



March 17, 2020

The Honorable Donald Trump
President of the United States of America
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

The National Park Hospitality Association (NPHA) represents businesses providing necessary and appropriate visitor services in our national parks. We operate in more than 100 park units under more than 500 contracts with the federal government, providing lodging and food service, transportation and various retail outlets, services ranging from river trips to climbing expeditions and more. We serve about one third of all visitors to the national parks. Last year, we provided an estimated \$1.8 billion in goods and services and, through various fees, contributed about \$150 million to the budget of the National Park Service. Concessioners in parks date back to the 1800s, predating the creation of the National Park Service in 1916. Our passion for parks is proven daily in the work of our 25,000 staff members and through our major investments in park infrastructure. Most of the lodging and other facilities we use for our operations were built with private sector investments, not appropriations. And each year, we invest in excess of \$100 million in major repairs and improvements to those facilities. We normally serve many international visitors, contributing substantially to our nation's exports.

National park concessioners are facing severe economic trauma from the coronavirus. Most of our operations are already shut down, and the likelihood of closure is high for many of the remaining operations, many of which are seasonal and being readied for opening. We believe the closures will cause a dramatic drop in visits and that visitor spending at our locations will decline by 75% or more this year. In fact, some of our operations will likely see a total loss of revenues.

The impact on the park concessions industry reflects the general trauma facing the nation's key travel industry but in fact we may be one of the most impacted facets of that industry.

Concessioners include US-based leaders in the hospitality field as well as hundreds of small businesses, many of whom are multi-generational providers of visitor services to park visitors. We need help. In addition to overall assistance outlined by the US Travel Association, we request these specific actions to allow our members to survive and play an important role in the economic recovery post-pandemic:

- 1) A waiver of franchise fees for operations in national parks for a period of one to two years, pending an assessment of the impact on our businesses through year end. Franchise fees range from 3 to 35% of our revenues but are a critical part of operational cash flows during this period. Forgiving franchise fees will allow us to retain staff enabling us to recover when the coronavirus pandemic ends;

- 2) An extension of all current contracts and contract terms for two years, to allow concessioners to recover at least a portion of the profits specified in the legislation establishing the National Park Service concessions program;
- 3) Allows use of entrance fees and other recreation fees collected by the agencies including the National Park Service, the Forest Service and the US Fish and Wildlife Service to rebuild visitation post-pandemic via information programs done in partnership with state agencies promoting visits to the shared legacy of our parks and wildlife refuges and forests and waters and encouraging purchase of the America the Beautiful Pass and park-specific annual passes. This would not change retention of 80% of collected fees by park units for uses at the unit's discretion; and
- 4) Supplemental appropriations to the National Park Service to mitigate the loss of franchise fees.

We look forward to meeting with those in the Administration tasked with rebuilding our economy after the impact of COVID-19. We are fortunate that America's Great Outdoors, and especially its national parks, will remain a cherished target for visits, and will be immediately available to contribute to reinvigorating the nation's economic vitality and spirit.

Sincerely,



Scott Socha

Chairman

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