



## American Recreation Coalition

*Dedicated to the protection and enhancement of everyone's right  
to health and happiness through recreation.*

# NEWS

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### RECREATION LEADERS MEET WITH KEY NATIONAL OFFICIALS

Washington, D.C. (September 11, 2007) Recreation leaders from across the nation met with top Congressional and Administration officials in Washington to discuss key issues, including the National Park Service Centennial Challenge, a proposal for a new national recreation commission, Great Outdoors Month 2008, and recreation's important contributions to health, education and other public priorities.

The recreation leaders group was led by American Recreation Coalition Chairman Thom Dammrich (President, National Marine Manufacturers Association) and Recreation Roundtable Chairman Ron Boeddeker (Chairman, Transcontinental Properties, developer of Lake Las Vegas). Participants included: Gary Kiedaisch, CEO of The Coleman Company; Jeff Frehner, President of Pacific Cycle, the leading supplier of bicycles to the U.S. mass market; a trio of top national park concessioners – Joe Fassler of Glacier Park, Inc., Bruce Fears of ARAMARK and Gerry Gabrys of Guest Services Inc.; and more.

The recreation leaders met with: U.S. Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid (D-NV); U.S. Senator Lamar Alexander (R-TN), the senior Senator from Tennessee and Chairman of the President's Commission on Americans Outdoors; U.S. Secretary of the Interior Dirk Kempthorne; and U.S. Representatives Sam Farr (D-CA) and Jon Porter (R-NV), the Co-Chairs of the Congressional Travel and Tourism Caucus. Although a planned visit with U.S. Senator Byron Dorgan (D-ND) was interrupted by special meetings concerning Iraq, the group met with Senator Dorgan's key staff.

The prime catalyst for the Washington visits was legislation to create a National Park Service Centennial Challenge Fund, a plan to match \$1 billion in new federal funding over 10 years with at least an equal sum from the private sector, yielding \$2 billion for new projects and programs to dramatically improve national parks and park visitor experiences. The recreation leaders encouraged the Members of Congress to support this legislation and offered Secretary Kempthorne feedback from Capitol Hill. He advised the recreation community to unify their efforts and make their voices heard on Capitol Hill through constituent letters to Members of Congress.

Discussions with Senator Alexander focused on his call for the creation of a new national commission on Americans outdoors to collect ideas and information, to identify

## Recreation Leaders Meet With Key National Officials Add One

innovative programs at the local, state and federal levels that are protecting outdoor resources while delivering benefits to the nation, and to unify recreation and conservation interests. Joining the industry leader group for these discussions were representatives of the National Wildlife Federation, American Hiking Society, National Association of State Park Directors and National Recreation and Park Association. In addition to discussing commission topics and strategies, the group considered ways to use Great Outdoors Month 2008 to increase awareness of recreation's benefits among the nation's leaders and the public, including the possibility of adding a "Take Your Child Outdoors Day" during the month.

Senator Alexander demonstrated his passion for recreation and conservation issues. He noted that he had recently met with top medical industry officials and had been told that today's youth might well be the first generation to have a shorter natural life expectancy than their parents – because of diminished physical activity. He also said that although understanding of the key role played by America's Great Outdoors in combating health, education and economic ills has increased, actual usage of public lands and waters has lagged – and certainly has not kept pace with overall population growth. Moreover, as the group discussed, changes in technology and lifestyles – including the "nature deficit disorder" among children, recently described by author Richard Louv in *Last Child in the Woods* – require a new look at how active, healthy outdoor opportunities can remain an important part of the American lifestyle particularly appropriate. Senator Alexander invited the group to work together to rekindle America's passion for the Great Outdoors.

During their meeting with the recreation leaders, Travel and Tourism Caucus Co-chairs Farr and Porter expressed support for recreation community goals and welcomed innovative ideas and public/private partnerships to serve the needs of the American public outdoors. As they noted, the Caucus is also very interested in increasing awareness of the valuable economic consequences of recreation on public lands, including parks. Plans were made for a briefing on the NPS Centennial Initiative for Caucus members.

The recreation community is planning several additional steps to increase the visibility of recreation issues at the national level. On September 20, recreation leaders will gather for *Recreation and 2008: Making Our Issues Count* – a policy forum featuring Senator Alexander as the keynote speaker. In addition, several more "fly-ins" of diverse recreation industry officials are planned during the fall.

For more information and to register for the September 20 forum, go to: <http://www.funoutdoors.com/node/view/1927>

Note: The following key issue papers shared by the recreation leaders group with the Members of Congress are attached as a PDF:

[National Park Service Centennial Challenge Fund](#)

[New National Commission on Americans Outdoors](#)

[White House Action on Youth and the Outdoors](#)

[USACE Recreation Fees](#)

[Confirmation of Lyle Laverty as Assistant Secretary of the Interior for Fish and Wildlife and Parks](#)

[Great Outdoors Month 2008](#)

