

# THE ROLE OF PARTNERSHIPS IN NATIONAL PARKS

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## OVERSIGHT HEARING

BEFORE THE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON NATIONAL PARKS, FORESTS  
AND PUBLIC LANDS

OF THE

COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES  
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

ONE HUNDRED ELEVENTH CONGRESS

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## **OVERSIGHT HEARING ON “THE ROLE OF PARTNERSHIPS IN NATIONAL PARKS”**

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**Thursday, September 23, 2010**

**U.S. House of Representatives**

**Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests and Public Lands**

**Committee on Natural Resources**

**Washington, D.C.**

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The Subcommittee met, pursuant to call, at 10:02 a.m. in Room 1324, Longworth House Office Building, The Honorable Raúl M. Grijalva [Chairman of the Subcommittee] presiding.

Present: Representatives Grijalva, Holt, Christensen, Sarbanes, Bishop, and Shuster.

### **STATEMENT OF THE HONORABLE RAÚL M. GRIJALVA, A REPRESENTATIVE FROM THE STATE OF ARIZONA**

Mr. GRIJALVA. Thank you very much. Let me call the Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests and Public Lands to order, an oversight hearing on the role of partnerships in the national parks. I want to welcome and thank all our panelists for their time. Very much appreciate it.

Private philanthropy has played a vital role in sustaining and expanding the National Park System since its inception. In recent years as Federal funding levels have declined park managers have worked creatively and collaboratively to develop more and better public-private partnerships more than ever. The vast majority of these partnerships serve visitors and taxpayers very well. The new education center at Old Faithful was funded in part by the Yellowstone Park Foundation, and \$13 million in donations from private individuals.

On the West Coast, a nonprofit called NatureBridge introduces children from some of the poorest neighborhoods in Los Angeles to hiking and camping in nearby national parks. The National Park Foundation is providing essential funding for the Flight 93 memorial in Pennsylvania, and in my hometown of Tucson the Tohono O’odham Nation helped the National Park Service build portions of the Juan Bautista de Anza National Historic Trail.

These and many other partnerships are helping the National Park Service reach out to new audiences and serve the public in new ways, and we look forward to hearing from our witnesses today about some of those success stories.

It is important to note, however, that the private partnerships within the National Park System have developed on a case-by-case basis and have grown in size and scope without coherent system-wide standards and management practices in place. Last year I instructed the Government Accountability Office to study National Park Service management of these partnerships and report on how these important relationships can be improved. The study revealed a number of concerns and made specific recommendations on how to remedy these concerns.

Today's hearing is an important opportunity to discuss these and other issues with the agency and with some of the most successful park partners. We appreciate our witnesses. Again, thank you for being here. We look forward to their comments.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Grijalva follows:]

**Statement of The Honorable Raúl Grijalva, Chairman, Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests and Public Lands**

The Subcommittee will now come to order. Thank you.

Private philanthropy has played a vital role in sustaining and expanding the National Park System since its inception. In recent years, as federal funding levels have declined, park managers have worked creatively and collaboratively to develop more and better public/private partnerships than ever.

The vast majority of these partnerships serve visitors and tax payers well: the new education center at Old Faithful was funded in part by the Yellowstone Park Foundation and \$13 million in donations from private individuals; on the West Coast, a non-profit group called NatureBridge introduces children from some of the poorest neighborhoods in Los Angeles to hiking and camping in nearby national parks; the National Park Foundation is providing essential funding for the Flight 93 memorial in Pennsylvania; and in my hometown of Tucson, the Tohono O'odham Nation helped the National Park Service build portions of the Juan Bautista de Anza National Historic Trail.

These and many other partnerships are helping the National Park Service reach out to new audiences and serve the public in new ways and we look forward to hearing from our witnesses today about some of these success stories.

It is important to note, however, that private partnerships within the National Park System have developed on a case-by-case basis and have grown in size and scope without coherent, system-wide, standards and management practices in law.

Last year, I instructed the Government Accountability Office to study National Park Service management of these partnerships and report on how these important relationships can be improved. The study revealed a number of concerns and made specific recommendations about how to remedy those concerns. Today's hearing is an important opportunity to discuss these and other issues with the agency and with some of the most successful park partners.

