

# REOPEN PARKS TO THE PEOPLE

October 3, 2013

The Honorable Barack Obama  
President  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW  
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

We are writing to help you understand the significant consequences arising from the federal shutdown and the closure of America's national parks. While we understand the intensity of feelings which prompted an inability of the Congress and the Administration to agree to even short-term funding of federal agencies including the National Park Service, we hope that you understand the real impact on millions of lives in addition to furloughed federal employees.

The National Park Service has announced that some 21,000 of its employees have been furloughed. But the impacts extend well beyond that. There are nearly 300 million visits to national parks each year. Park visitors depend upon some 25,000 concessioner employees and thousands of not-for-profit organization employees for lodging, food, supplies and souvenirs, transportation, education and interpretation. Some 20,000 youth work on federal lands each year through conservation corps, restoring habitat and maintaining trails and more. Gateway communities also serve these visitors - in many cases, concessioner operations are the largest source of tax revenues in these communities. All of this activity - and its economic and social benefits - has been halted by the government shutdown.

An estimated 700,000+ individual park experiences will now be denied every day. And it's not only the American people who will be turned away. Some 10% of all park visits are by international guests - whose spending helps the nation have a favorable balance of trade in tourism. Recent estimates are that one US job is created for every 35 inbound travelers to the USA. And national parks figure importantly in the National Strategy for Travel and Tourism, which has set a national goal of strengthening the U.S. economy by increasing the number of international visitors to 100 million by 2021. Reaching this goal will not be helped by disgruntled visitors here in the US now, denied access to parks, nor by the uncertainty being caused by the widespread publicity about US national parks being gated and closed.

This shutdown unfairly harms the American people and the businesses helping our economy to grow. It comes on the heels of significant budget reductions that have already limited opportunities for visitors, harmed the tourist economy, and strained park

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resources. The shutdown needs to be ended swiftly and a lesson learned. Please find a way to resolve issues on budgets and other national issues without imposing unjustified, unnecessary pain on the rest of the nation. We ask your help in making certain that the pain resulting from closures of and budget cuts for our parks and other public lands ends quickly.

Sincerely,

**America Outdoors Association**  
**American Hiking Society**  
**American Recreation Coalition**  
**American Society of Travel Agents**  
**Association of Partners for Public Lands**  
**Destination Marketing Association International**  
**National Park Hospitality Association**  
**National Parks Conservation Association**  
**National Tour Association**  
**Southeast Tourism Society**  
**The Corps Network**  
**US Travel Association**

cc: Hon. Sylvia Mathews Burwell, Director, Office of Management and Budget  
Hon. Sally Jewell, Secretary, U.S. Department of the Interior  
Hon. Jon Jarvis, Director, National Park Service