NPHA BOARD AND LEADERS USE MONTHLY CALLS FOR UPDATES

NPHA Chairman Terry MacRae has kicked off monthly calls/webinars for board members, staff and invited guests as a way to share information and discuss key issues. Normally held on the last Thursday of the month, the sessions have allowed association leaders to plan upcoming meetings and establish priorities. On the July call, plans for collecting information from concessioners to support expansion of concessioner services to park visitors were finalized. This study is key to discussions with NPS and the Congress on how concessioners can serve 21st Century visitors – including those who need to be invited to our parks – while also helping supplement NPS funding and capabilities. During the call, association leaders also learned that NPS Deputy Director Christy Goldfuss has been asked to work with NPHA to improve cell and internet capability in parks and that DMOs – destination marketing organizations – are eager to work more closely with park concessioners to promote park visits and improve park visitor experiences. NPHA was recently invited to address Destination Marketing Association International (DMAI) delegates at its meeting in Las Vegas, along with NPS and National Parks Conservation Association representatives. To see a copy of NPHA's presentation to DMAI – a presentation which could be useful for your own gateway and regional DMOs – click [here](#).

NPHA members and allies are urged to submit information and suggestions for call discussions through either Derrick Crandall (dcrandall@funoutdoors.com) or Terry MacRae (tmacrae@hornblower.com).

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NPHA TO HOLD FALL MEETING IN D.C., OCTOBER 20-22, 2014

The 2014 NPHA Fall Meeting – *Supporting America’s National Parks for the Next 100 Years* – is scheduled for October 20-22 at the Georgetown University Hotel and Conference Center, located at 3800 Reservoir Road, NW, Washington, DC 20057. Our theme this year is **NPS Centennial: The Start of an Exciting New Century of Park Experiences**.

The meeting will officially begin on the evening of Monday, October 20, although a committee meeting is planned Monday afternoon to address the key topic of expanded and enhanced visitor services in national parks. We will take advantage of our meeting time in Washington for sessions with NPS and Department of the Interior officials, both on direct concessioner issues and on broader goals and programs including the Centennial. We will also meet with Congressional staff, other park organization leaders and with key travel and tourism leaders. An optional Wednesday field trip in the D.C. area is also planned.

Lodging is available at a special meeting rate for several days before and after the NPHA meeting. NPHA members and meeting participants are offered a special rate of \$189 single or double, plus taxes. Reservations must be made by September 29 and can be made by phone at (888) 902-1606. Please identify yourself as a member of the National Park Hospitality Association when booking to ensure that you receive the discounted rate.

For more information, including information on “Early Bird” registration, fees and displays, as well as access to the meeting schedule and registration form, please click [here](#) or call/email Ben Nasta at (202) 682-9530 or bnasta@funoutdoors.com.

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FEDERAL REPORTS ON VISITOR SPENDING IN GATEWAY COMMUNITIES

National park visitors contributed \$26.5 billion to the nation’s economy and supported almost 240,000 jobs in 2013, according to a peer-reviewed report released on July 18 by National Park Service Director Jonathan B. Jarvis.

“The big picture of national parks and their importance to the economy is clear,” Jarvis said. “Every tax dollar invested in the National Park Service returns \$10 to the U.S. economy because of visitor spending in gateway communities near the 401 parks of the National Park System.”

National park visitation for 2013 declined by 3.2 percent compared to 2012. According to the report, the 16-day government shutdown last October accounted for most of the decline. National parks in the Northeast, closed for Hurricane Sandy-related repairs, were the other significant brake on visitation.

Visitor spending for 2013 was down by 1 percent. The number of jobs supported by visitor spending was off by 2.1 percent, and the overall effect on the U.S. economy was 1 percent lower than the previous year due to adjustments for inflation.

Jarvis said visitation so far this year indicated a rebound from 2013 and he expects a steady increase as excitement grows in advance of the 2016 Centennial of the National Park Service.

The Federal Interagency Council on Outdoor Recreation (FICOR) also released a report on jobs and income at the lands managed by the council's seven member agencies for 2012. FICOR's report concluded that among the agencies, there were 938 million visitors who spent \$51 billion and supported 880,000 jobs in gateway communities.

The full National Park Service report can be found [here](#).

The FICOR report can be found [here](#).