We appreciate our witnesses for participating in today's hearing and look forward to their comments.

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Mr. GRIJALVA. Any comments, Mr. Bishop?

Mr. BISHOP. Just a couple in very quick passing. I appreciate the Chairman's efforts to begin this dialogue by his request earlier on, and I look forward to hearing the testimony of those who have come here, both in written form as well as what they will say orally here today.

Mr. GRIJALVA. Thank you. Dr. Christensen, any comments?

Mrs. CHRISTENSEN. Not at this time.

Mr. GRIJALVA. Thank you. Let me now introduce Deputy Wenk from the National Park Service for his five minutes, and opportunity to answer some questions. Thank you, sir.

**STATEMENT OF DANIEL N. WENK, DEPUTY DIRECTOR,  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE  
INTERIOR**

Mr. WENK. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for the opportunity to appear before you today to discuss National Park Service partnerships.

Private philanthropy has played a major role in advancing the National Park Service. The park system benefitted from private contributions even before Congress created the National Park Service on August 25, 1916. Congress formally recognized the importance of private philanthropy to the parks in 1935 when it established the National Park Trust Fund Board to receive gifts for the benefit of the National Park Service and its activities.

Philanthropy is more than a source of land and money for the parks, it is the means of building and strengthening bonds between the parks and their advocates. While all taxpayers contribute to the parks, those who make additional voluntary contributions have a special interest in their welfare. The parks and the National Park Service benefit from their devotion as well as their dollars.

I will focus upon the steps we have taken to ensure the facilities constructed in national parks through partnerships and donations are economically sustainable and driven by National Park Service priorities, as well as our response to the recommendations made by the General Accounting Office in the 2009 review of our partnership efforts, and our collaboration with partners to reach new and younger audiences.

Congress has previously expressed concern about partner-funded projects that were not prioritized by the National Park Service but were included in our five-year line item construction program. The concern focused primarily on those projects where private fundraising was unsuccessful and partners subsequently pursued Federal funds through the appropriation process. Congress also noted its concern about projects that resulted in new operations and maintenance costs.

Internally, the National Park Service had similar concerns, and in response we developed the Partnership Construction Process for the review, approval, and management of capital projects involving public and private partners. This process ensures that new park facilities reflect National Park Service priorities, are appropriately scaled, and are financially and operationally sustainable. It includes multiple reviews at the regional and Washington levels, and ultimately requires the Director's approval for all projects valued \$1 million and greater.

Congressional consultation concurrence is required for projects \$5 million or greater. Projects requiring line item construction funds are included in the National Park Service five-year plan, and prioritized based on their readiness and service-wide priorities.

We have developed tools for use in determining the appropriate size of a new facility, and estimating the annual and cyclic operations and maintenance costs. Park partners are now required to develop business plans that describe how the partner intends to cover annual and long-term O&M costs. Overall, this process is resulting in more informed decisions about proposed projects and giv-

ing us the opportunity to modify the scope or scale of a project as needed in the early phases.

The Service highly values our partners' commitment, energy, and fundraising efforts. We encourage parks to develop partnerships and continually review our policies to make it easier to work with the private sector. We support partners who share our interest and goals while maintaining the integrity and accountability of the parks and the National Park Service. We maintain high standards for construction inside national parks, and we strive to apply our policies fairly and consistently.

Partner groups vary widely from small start-up friends groups to the large and experienced fundraising organization, so we have developed three templates. Friends groups fundraising in partner construction agreements reflects the level of partner activity in a park while providing consistency and streamlines the process. Improving the skills of the National Park Service managers is an ongoing effort. We use various methods, including web technologies, to reach a greater number of employees each year. Our training sessions regularly include partners as participants and trainers, allowing everyone the benefit of alternative perspective on the partnership program.

Finally, I am pleased to tell you how partners are helping the National Park Service reach new audiences, particularly young people. Parks across the country are developing long-term relationships with schools, nonprofits, and other organizations to provide young people with opportunities for community service, internships, employment and just plain fun. We are strengthening our ties to community organizations like the Boys and Girls Clubs, YMCAs, national groups like the Youth Conservation Corps, Public Land Corps, and the Student Conservation Association, and places strong emphasis on intercity youth who may not know about national parks or consider career opportunities with us.

