



September 2014 Newsletter

www.parkpartners.org

In This Issue:

- [2014 Fall Meeting Registration and Reservation Deadlines Approaching](#)
- [Concessioner Survey Shows Support for Increased Visitation, Enhanced Visitor Services](#)
- [NPS Centennial Campaign Moving Forward](#)
- [DMOs Can Reconnect Americans with the Outdoors and Boost Economies](#)
- [Healthy Parks Healthy People Congress to be Rescheduled](#)
- [NPHA Strategic Planning](#)
- [Spotlight on a New Associate Member](#)

FALL MEETING REGISTRATION AND RESERVATION DEADLINES APPROACHING

Deadlines for “Early Bird” registration and room reservations for the NPHA Fall Meeting are fast approaching. The deadline for “Early Bird” registration is September 26. To take advantage of discounted room rates, you must reserve a room by September 29.

The meeting – *Supporting America’s National Parks for the Next 100 Years* – will take place 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.

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.

[Return to top](#)

CONCESSIONER SURVEY SHOWS SUPPORT FOR INCREASED VISITATION, ENHANCED VISITOR SERVICES

NPHA members were recently asked to participate in a survey on the exciting potential offered by enhanced and expanded visitor services – in terms not only of greatly improved visitor experiences and but also substantially increased franchise fees generated for the national parks. The upbeat responses show wide areas of agreement among concessioners across the country regarding ways to enhance visitor services – *even when expanded visitation isn't possible* – and to work more productively with the National Park Service.

Concessioners expressed overwhelming support for enhanced visitor services in their parks for a variety of reasons, especially encouraging both first-time and repeat visitation and responding to trends in recreation, travel and tourism. Several concessioners also documented the financial impact expected from enhanced visitor services: significant increases in revenues – which also means more jobs – and in additional franchise fees paid to the NPS. A single concessioner estimated that he could generate \$15 million more in NPS franchise fees – and a net benefit to NPS of \$12 million – from new and enhanced services.

Concessioners were also confident that enhanced services would contribute to the quality of the overall visitor experience. Asked about market demand for a number of changes in management – in addition to enhanced services – concessioners expressed strongest support for increased visitation, during peak and off-peak periods and shoulder seasons. They also commented that, in general, park managers supported those objectives too, especially the marketing and outreach that were needed to make them a reality. Concessioners cited potential visitors' lack of awareness of parks, as well as their own inability to work cooperatively with other tourism interests, as significant barriers to increased visitation. On the other hand, dynamic pricing – the ability to adjust pricing to changes in demand and supply – received broad support as a strategy for increasing visitation.

The concessioners were also asked about providing new types of visitor services. The most popular involved the use of technology, including Wi-Fi and apps, along with camera classes. Educational and interpretive services, equipment rentals including bicycles and boats, and adventure activities also attracted significant interest.

In terms of working more effectively with the NPS, the concessioners were unanimous in their support for increased use of contemporary business practices and they saw very strong interest in those practices among park managers as well. Concessioners noted the same shared interest in long-term capital investments in visitor services.

The survey also asked NPHA members to comment on the upcoming Centennial. The concessioners offered mostly positive observations about the potential for greater public awareness of national parks, increases in park funding and visitation, enhanced visitor facilities, and heightened opportunities for business. Some respondents did express concern about the

current inability to welcome more peak-season visitors, the possible diversion of funds from out years, and the uncertain impact of the Centennial campaign, but, overall, the tone was very supportive. As one concessioner commented, “No concerns; [we] actually see it as a good thing for us. We need more visitors!”

The survey will be released at and become a central focus of the October 20-22, 2014, NPHA meeting in Washington, DC. NPHA Chairman Terry MacRae anticipates that the data will assist the work of the “Innovative Commercial Visitor Services” working group established by NPS in 2013.

[Return to top](#)

NPS CENTENNIAL CAMPAIGN MOVING FORWARD

The National Park Service Centennial Campaign is ramping up and more information is becoming available by the day.

The overall theme of the campaign remains “Find Your Park,” and there are a number of key subthemes. To highlight the diversity of the 401 national park units and the breadth of NPS programs, many of the ads/PSAs will combine a traditional park image with an urban image – such as natural stone arches and the Golden Gate Bridge or Giant Sequoias with the Lincoln Memorial. There is discussion underway about ways that concessioners and state tourism offices can tie into the campaign, as well as the social media creative, but those issues remain to be resolved.

Information is also available regarding use of the Centennial logo. M Style has been retained by the National Park Foundation to develop licensing agreements for use of the logo on apparel, cups, mugs and other items. Concessioners and other “park retail partners” will be able to use existing vendors but will need to pay a licensing fee of 4.25% on retail sales.



There is no announcement yet on the process of gaining approval to use the Centennial logo on cups, napkins, in brochures and other marketing materials or on vehicles and other property. In discussions about licensing, comments were generally positive but concessioners do want to be certain that outside-the-park competitors without franchise-fee obligations will have logo-use costs reflecting this disparity.

A response from NPHA is being drafted that will raise issues including: a cap on the 4.25% to encourage use on higher-cost items; a blanket waiver on price approvals for items not subject to market declarations; better definition of when the fee would be levied, and consideration of applying the fee at the concessioner purchase price; and treatment of carry-over goods after 2016.