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2014 NATIONAL PARK VISITATION TO DATE

The National Park Service reports monthly data on visits to each unit and systemwide. Data through June 2014 suggest that 2014 visitation may rise above 2013 to near-2012 levels. However, visits to park units which collect fees – including parks where most concessioners operate – reported a decline in visitation for the first six months of the year of over 3% and a decline of about 4.5% for June. To obtain the data, see [here](#).

National and park specific-reports can be generated from the website for overall recreation visits, concessioner lodging, concessioner camping, tent camping, RV camping and backcountry camping. For example, the report on concessioner lodging for the first half of 2014 shows a 6.7% growth over the comparable period of 2013.

The report on visits to fee-collecting parks through July, including visitation breakdowns for each NPS unit, can be seen [here](#).

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DELAWARE NORTH COMPANIES MAKES \$3+ MILLION COMMITMENT TO H.O.P.E. PROJECTS

Key park concessioner Delaware North Companies has announced plans to contribute more than \$3 million to Hands-On Preservation Experience (H.O.P.E.) programs in Shenandoah, Yellowstone, Kings Canyon and other parks over the next 18 months. The H.O.P.E. project is a joint undertaking of The Corps Network and the National Trust for Historic Preservation (NTHP).

The projects will be modeled after a very successful pilot program that took place in Shenandoah National Park, where a historic national park stable was rebuilt by eight urban youth employed by a conservation corps and mentored by restoration experts provided by NTHP, overseen by the National Park Service and paid for by Delaware North Companies. The project was completed at less cost, more rapidly than standard historic-restoration projects and with many serendipities, including skills training for and park exposure to the corps members.

The commitment was announced at a gathering in Gettysburg hosted by the Franklin Project of the Aspen Institute focusing on reconstituting the national service legacy of the Civilian Conservation Corps through the 21st Century Conservation Service Corps. NPHA and the National Trust are planning online and in-person sessions to help share the “how-to” information about H.O.P.E.

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ARAMARK CELEBRATES KIDS TO PARKS DAY

To celebrate the National Park Trust’s 4th annual *Kids to Parks Day*, ARAMARK hosted a free treasure hunt for kids at Mesa Verde National Park on Saturday, May 17. ARAMARK is a proud national sponsor of *Kids to Parks Day* and Mesa Verde’s park concessioner. Kids who came out to Mesa Verde were invited to take part in an outdoor, nature treasure hunt using clues provided by ARAMARK.

“America’s parks provide a perfect opportunity for families to connect with and explore nature and ARAMARK is committed to finding new, innovative ways to enrich these experiences through meaningful partnerships and fun, educational programs,” said ARAMARK Leisure Services President Bruce W. Fears.

Started in 2011, *Kids to Parks Day* is a national movement encouraging kids to get out and explore local, state and national parks and public lands to discover science, history and outdoor recreation opportunities.

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FLREA REVISIONS ADVANCE

The U.S. House of Representatives Natural Resources Committee on July 30 unanimously approved for floor action legislation on recreation fees that revises and extends the Federal Land Recreation Enhancement Act. The measure continues to authorize federal land managers to charge entrance fees, allow agencies to retain a large portion of fee revenues locally for services and facilities (now 90% versus 80% previously), and require more transparency in fee collection and use and would curtail new and increased fees for national forests and BLM-managed areas. Some issues remain in discussion, including cost and age limits for senior passes, how concessioners treat pass-related discounts and whether the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers will be included in the legislation. Some \$300 million in federal agency recreation program funding is at stake.

The House has conducted two hearings on recreation fees and has documented broad support for fee programs that are transparent and which support services and facilities linked to the fee sites. Study after study shows that visitors seek quality experiences. For example, a newly published study in the *Journal of Environmental Management* reported that Yellowstone visitors are willing to pay \$41 more in park entrance fees to ensure that bears are allowed to remain viewable along roads within the park. The researchers concluded that the economic benefits of

allowing this wildlife viewing opportunity to continue could outweigh the costs of using additional resources to effectively manage these traffic jams. The study is available [here](#).

Another action underway in the House is a one-year extension of the existing law as part of the Interior and Related Agencies appropriations measure for FY2015.

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BEACON AWARD RECIPIENTS USE NEW TECHNOLOGIES TO IMPROVE VISITOR EXPERIENCES AND RECREATION PROGRAM MANAGEMENT

Several outstanding initiatives using technology to improve visitor experiences and recreation program management were honored during Great Outdoors Month 2014 with Beacon Awards presented by the American Recreation Coalition.

