



November 2013 Newsletter

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MAKE PLANS NOW FOR THE NPHA ANNUAL MEETING IN MARCH 2014

Planning is well under way for NPHA's Annual Meeting, to be held March 16-19, 2014 in Washington, D.C. at the Hamilton Crowne Plaza Hotel. The theme for the meeting – ***Centennial on the Horizon – Preparing to Welcome More Park Visitors*** – will allow concessioners, NPS officials and others to focus on ways to make the 2016 Centennial successful in attracting new park visitors and serving them well. Topics for discussion will include: the encouragement and measurement of – and rewards for – concessioner excellence; enhanced 21st Century visitor services; the Centennial Campaign; enhancement of cell and WiFi access; an economic activity dashboard; and successful navigation of the NPS park planning process.

The meeting will begin on Sunday evening, March 16th, and will include sessions at the U.S. Department of the Interior and on Capitol Hill. The NPS Concessions Management Advisory Board is expected to meet in the Washington, D.C., area on one of the dates of the meeting, and NPHA has invited the CMAB to join in planning sessions which will assist both entities.

Room reservations must be made by February 18th and the deadline for “Early Bird” registration – a \$50 discount – is March 7th. More information is available [here](#).

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NPHA FALL MEETING FEATURES DYNAMIC, INFORMATIVE DISCUSSIONS

More than 50 NPHA members and special guests gathered in Washington, D.C. in late October for NPHA's Fall Meeting at the Georgetown University Hotel and Conference Center, operated by ARAMARK. Among the participants were key Members of Congress and NPS leaders. Topics addressed during the meeting included: the NPS Centennial Campaign, with presentations by members of the National Park Foundation and Grey New York team that is overseeing the campaign; preparation for changes in NPS operations during 2014 due to budget pressures; development of a blueprint for allowing concessioners to better serve 21st Century visitors to the National Parks ([see related story](#)); development of a new, concessioner-friendly Director's Order 21; and creation of a strategic plan for NPHA. The discussions with NPS officials were both candid and cordial, despite the serious difficulties associated with the federal shutdown earlier in the month, as all parties focused on finding ways to work together productively. The NPHA meeting was immediately followed by additional useful discussions during the all-day meeting of the NPS Concessions Management Advisory Board at the U.S. Department of the Interior.

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TOWN HALL EXPLORES EXPANDING VISITOR SERVICES IN NATIONAL PARKS

A featured part of the NPHA Fall Meeting was a national town hall hosted by U.S. Representative Raúl Grijalva (D-AZ). Congressman Grijalva serves as Ranking Member of the House Subcommittee overseeing the National Park Service. The Congressman set the stage for the session by noting that concessioners serve a large segment of all visitors to national park units – providing lodging and food, retail offerings like souvenirs and supplies, and transportation. He then invited concessioners to outline strategies for expanding and enhancing park experiences.

Bruce Fears, President of ARAMARK Parks and Destinations and a NPHA Vice Chairman, noted that expanding and revising visitor services in national parks is a decentralized, complex process. He compared the challenges in parks to traditional constraints at ski areas on national forests involving expansion of summer season recreation offerings, noting that recent Congressional action has specifically authorized new services under existing ski area permits.

The first presentation was by Chris Belland, the concessioner operating the Yankee Freedom high-speed ferry to Dry Tortugas National Park, who described proposals to increase the number of ferry passengers and enhance visitor experiences with glass-bottom boats and more. See his presentation [here](#).

Alex Klein of Grand Teton Lodge Company described three proposed visitor enhancements: bike rentals; a food truck; and park photos. See his presentation [here](#).

John Schoppmann of Forever Resorts outlined proposals for extending the season at the Grand Canyon's North Rim and offering a new rent-a-tent program in several parks in cooperation with The Coleman Company. See his presentation [here](#).

Terry MacRae of Hornblower Cruises outlined proposals to extend operating hours at Alcatraz Island and the Statue of Liberty, mitigate bottlenecks, and aid storytelling by adding food service in the prison cafeteria. His presentation can be viewed [here](#).

Other presentations were made by Jim Houser of Delaware North Parks and Resorts, Aaron Wodin-Schwartz of Brand USA, and Nancy Logan and Jamie Patten of The Student Conservation Association.

Click [here](#) for more information on the town hall.

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NPPC, NPS SIGN MEMORANDUM OF AGREEMENT

The National Park Service and the National Parks Promotion Council signed their long-awaited Memorandum of Agreement during the NPHA Fall Meeting. Sue Waldron, NPS Assistant Director for Communications, and Terry MacRae, NPPC Chairman, signed the document as NPHA members and guests watched and applauded. NPS and NPPC executed the Agreement to formalize and encourage joint activities to promote "visitation to the national parks both domestically – with particular focus on youth and underserved communities – and abroad." To achieve this common goal, NPS and NPPC agreed to take several specific actions: create a team of senior managers that will meet at least twice a year to oversee the implementation of the agreement; work collaboratively to promote visitation to national parks; analyze research on current and potential park visitors to understand perceptions of national parks; identify opportunities to change, enhance and expand those park perceptions through marketing and communication; develop a five-year marketing and communications strategy; prepare annual work plans to implement the strategy; and evaluate the strategy annually and update as needed.

