

U.S. TRAVEL ASSOCIATION*

Kurt Rausch

Chief of Commercial Services Program
National Park Service
1849 C Street NW, Mail Stop 2410
Washington DC 20240

September 16, 2020

Dear Mr. Rausch,

This submission responds to the request for comments on the Notice of Proposed Rule: “Commercial Visitor Services; Concession Contracts” 36 CFR part 51; NPS-2020-0003; Regulation Identifier Number 1024-AE57.

The U.S. Travel Association is the only association that represents all sectors of the travel industry—hotels, airports, state and local tourism offices, car rental companies, theme parks and attractions, and many others. With such a diverse membership, our association has a focused mission: to increase travel to and within the United States. In 2019, the U.S. travel industry generated \$2.6 trillion in economic output, supported 15.8 million American jobs and generated a \$59 billion trade surplus for the United States.

In 2019, 327 million visitors to our national parks spent \$21 billion, generating \$41.7 billion in total economic output. The 340,500 jobs supported by park visitation include park personnel, local hospitality workers and concessionaires. Specifically, spending by park visitors with concessionaires exceed \$1.6 billion annually and provide funding for vital infrastructure, maintenance and operations. Additionally, concessionaires contribute about \$150 million annually in direct payments to the National Park Service (NPS).

U.S. Travel supports the proposed rule, and we further support the recommendations of the National Park Hospitality Association in its comments on the proposed rule.

The proposed rule is a much-needed update of regulations last revised 20 years ago. These updates will allow greater collaboration between the NPS and concessionaire partners to invest and update parks infrastructure, provide a greater visitor experience, and strike a balance between conservation and access to America’s expansive collection of public lands. These updated regulations are necessary to provide visitors, 35% of which come from overseas, the access, services and accommodations they expect, without undue burden on the natural environments. National parks across the country need modernization—from better broadband connectivity to in-park services at campgrounds—and the proposed rule will facilitate contemporary management practices designed to benefit visitors’ experience while protecting park resources.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment. We look forward to continuing our productive relationship with the National Park Service.

Sincerely,



Tori Emerson Barnes
Executive Vice President
Public Affairs and Policy