Among the programs recognized were two initiatives involving the National Park Service as well as the Department of the Interior's Office of Digital Strategy, which has dramatically increased Interior's social media presence with use of Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and Tumblr.



#TakeOnPocono wins 2014 Beacon Award

#TakeOnPocono – a partnership project between the Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area and the Pocono Mountains Visitors Bureau – encourages people to take pictures at the Recreation Area and share them with the hashtag online. Tagged photos are automatically featured on the Pocono Mountains Visitors Bureau's website and each contributor becomes eligible to win weekly prizes and a grand prize.

The initiative has been a great success, and has been submitted for consideration to the 2016 National Park Service Centennial Planning Team as a sustainable initiative involving integration of social media technology, cost effective promotion, partnering with a nonprofit organization, intra-agency sharing and significant visitor engagement.

WNEP-TV, the local ABC affiliate for the Scranton-Wilkes-Barre market in Pennsylvania, featured the partnership between the Pocono Mountains Visitors Bureau and the National Park Service in its broadcasts on July 17. The full story and video can be found [here](#).

Also honored was the National Park Service's Law Enforcement Real-time Mapping project in the Mojave National Preserve. The program uses iPads and free ESRI software to better manage OHV use in and



NPS Law Enforcement Branch Chief Travis Poulson accepts award on behalf of Mojave National Preserve

around the 1.6 million acre preserve through enhanced mapping and geospatial locations. Using this new resource, rangers know their exact location, the ownership of the land and more, and can input data on incidents, all of which is accessible at headquarters and in the field in real time.

This use of off-the-shelf hardware and software has now been shared within NPS and with other agencies and is being adapted for use in other programs, including road maintenance, vandalism control at cultural sites, utility corridor management and more.

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NPS CENTENNIAL ACTIONS

The National Park Service and the National Park Foundation continue to work on plans for a major new Centennial Campaign, themed as FIND YOUR PARK, and a series of Centennial events, a handful of which will be deemed “signature” events – including the 2016 Tournament of Roses Parade. Centennial activities will rely on non-federal partners since costs are anticipated in the tens of millions of dollars. Enlisting these partners is prompting some new thinking by agency leaders, including a willingness to allow a modification of the traditional NPS arrowhead to be more widely used – somewhat parallel to the way the Olympic rings are used by sponsors and partners.

Centennial-related activities by other organizations are also being unveiled. The National Geographic Society, which was actively involved in the creation of the National Park Service in 1916, will devote a great deal of its magazine and broadcast focus to national parks beginning mid-2015. And Brand USA’s IMAX film honoring the Centennial will commence filming this summer, with the expected release in late 2015. The release will be accompanied with major promotion campaigns aimed at boosting visitation to the USA in key markets.

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REPORT ON THE STATE OF THE HISPANIC CONSUMER

An interesting, though not new, report offers insight on Hispanic consumers. The report – released in Q2 of 2012 – notes a number of important findings:

1. The Hispanic population is big business and is of growing economic importance;
2. Hispanics appear less interested in being assimilated into dominant U.S. lifestyles. They appear very committed to sustaining key cultural values and practices; and
3. Most Hispanics, even when English-language competent, prefer advertising and similar messages which are in Spanish.

The full report can be viewed as a pdf [here](#).

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FIRST ANNUAL CONFERENCE ON PRESERVATION AND STEWARDSHIP OF HISTORIC PLACES TO TAKE PLACE IN SEPTEMBER

Yellowstone National Park Lodges-Xanterra are sponsoring the first annual *Conference on Preservation and Stewardship of Historic Places*, set to take place in Yellowstone National Park on September 30 - October 2.

The conference is for those historic and rustic architecture practitioners who are looking to build new skills and network with professionals and craftsmen in the field. The conference will provide opportunities to learn and exchange ideas through demonstrations, classroom presentations, hands-on experiences and facilitated dialogue.

Presentations will cover topics such as: conducting annual inspections, assessing the condition of rustic buildings, choosing a qualified engineer and/or consultant and developing and implementing treatment and maintenance plans.

More information is available [here](#).

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KEY TRANSITIONS

Ben Erichsen – has left his current position as Chief of Commercial Services for the National Park Service, a job he began in June 2013. Ben has been a key link between NPS and concessioners, and NPHA looks forward to working closely with his successor. Former Commercial Services Chief Jo Pendry will fill his post temporarily.

