

NEWS



Contact: *Derrick Crandall 202-682-9530*
dcrandall@funoutdoors.com

Date: **August 7, 2012**

New Poll of 2012 Likely Voters Finds Unity in Support for National Parks

Washington, D.C. – According to a new public opinion poll commissioned by the National Park Hospitality Association (NPHA) and the National Parks Conservation Association (NPCA), national parks are cherished by an overwhelming 95 percent of likely voters who want the federal government to ensure the parks are both protected and available for enjoyment.

The new poll finds that more than 80 percent of those likely to vote in 2012 have visited a national park at some point in their lives, and nearly nine in 10 say they are interested in visiting a park in the future, and 60% want to stay overnight in a park lodge. National parks are viewed as embodying the American experience, and voters want to see them enjoyed, honored, cherished, and cared for, not left to crumble into disrepair.

“From the Everglades to Gettysburg and Yellowstone, our national parks are American icons and inspire visitors from across the world, supporting urban and rural economies nationwide,” said Tom Kiernan, president of the National Parks Conservation Association. “This poll is a clear indication that voters want to see them preserved and protected for the future.”

National parks are a top tourist draw but are a very small part of the federal budget -- less than 1/13th of one percent. Yet they support \$31 billion in private-sector spending and 258,000 jobs each year. Nearly nine in 10 voters see national parks as an important and appropriate federal responsibility. And even in these challenging fiscal times, very few voters from either side of the political aisle say the federal government should be cutting back on funding for national parks.

“The American people understand that national parks are gifts from the past to treasure today and bequeath to future generations of Americans,” said Derrick Crandall, counselor for the National Park Hospitality Association. “Our nation’s leaders – regardless of party – can’t allow differences on other issues to obscure the unifying force of our national parks.”

The poll of likely voters indicates that they associate national parks with key priorities and American values. Nearly 90 percent of voters think that candidates who prioritize national parks are seen as caring about the environment, protecting our heritage for the future, patriotic, and a good steward of our nation’s resources. And as the National Park Service approaches its centennial in 2016, a majority of likely voters (77 percent) say it is important for the next president to ensure that parks are fully restored and ready to serve and be relevant to future generations in their second century.

Survey of 2012 Likely Voters on National Parks Add One

National parks are highly valued by voters, who see them as home to some of the most majestic, beautiful, and awe-inspiring places in the world and also as great places where people can have fun, be physically active, and enjoy themselves. Yet few voters (6 percent) think national parks are in good shape today, while many more (80 percent) express concern that funding shortages are damaging national parks and marring visitors' park experiences. Even in these difficult fiscal circumstances, very few voters say the federal government should be cutting back on funding for national parks. And they support park fees: eight in 10 likely voters describe the \$80 annual America the Beautiful pass as a good value and one in three describe it as a bargain.

The new poll offers important information as the Administration and Congress consider additional cuts to national parks through the annual appropriations process and the looming across-the-board cut known as "sequestration," scheduled for January 2013. The National Park Service could face cuts of as much as 10 percent that would reduce seasonal park rangers and potentially close visitor centers, campgrounds and even some entire national park sites.

The survey was conducted by Hart Research Associates and North Star Opinion Research from June 12-17, 2012, among a national sample of 1,004 registered voters. To view the poll, see www.parkpartners.org. The survey results are being shared with National Park Service leaders as well as candidates for office in November 2012.

###

Since 1919, the National Parks Conservation Association (NPCA) has been an independent, nonpartisan organization working to address the major threats to America's national parks and the resources they contain. As the only nonprofit, membership organization dedicated solely to preserving and enhancing national parks, NPCA and its more than 600,000 members and supporters advocate on behalf of the national parks. www.npca.org.

The National Park Hospitality Association (NPHA) is the national trade association of the businesses that provide lodging, food services, gifts and souvenirs, equipment rentals, transportation and other visitor services in the National Park System. Concessioners have served park visitors since the 1870's. NPHA members have a combined workforce of nearly 25,000 persons - mostly front-line, visitor-contact jobs - and provide in excess of \$1.1 billion in goods and services to visitors annually. NPHA members operate in more than 100 park units and generate more than \$100 million annually for the National Park Service budget. Guest Donation Programs operated by concessioners have provided millions of dollars for park projects and programs. www.parkpartners.org.