For many young people, their first entry point to a national park is through curriculum-based education programs presented at their schools or at one of our park-based education centers or institutes. Partners often cover full and partial scholarships for low income and ethnically diverse students who otherwise could not participate.

Partnerships like these are making a difference. They enable the National Park Service to reach as never before hundreds of thousands of young people. Our partners are contributing not only funding for these programs but their valuable time, energy, and commitment to youth education, recreation and park stewardship.

Mr. Chairman, this concludes my prepared remarks. I would be happy to answer any questions you or other members of the Subcommittee may have.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Wenk follows:]

**Statement of Daniel N. Wenk, Deputy Director,  
National Park Service, Department of the Interior**

Mr. Chairman, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today to discuss National Park Service partnerships. My testimony will focus on three areas: 1) the continuing progress we are making to ensure facilities constructed in national parks through the combined efforts and resources of the National Park Service, partners, and donors are sustainable; 2) the improvements we have made to our



partnership program in response to recommendations from the Government Accountability Office and a 2009 Office of the Inspector General report on the Department of the Interior Challenge Cost Share programs; and 3) the work we are doing with partners to engage new and younger audiences.

Private philanthropy has played a major role in advancing the national parks and the National Park Service. The park system benefited from private contributions even before Congress created the National Park Service on August 25, 1916. Congress formally recognized the importance of private philanthropy to the National Park System in 1920 when it granted the Secretary legal authority to accept donations for the benefit of the national park and monument system, and in 1935 when it established the National Park Trust Fund Board to receive gifts for the benefit of the National Park Service, its activities, or its services. But philanthropy is more than a source of land and money for the parks. It is a means of building and strengthening bonds between the parks and their advocates. While all taxpayers contribute to the parks, those who make additional voluntary contributions will have a special interest in their welfare. The parks and the National Park Service benefit from their devotion as well as their dollars.

### **CONSTRUCTION**

Over the past several years, the National Park Service has taken a number of specific actions to better ensure that new park facilities reflect NPS priorities, are appropriately scaled, and are financially and operationally sustainable over the long-term. Previously, Congressional committees expressed concern about partner-funded projects that were not prioritized by the NPS nor included in our five-year, line-item construction program. The concern centered primarily on projects where private funds were promised, but where private fundraising was unsuccessful and partners subsequently pursued federal funds through the appropriations process. Congress has also noted its concern about projects that result in new operations and maintenance costs.

In response to the above concerns, the NPS developed a "Partnership Construction Process" governing the review, approval, and management of capital projects that involve either public or private partnerships. Evidence that this process has been followed is required to secure the NPS Director's approval for any partner funded construction project. The Partnership Construction Process combines our standard review of all construction projects valued at \$500,000 or greater with our fundraising approval process.

Pursuant to the NPS Partnership Construction Process, projects are reviewed by the NPS Development Advisory Board and the Department's Investment Review Board, and are evaluated for compliance with park planning documents. Additionally, partners are required to have fundraising plans, feasibility studies and fundraising agreements in place prior to the launch of a fundraising effort. Those projects requiring funds from the NPS line-item construction budget must be included in the NPS five year plan and prioritized, based on the project's readiness to proceed and service-wide priorities. The Director's approval is required for construction projects costing \$1 million or greater, and congressional consultation and concurrence is required for projects costing \$5 million or greater.

The Partnership Construction Process is designed to ensure that proposed projects meet NPS needs, that facilities are sized and scaled appropriately, and that they are financially sustainable. These issues are considered in the early phase of project consideration and are documented in a Memorandum of Intent between a park and its partner. The Memorandum of Intent (MOI) describes (1) the park's need for the project, (2) the legal authority to carry out the project, (3) the park's and partner's respective capabilities and readiness to take on the project, (4) their roles in the operations of the facility, and (5) how the facilities will be sustained, e.g., through an endowment, fees for services, or other revenue-generating activities. Park superintendents submit these memoranda to their Regional Directors as the first step in gaining regional and Washington-level review and approval for projects. Regional Directors assess whether the project and both partners are ready to move forward. This assessment is based on the documented experience of the partner in raising funds for, as well as constructing or implementing, a project of the size and scope discussed in the MOI. The Regional Director also evaluates the ability and experience of the park staff in managing a project of the scope and scale proposed.