Dean Reeder – is retiring this month from his current position as National Tourism Director for the National Park Service, a position he has held since June 2005. Dean was appointed to the position by former National Park Service Director Fran Mainella. Prior to coming to Washington, Dean spent 11 years as the head of the Division of Travel Development for the state of Utah.

Mike Reynolds – is now Associate Director for Workforce, Relevancy and Inclusion at the National Park Service. Mike is a 28-year NPS veteran, and comes to Washington from the Midwest Region, where he served as regional director since April 2011, managing 60 national parks that span 13 states and welcome more than 20 million visitors each year. In his new position, he oversees the Human Resources, Equal Opportunity, Youth, and Relevancy, Diversity & Inclusion programs affecting all employees of the National Park Service.

Mitt Romney – is now a travel blogger!! The 2012 Republican candidate for President took his wife and five (of 22) grandchildren ages 10 to 13 on a major swing through national parks, blogging and posting pictures on Medium as they traveled. The news media are using him as an example of surging interest in multi-generational travel – and of national parks at the forefront of destinations for these trips. For a more detailed report, see [here](#).

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DUES REMINDER

Regular and Associate Member payments for 2014 were due May 1. All Regular Members and most Associate Members have submitted their dues – THANKS! If you have questions, please contact Derrick Crandall (dcrandall@funoutdoors.com).

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MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIRMAN

I am delighted to serve as NPHA Chairman for 2014-15 and excited about the association's goals and programs.

We are all pleased with the increased effectiveness of our association in communicating with the National Park Service, the Congress and other key national park interests. There are many examples of NPHA's accomplishments in recent years. We meet regularly with NPS leaders during our meetings and have succeeded in convincing the agency that a decline in visitation to parks is dangerous and must be remedied with promotion and marketing. Concessioners are now invited into discussions about the 2016 NPS Centennial and about new financial models for the NPS. During our March 2014 meeting, Director Jon Jarvis announced plans to partially compensate concessioners affected by the October 2013 government shutdown and he and others pledged support for implementation of new visitor services.

First and foremost, we intend to be cheerleaders as Jon Jarvis moves to keep national parks relevant to 21st Century Americans. We will support the NPS Centennial Campaign and its Find Your Park theme, both through NPHA and by helping our members become involved. We will continue to press for expansion of visitor services – using Grey's Centennial Campaign findings that most younger and urban Americans simply don't know enough about what they would find to do were they to visit a national park unit. And we are now poised to press for NPS acceptance of contemporary business practices by concessioners – including on pricing, on marketing and on reservations practices.

This progress requires NPHA to be appropriately staffed and funded. Our dues structure and rate have been in place since 2008. Our scope of activities – from holding regional meetings with NPS officials to joining in park community national efforts like the 2012 America's Park Summit and the defining of new NPS supplementary revenue streams, from our support of the NPS Healthy Parks Healthy People initiative to our success in gaining Congressional understanding of the value of concessioners – has expanded. For this reason, the NPHA board acted in March to increase our dues by 10% for 2014 and to take steps to expand our membership and establish a new dues structure for 2015 and beyond.

Most members have responded immediately to the dues notice – thanks! If you have not yet sent in your dues yet, please do so now. And please help us add to our ranks – especially reaching out to businesses who qualify for Associate Member status and to businesses who are small concessioners and who operate under CUAs. Alex Klein will be leading our Membership Committee and would be delighted to work with you on member recruitment.

We have plenty of great opportunity ahead with the Centennial rapidly approaching and NPS leadership recognizing the effectiveness and leadership of the NPHA. We look forward to your continued support and participation.

***Terry MacRae, Chairman
National Park Hospitality Association***

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TIPS ON HOW TO STAY INFORMED:

Read the Federal Parks and Recreation newsletter, provided as a member service, at <http://parkpartners.org/Federal-Parks-and-Recreation-Newsletter.html> (password is “nphaonly”).

For information on upcoming prospectuses and other actions of the NPS Commercial Services Office, check regularly at <http://concessions.nps.gov/>
To reach an NPS employee, use the NPS locator at <http://www.nps.gov/directory/>

For reports on park unit visitation, current year and historic, as well as information on overnight stays, go to <https://irma.nps.gov/Stats>.

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