The Agreement's initial term will be five years, followed by additional five-year extensions as approved by both groups.

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NORTHEAST REGIONAL SUMMIT SET FOR DECEMBER 9TH

A NPS/NPHA regional summit will be held with Northeast Regional Director Dennis Reidenbach and his team on December 9th in the Northeast Regional headquarters in Philadelphia. The agenda will cover a number of key topics: the October shutdown, including lessons learned, ongoing challenges and future

guidelines; funding expectations for FY14 and any operational implications; Centennial initiatives planned and/or possible in the region; and regional concessions activities.

In addition to Mr. Reidenbach, NPS participants will likely include: Deputy Regional Directors Mike Caldwell and Gay Vietzke; and Northeast Region Chief of Concessions Ethan McKinley. National Parks of New York Harbor Commissioner Joshua Laird has been invited.

A number of NPHA members have already confirmed their participation, including Acadia Corporation, Delaware North Companies, Evelyn Hill, Gettysburg Tours, and Hornblower Cruises. Other NPHA members are welcome, but are asked to notify NPHA Counselor Derrick Crandall (dcrandall@funoutdoors.com) of their attendance plans no later than noon on December 6th.

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SECRETARY SALLY JEWELL LAYS OUT VISION FOR DOI FUTURE

Secretary of the Interior Sally Jewell delivered a major speech on October 31, 2013, outlining her vision for the future of the U.S. Department of the Interior. Her [remarks](#) focused on initiatives related to conservation, balanced development of public land resources, and strengthened connections between young people and the nation's public lands.

She opened her remarks by addressing the shutdown of the federal government, which had ended mid-month. She described the shutdown's "most visible impact" as "the shuttering of our national parks, wildlife refuges and other public lands." She decried the economic losses suffered by businesses, including national park concessioners, and gateway communities dependent on public lands but also noted a "silver lining" to the shutdown's cloud: "The shutdown shined a spotlight on just how much Americans love and value their public lands and the people who serve them."

Secretary Jewell described President Obama's America's Great Outdoors initiative as an important part of his plan for a conservation legacy in recognition of the "moral obligation to the next generation to leave our land, water and wildlife better than we found it." She called for full funding of the Land and Water Conservation Fund, passage of a comprehensive public lands package conserving "our nation's most special lands and waters," and the encouragement of development "in the right ways and in the right places."

The Secretary also offered a plan for "engaging the next generation in understanding and stewarding our public lands." She expressed great concern that millions of young people have grown up with little connection to the natural world, a situation that she described as threatening the future stewardship of public lands. The plan to solve this problem, she explained, involves providing millions of young people with new opportunities for recreation, education, volunteerism, work and training. And

the goals are specific and ambitious: partnerships in 50 cities to provide outdoor recreation opportunities for more than 10 million young people by 2017; educational opportunities on public lands for at least 10 million K-12 students every year; volunteer engagement of one million young people on public lands by 2017; and 100,000 work and training opportunities for young people at federal land management agencies over the next four years. To reach these goals, the Secretary described her plan to prioritize budgets, build on successful programs, and leverage resources from partners like schools and communities. She also plans to raise \$20 million in partnership with corporate and nonprofit groups. “From my experience in the private sector, I know that there are many organizations and individuals that want to see our lands protected and the next generation engaged,” she said. “We will work together to make these goals a reality.”

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NATIONAL SERVICE PARTNERSHIP INITIATIVE MOVES FORWARD

In late November – on the 50th anniversary of the assassination of President John F. Kennedy – The Corps Network, the Partnership for the 21st Century Conservation Service Corps, and the Franklin Project at the Aspen Institute teamed up to host a private-sector working session to explore how public and private-sector partners can work together to protect and conserve the nation’s natural resources while providing opportunities for national service – and for the development of employment skills – to young people and veterans. NPHA Counselor Derrick Crandall attended and offered these observations afterwards:

“OK, I’ll ’fess up. I want to be part of a big idea that gets this nation back on course. And that is why I found today’s session with retired General Stan McChrystal, former Interior Secretary Dirk Kempthorne, former Corporation for National and Community Service CEO Harris Wofford and others so inspirational. McChrystal was passionate and cogent. He talked about his belief that being a citizen was much more than just voting and paying taxes. It was about taking an active part in supporting something much bigger: our nation. He talked about how military service was good for some, but that service was just as important teaching in inner cities or working on public lands. And he told us that we owed it to the four million Americans turning 18 each year to give them the chance to be part of something big, to buy into being an American citizen. He urged us to join in working on this big idea – a year of paid service to the nation open to all interested youth. He talked about the immediate tangible benefits that could be done for the nation – as the CCC crews did in the 1930’s – and about the even more important benefits that would accrue from Americans proudly joined in serving their nation.