Projects are further reviewed at the concept and schematic design phases by the Department's Investment Review Board and the NPS' Development Advisory Board. At the concept phase, board members review the park's projected operations and maintenance costs for proposed facilities. The boards are placing greater emphasis on project sustainability. Specifically, board members focus on the potential impacts to park operations and budgets and on the partner's ability to cover all or a portion

of the operations and maintenance costs. This emphasis is in NPS's interest, and it responds to recommendations by the Office of the Inspector General and the Government Accountability Office in their respective 2007 and 2009 reports.

The NPS's Denver Service Center, which manages most large NPS construction projects, has developed tools for parks to use in determining the appropriate size of a new facility (Visitor Facility Model) and for estimating annual and cyclic operations and maintenance costs (Operations and Maintenance (O&M) calculator). Partners will now be required to develop a Business Plan that describes how annual and long-term O&M costs will be covered. This requirement addresses a recommendation of the GAO report discussed below. The NPS currently assesses Business Plans using in-house expertise within our concessions and budget offices. NPS may also obtain the services of business consultants for such evaluations.

NPS's Partnership Construction Process is resulting in more informed decisions about proposed projects and provides NPS with the opportunity to modify the scope or scale of proposed projects in early phases of project planning. For example, the Partnership Construction Process resulted in revisions to the scope and associated cost of projects at Mesa Verde National Park, the Flight 93 National Memorial, and the Yellowstone National Park visitor center.

The NPS recognizes the need to have a clear understanding, both with partners and within the agency, regarding the total cost of a project and about funding assumptions. Furthermore, project proposals predicated on approaching Congress for earmarked funds that are not included in the NPS budget, or on undetermined funding sources, are rejected. The following provision is inserted into partnership agreements and prohibits partners from lobbying Congress for funds for a project or program unless it is included in the President's budget submission to Congress:

LIMITATION ON LOBBYING. THE PARTNER WILL NOT UNDERTAKE ACTIVITIES, INCLUDING LOBBYING FOR PROPOSED PARTNER OR NPS PROJECTS OR PROGRAMS, THAT SEEK TO EITHER (1) ALTER THE APPROPRIATION OF FUNDS INCLUDED IN THE PRESIDENT'S BUDGET REQUEST TO CONGRESS FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR OR ANOTHER FEDERAL AGENCY THAT HOLDS FUNDS FOR THE SOLE BENEFIT OF THE NPS UNDER CONGRESSIONALLY AUTHORIZED PROGRAMS, INCLUDING THE FEDERAL LANDS HIGHWAY PROGRAM; OR (2) ALTER THE ALLOCATION OF SUCH APPROPRIATED FUNDS BY NPS OR ANOTHER FEDERAL AGENCY. NOTHING IN THIS PARAGRAPH IS INTENDED TO PRECLUDE THE PARTNER FROM APPLYING FOR AND OBTAINING A COMPETITIVE OR NON-COMPETITIVE GRANT OF FEDERAL FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE FROM A FEDERAL AGENCY, OR FROM UNDERTAKING OTHERWISE LAWFUL ACTIVITIES WITH RESPECT TO ANY PARTNER OR NPS ACTIVITY, PROJECT OR PROGRAM INCLUDED IN THE PRESIDENT'S BUDGET REQUEST TO CONGRESS. NOTHING IN THIS PARAGRAPH SHOULD BE CONSTRUED AS NPS REQUESTING, AUTHORIZING OR SUPPORTING ADVOCACY BY NON-FEDERAL ENTITIES BEFORE CONGRESS OR ANY OTHER GOVERNMENT OFFICIAL. EXCEPT AS PROVIDED HEREIN AND IN APPLICABLE LAWS, NOTHING IN THIS PARAGRAPH SHALL BE CONSTRUED TO CURTAIL THE PARTNER'S ABILITY TO INTERACT WITH ELECTED OFFICIALS.

#### **GAO REPORT**

In 2009, GAO completed a report on Donations and Partnerships.<sup>1</sup> The report contains seven recommendations for improvement of NPS management in these areas. The complete NPS response to these recommendations is contained in the report. Today, I would like to highlight three GAO recommendations and commensurate NPS responses that may be of special interest to the subcommittee in the context of this hearing.