[Return to top](#)

DMOs CAN RECONNECT AMERICANS WITH THE OUTDOORS AND BOOST ECONOMIES

Destination Marketing Organizations (DMOs) play an integral part in building awareness of enjoyable experiences in the Great Outdoors, and we now see that many DMOs are active in tourism development and operations as strategies to generate buzz, meet visitor expectations and leave visitors eager to return.

Several DMOs are already successfully partnering with public agencies to go beyond promotion and improve visitor experiences. Three outstanding examples of this mutually beneficial relationship are the Guam Visitors Bureau's effort to improve local services around the island and provide safer and more enjoyable activities for visitors, the Pocono Mountains Visitors Bureau's #TakeOnPocono social media campaign in partnership with the Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area and the Currituck County Travel and Tourism Commission's effort in North Carolina to use the county's occupancy tax to improve EMS services, sponsor festivals and more. All of these services attract and retain vacationers and boost revenues, in the case of Guam to the tune of more than \$10 million in new occupancy tax collections!

Most public agencies managing Great Outdoors places depend upon annual appropriations and have been forced to reduce services. Even though the basic attractions remain, the numbers of rangers and interpreters are down and visitor center hours and programs have been cut. These changes can disappoint visitors. DMOs can be and – in a growing number of places are – an important partner in forging a new financial model for sustained, high-quality visitor experiences.

To read, comment on and share an NPHA blog posted on Destination Marketing Association International's (DMAI) website detailing these examples, click [here](#).

To help encourage these partnerships, NPHA Counselor Derrick Crandall appeared at DMAI's Annual Convention in Las Vegas this July, presenting 10 reasons why gateway DMOs should be more active on issues related to parks and other outdoor places – including budget influences, healthy lifestyles and more. The presentation was very well received and will lead to further engagement with gateway DMOs.

A copy of the presentation is available [here](#).

[Return to top](#)

HEALTHY PARKS HEALTHY PEOPLE CONGRESS TO BE RESCHEDULED

According to the National Park Service, the Healthy Parks Healthy People Congress that was planned for July 2015 in Atlanta, Georgia is currently being rescheduled. The Park Service says the Congress will be held in 2015, and the exact dates will be forthcoming. The new location is the Washington, DC metropolitan area.

[Return to top](#)

NPHA STRATEGIC PLANNING

Through committees looking at dues and membership and services and monthly calls, NPHA leaders are crafting a strategy for the next five years. NPHA Chairman Terry MacRae will provide an overview of the strategy in opening remarks at the NPHA meeting in October.

Key to the plan is the role NPHA and its members will play in the future of America's parks. The NPS Centennial is serving as a catalyst for efforts to boost visitation after decades of stagnation and a loss of relevance to the fastest growing segments of the American population. NPS Director Jon Jarvis appeared recently before the National Association of State Park Directors. A news account of his remarks said:

National Park Service Director Jon Jarvis said Wednesday in Omaha that he is concerned that not enough Americans understand and appreciate the value of the treasured landscapes and cultural landmarks. But an effort is planned to try to change that.

The Park Service and state parks across the country are poised to launch promotional campaigns next year to reintroduce an American idea to a new generation — that the most special places in the nation should be preserved, not for royalty or the rich, but for everyone.

Starting next spring, a “Find Your Park” marketing campaign, financed by private philanthropy, will invite young Americans in an increasingly urbanized country to rediscover what their parents and grandparents knew: The nation’s parks are treasures important to shaping new generations of Americans.

But more than an invitation will be needed. Visitors will need services that concessioners have long provided – and additional services they now receive at other destinations. Providing better and better featured campsites and lodging, interactive story-telling, nutritious and fun meals, better transportation options – these are roles for concessioners in the second century of the NPS.

The NPHA strategy will also address the role of association training and certification efforts, including cooperative efforts with NPS and others active in national park units including nonprofit organizations.

NPHA is also launching an assessment of the 1998 legislation revising the NPS concessions program, addressing both the statute and its implementation.

NPHA members will be invited to respond to the overview and help shape NPHA goals and programs at the meeting.

[Return to top](#)

SPOTLIGHT ON A NEW ASSOCIATE MEMBER

Thompson & Little Food Service Equipment & Design is honored to be joining the National Park Hospitality Association. With 68 years in business, Thompson & Little specializes in food-service equipment and supply-order fulfillment, as well as kitchen design and layout services. The company provides delivery and installation services and manufactures custom stainless steel fabrication as well in their NSF certified manufacturing facility.

Thompson & Little was named the “2014 Top Achiever: Dealer” by FE&S Magazine this year. In recent years, the food service dealership was awarded the SEFA Breakthrough Dealer award, and earned a GSA Certification with the federal government as well. A WBE-certified woman-owned business, Thompson & Little’s headquarters resides in North Carolina, but they service the entire nation, either through their own installation service centers or via drop-ship orders to their clients.

Andrew O’Quinn, Thompson & Little’s Vice President, will be attending the annual NPHA meeting in October and hopes to meet many of our members while in attendance. Thompson & Little can be contacted at (910) 484-1128, or by visiting their website at www.ThompsonLittle.com for more information.

[Return to top](#)

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>.

[Return to Top](#)