You would have been proud of the energy in the room as top execs from Home Depot and Coke and ExxonMobil and more expressed support and

made offers. The park concessioners will be hiring 200-300 conservation corps members (probably 25% young vets) to work under the direction of skilled craftsmen on in-park historic preservation projects. The craftsmen, almost all now senior citizens, won't be doing the heavy parts of the job. They will be instructors. And the conservation corps members in many cases will acquire carpentry and masonry skills sorely needed to care for tens of thousands of historic, federally-owned buildings. And the senior representatives of the Obama Administration in attendance delivered an exciting message: a "big idea" about national service is a very strong candidate for a centerpiece role in the State of the Union Message in early 2014.

This nation needs leaders like Stan McChrystal and Dirk Kempthorne and Harris Wofford who know when to be political and partisan and when to call upon all Americans to be Americans."

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COALITION URGES TOP INTERIOR AND WHITE HOUSE OFFICIALS TO MAKE CENTENNIAL A FY15 BUDGET INITIATIVE

The National Parks Second Century Action Coalition has been meeting for several months to unify support around several key recommendations. The coalition involves conservation, tourism and other key interests and reflects the continued efforts of NPCA, NPHA and NPF to strengthen the partnership of national park supporters in advance of the 2016 NPS Centennial. Suggestions for legislation have been shared with key Hill offices, including the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee. In addition, the coalition is meeting with top Interior officials and leading White House officials urging the President to include both a request for additional funding and suggested park legislation in his State of the Union address and accompanying FY15 budget proposal. The combination of increased appropriations and new supplemental funding suggested by the coalition would increase park funding significantly. Improved and expanded visitor services is a key element in the request.

The lessons learned from the October shutdown are improving the odds for the White House to embrace a NPS Centennial proposal. The Center for American Progress (CAP) released a survey in mid-November which once again demonstrated broad and bipartisan public support for national parks, including funding of parks ([see related story](#)).

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NEW SURVEY HIGHLIGHTS SUPPORT FOR PARKS AND PUBLIC LANDS

Hart Research Associates conducted a survey for the Center for American Progress (CAP) in late October and early November to determine the public's view of

both the impact of the federal government shutdown on national parks and public lands and the value of investments in those resources. Their findings underscore the American people's support for national parks and public lands. They not only viewed the closure of these resources as a significant problem that hurt the economies of gateway communities but also broadly agreed that the shutdown had highlighted both the importance of parks and public lands and the need to avoid closures in the future. The survey also found that the public opposes additional cuts to funding for parks and public lands, supports funding for new parks and other outdoor recreation opportunities, and believes the reasons for such funding include the responsibility to protect parks and public lands as a legacy for future generations, not only for their beauty but also for their economic value to communities and businesses. To see the CAP study, click [here](#).

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FLREA EXTENDED FOR ONE YEAR

The Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act (FLREA), originally slated to expire in December 2014, was extended for one year by the U.S. Congress as part of the legislation ending the shutdown of the federal government. The legislation was signed by President Obama on October 17, 2013. FLREA authorizes the collection of entrance and recreation fees by most of the major federal recreation providers – and the retention of those fees to enhance recreation opportunities at managed sites – and generates approximately \$300 million in revenue for the federal land-management agencies. A broad coalition of recreation, conservation and tourism organizations – including NPS – sent a letter to Congressional leaders in late September, calling for FLREA's extension as “an essential step in producing sustainable, supplemental resources for federal land agencies to achieve long term stability and further our nation's economic, health and environmental well-being.” A copy of the coalition's letter can be found [here](#).

The one-year extension provides an important opportunity to develop revisions to FLREA that will enhance its revenue potential and reduce its costs, allowing it to provide better recreation resources and facilities. Among the ideas under consideration are: “dynamic” pricing to encourage more visitation during non-peak periods; re-evaluation of current pricing practices; electronic fee collection and other improvements to increase sales and reduce collection costs; improved means of public feedback and guidance; pilot projects to test new ideas; and development of “value-added” passes and other partnerships with recreation, conservation and tourism groups.

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PEOPLE IN THE NEWS

A number of key personnel changes are in the works. President Obama has announced the nomination of Rhea Suh to serve as Assistant Secretary of the Interior

for Fish and Wildlife and Parks, overseeing the National Park Service and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Ms. Suh has been Interior's Assistant Secretary for Policy, Management and Budget since May 2009, where, in addition to serving as the Department's Chief Financial Officer and Chief Human Capital Officer, she has worked on a number of key initiatives, including revitalization of the Land and Water Conservation Fund and youth engagement and employment through "Youth in the Great Outdoors."

NPS Director Jon Jarvis has named Sue Masica as the Intermountain Regional Director, where she will be responsible for leading 6,000 employees and overseeing 91 national park sites visited by more than 42 million people each year. Ms. Masica, who has 25 years of federal service and will move to her new post in January, is currently the Alaska Regional Director, a position she has held since 2008.

Dennis Reidenbach, Director of the NPS Northeast Regional Office since 2007, will be retiring near the end of the year. As Regional Director, Mr. Reidenbach has been responsible for a 13-state area that welcomes more than 55 million visitors each year and is home to a third of all NPS museum collections, a quarter of the agency's historic structures, almost half of the country's National Historic Landmarks, and more than half of the National Heritage Areas.

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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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For more information or to send questions/comments, please email

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