GAO recommended that NPS's donations and fund-raising policies be appropriately tailored to address the level of risk to the agency. In response, NPS noted that it had revised Director's Order #21 (DO-21) in 2008 to simplify the approval and review process for construction and non-construction projects in national parks. Furthermore, NPS streamlined the partnership construction review and approval process from five phases to three and provided for Regional Director approval of fundraising efforts under \$5 million on the condition that no federal funds will be contributed to the project or program, thereby shifting the approval of projects posing less risk to the agency from the Director to the Regional Directors. Additional improvements to the NPS partnership program follow.

Partnership Agreement templates have been developed to reflect the level of risk of a project to the agency. For instance, agreements that authorize activities considered to be higher risk, such as the donation of facility designs and facility construc-

<sup>1</sup> GAO-09-386: "National Park Service: Donations and Related Partnerships Benefit Parks, But Management Refinements Could Better Target Risks and Enhance Accountability."

tion to NPS, include language to minimize the risk of these activities to the government. For example, the construction agreement includes very specific language on intellectual property ensuring that the United States has the appropriate rights to design and construction documents created in furtherance of the agreement and thereby reducing the risk of a conflict over the use of that material. In contrast, agreements addressing lower risk activities, such as those authorizing fundraising for design and construction that will be undertaken by NPS, contain provisions that appropriately address risks posed by fundraising activities.

GAO recommended that, to increase transparency and efficiency, the Department of the Interior's Office of the Solicitor work with the NPS to finalize draft model agreements related to donations and fundraising. Accordingly, we have worked with the Office of the Solicitor to finalize three model agreements (templates): a Friends Group Agreement, a Fundraising Agreement, and a Partnership Construction Agreement. These agreement templates are now being used by the parks and their partners. The templates may be modified to address comments provided by Friends Groups and as a result of NPS's experience in using them.

GAO recommended that NPS improve National Park Service employees' knowledge, skills, and experience about fundraising and partnerships with nonprofit organizations—and encourage employees to improve nonprofits' understanding of the National Park Service—through targeted training, resource allocation, recruiting, and promotion practices. NPS recognizes that professional development in partnerships is an ongoing need and we continue to expand training in this area. The NPS has a dedicated partnership training manager who facilitates national partnership training opportunities and forums annually, supports regional training efforts, and identifies ways to incorporate partnership training into broader curricula, such as the Superintendents Academy and Fundamentals courses. Our courses usually include partners as participants and trainers, so that we both benefit from learning about one another's cultures, missions, and the applicable laws and standards by which we operate.

In order to leverage limited resources, we “teach the teachers” by training regional partnership employees who deal directly with partnership issues in their respective regions, and we are developing a variety of training methods, including face-to-face training sessions. We are also beginning to use web technologies to reach a greater number of employees.

At all levels of the NPS, we recruit managers with partnership experience and we are requiring that many position descriptions include partnership-related knowledge, skills, and abilities.

Although these three GAO recommendations have been highlighted, we would like to note that in response to the GAO recommendation regarding Data Collection, NPS now has incorporated the “Annual Report of Operations and Aid to a Federal Land Management Agency” form and its related requirements into the model Friends Group Agreement. And, with respect to the GAO recommendation for the development of a strategic plan, the NPS continues to consider this recommendation, and intends to begin developing such a plan as early as late 2010. This plan will attempt to define the wide range of NPS partnerships. It likely will include the many ways the agency partners with nonprofits, government agencies and educational institutions along with recommendations on how to enhance the partnership process.

#### **CHALLENGE COST SHARE PROGRAM**

The purpose of the NPS Challenge Cost Share Program (CCSP) is to increase participation by qualified partners in the preservation and improvement of NPS natural, cultural, and recreational resources; in all authorized NPS programs and activities; and on national trails. NPS and partners work together on CCSP projects with mutually beneficial, shared outcomes. In 2008, the Office of the Inspector General (OIG) opened an evaluation of all DOI Challenge Cost Share (CCS) Programs including the NPS CCSP and released their evaluation report in September of 2009. The report was critical of aspects of all Departmental CCS programs, citing lack of transparency, documentation, and internal control reviews as issues. The report recommends that the Department's CCS programs require 1) CCS funding to be announced on Grants.gov; 2) partner commitment letters; 3) CCS awards to be reported in the Federal Assistance Award Data System; 4) accurate tracking of partner expenditures and in-kind contributions; 5) certifying agreements documenting that all agreed-to-tasks were performed and matching contributions provided; 6) return of unspent CCS funds for reallocation to other projects; 7) accurate reporting of the program's accomplishments, including federal/nonfederal matching ratio; and 8) periodic management control reviews. In response, the DOI Office of Acquisition

and Property Management issued a directive dated September 17, 2010 that addresses the eight recommendations.

