



NATIONAL PARKS FOR A NEW CENTURY: STATEMENT OF JOINT PRINCIPLES

PURPOSE

America's national parks include some of the most beautiful, majestic and awe-inspiring places on Earth as well as places commemorating momentous elements of our culture and history. Our parks embody American values, our national heritage, and our continuing story. The centennial of the National Park Service in 2016 provides an exceptional opportunity for national leaders to partner with the American people in restoring, celebrating and visiting our parks and readying the Park Service to serve our children and grandchildren through the next century. This document outlines the core principles shared by the national parks community in support of America's national parks and their owners, the American people. These principles demonstrate broad support for strong national parks and National Park Service programs and progress through advocacy, service, philanthropy and partnerships. National Parks and National Park Service programs are both important to our common heritage. These Principles apply equally to parks and to programs of the National Park Service as it enters its second century. They are the basis for a Centennial Agenda to guide action by our political leaders, philanthropists, and park supporters, as we approach the National Park Service's second century.

JUSTIFICATION

National Parks Create Memories and Honor Our Heritage, History and Cultural Diversity: For many, visits to national parks and other nationally significant places are the experience of a lifetime. Our most special places provide all Americans and our guests from other nations the opportunity, with families and friends, to build lasting memories, to appreciate America's tremendous history, to explore nature, and to celebrate and learn about our diverse culture.

National Parks Are Economic Engines: By attracting visitors from all over the world and supporting businesses that boost local economies, national parks provide billions of dollars in economic benefits, as the ideal marriage of conservation and tourism. National parks are strong investments in our urban and rural economies, producing a minimum of \$4 in benefit for every \$1 invested. National parks and programs including national landmarks and historic tax credits sustain businesses and inspire capital investments that help drive economic vibrancy and stability for communities, states and regions. Early career employment in parks has shaped millions of lives and created lasting benefits. And as guardians of our heritage, they are priceless.

Preserving Nature Today Requires New Strategies: National parks have long played a vital role in protecting our natural wonders. Today, fish and wildlife in our parks face outside threats that were unforeseen a century ago, jeopardizing the long-term survival of our park wildlife resources. These threats demand solutions that are large in scope. They require creative partnerships, the restoration of degraded resources, and policies that create connections to protect habitat and migration routes, and safeguard the air and water of our national parks.



National Park Service Programs Offer Benefits to Every Corner of Our Nation: Every community can benefit from National Park Service programs, even if it contains no national park unit. National Park Service programs help local communities with conservation and revitalization efforts, leverage billions of dollars in local preservation efforts, help preserve Native American heritage, and enhance outdoor recreation opportunities for millions of Americans.

The Educational Power of National Parks Is Largely Untapped: National park units, from Independence Hall to Manzanar to Yellowstone, and from the Statue of Liberty to Thomas Edison's Laboratory, can serve as outstanding centers of active learning for all ages. Our nation would greatly benefit by better capitalizing on our national treasures as hands-on classrooms for teaching the next generation about science, math, civics, literature and American history. Technology can help bring these lessons to a wide and diverse audience, no matter where they live.

Parks Produce Healthy Communities and Recreational Opportunities: Connecting communities—urban and rural—to national parks and other protected lands, trails, waterways, and community green spaces, gives people access to fun, healthy, inspirational outdoor experiences that add to quality of life and produce physical and mental health benefits. National Park Service programs can help communities achieve these connections.

National Parks Are America's Storybook: Whether it is the chronicling of our richest historical moments or the preservation of our greatest natural landscapes, America's national parks, trails, historic landmarks, and heritage areas contain the chapters of our history and culture. Our forebears have enabled us to preserve, conserve and protect these treasures and to build upon them, so that the full fabric of America's diverse story is represented accurately, for present and future generations.

Excellence in Park Management Builds Value: Our National Parks and their related programs are highly successful at serving the American people, particularly where the National Park Service has the ability, training, and resources to encourage innovation, collaboration, and entrepreneurship.

JOINT PRINCIPLES

Together, we call on America's leaders to unite around a Centennial Agenda that engages the American people in an active partnership to protect and revitalize our national parks, and encourages them to take advantage of the many opportunities our parks and National Park Service programs present. This Centennial Agenda should adhere to the following principles:

- 1. Keep America's Promise to Our Children:** We borrow national parks from our children. As we enjoy today's opportunities to experience our national parks and heritage, we must also restore, preserve, and protect the parks' air, water, animal and plant life, as well as cultural and historic landscapes, so future generations can experience them as we do.
- 2. Protect and Cherish Our Heritage:** The National Park Service should have adequate resources to serve the American people, through basic federal funding, philanthropic giving, visitor support, and innovative partnerships. National parks and our heritage should be honored, cherished and cared for, so they may exist for future generations to enjoy.
- 3. Promote Powerful Partnerships:** Our national parks and Park Service programs depend on powerful, diverse partnerships. Partnerships help achieve conservation goals, propel visitation, engage youth, preserve cultural heritage, and foster recreation, volunteerism and public service, healthy lifestyles, sustainable jobs and economic vitality. Support from partners and volunteers will thrive as long as there is a clear commitment to sustained federal support for national parks and programs.
- 4. Evolve with a Changing America:** The National Park System and its programs should continue to evolve and reflect the growing diversity of our nation, increasing urbanization, and conservation needs in our expanding national community. The National Park Service and its partners must also reflect this diversity in the faces they project and the creativity, innovation, and entrepreneurship they summon to preserve our collective heritage.
- 5. Enhancing our Quality of Life:** National parks and their programs help produce healthy minds and bodies. They should foster connections to communities through trails, waterways, and other means, facilitated by the National Park Service and partners. They should be used to teach us, through our visits and in America's classrooms, about our natural and cultural heritage, and be available for present and future generations to tap as a reservoir to enhance our enjoyment, health, and quality of life.
- 6. Deliver Lasting Memories:** Families and friends expect to enjoy memorable, outstanding visits to National Park Service sites. Educational and interpretive programs, lodging and food, trails and other recreation facilities should be exceptional, park-appropriate and responsive to visitor needs, and natural and cultural resources should be in the best possible condition. High quality park experiences should be affordable for all and accessible both physically and virtually.