The directive requires program compliance with existing Departmental guidance relating to cooperative agreement use, requirements, and reporting of awards in the Federal Assistance Awards Data System. The directive also requires greater partner accountability, outlines reporting requirements, and addresses performance measures and project monitoring. All bureaus, including the NPS are expected to revise their program guidance to align with the Departmental directive.

Prior to the issuance of the DOI directive, in FY 2010, NPS CCSP guidelines were revised and tightened to address OIG concerns. By June 2010, four of eight OIG recommendations were able to be closed out with the NPS Office of Financial Management. One recommendation was pending close-out. Three (relating to Grants.gov posting, Federal Assistance Awards Data System requirements, and management control reviews) have been addressed and are currently being reviewed by the NPS Office of Financial Management. The DOI directive will be sufficient to close-out the remaining OIG recommendations for the program.

### **SERVICEWIDE YOUTH PROGRAMS AND PARTNERSHIPS**

Much of our attention in the past five years has focused on the role of partners in funding bricks and mortar projects. We are pleased to have this opportunity to tell you about another facet of our partners' support, and that is the role partners have had in helping NPS engage new audiences – in particular, young people. A primary goal – and need – of our agency is to make national parks relevant to all Americans.

Our youth outreach and recruitment strategy is focused and specific. Park employees across the country are developing long-term relationships with universities, community colleges, high schools, technical schools, non-profit organizations, and national organizations like Outward Bound to provide children with opportunities for community service, internships, employment, learning, and just plain fun.

Many of our partnership programs focus on training and employing youth for environmental careers. These programs are designed to engage young people early, when they are just beginning to think about their career choices. There is a particular focus on inner-city children of color, who may not have known about or considered environmental career opportunities. In addition to mentoring and career development, these programs allow students to carry their experiences back to their families and communities, further broadening awareness of the NPS and the parks. Students continue in these programs throughout their high school career, providing interested students a link to future NPS jobs through the Student Temporary Employment Program (STEP) and the Student Career Experience Program (SCEP), and ultimately permanent positions. The results are that young people experience the national parks, and the parks become meaningful to their own lives. It also results in the NPS having a more diverse workforce, which brings new energy and new perspectives to our agency and positively influences our operational and management decisions.

We are able to provide these programs by strengthening our ties to community centers and organizations like Boys and Girls Clubs and YMCAs; as well as national organizations like the Greenworks USA Trust, Greening Youth Foundation, and the Student Conservation Association.

Young people participating in the Public Lands Corps and Youth Conservation Corps work with park staff to complete a variety of summer natural and cultural resource conservation projects. Their work experience includes the chance to explore career opportunities that have an emphasis on park and natural resource stewardship.

Paid internships in the field of interpretation and visitor services are offered during the summer to graduating high school seniors and freshman and sophomore college students in partnership with a host of non-profit youth organizations. Work experience gained through internships provides avenues for students to qualify for summer seasonal employment as GS-04 Park Rangers.

Many of our parks are collaborating with non-profit organizations to establish education and environmental institutes inside parks, which typically offer field, classroom, and laboratory environmental science education and overnight experiences in a park for students in grades K-12. For many young people, their first entry point to a park experience is through curriculum-based education programs presented at their schools or at one of our park-based education or environmental centers. Our partners often provide full and partial scholarships and therefore are able to attract and serve low-income and ethnically diverse students, who otherwise could not participate.

One of our newer programs, the “Let’s Move Outside” Junior Ranger program, encourages young people to enjoy the outdoors and be active and healthy. Park rangers provide programs, workbooks, and incentives to pursue a Junior Ranger badge. Young people who complete at least one physical activity in pursuit of their Junior Ranger badge receive a special sticker that designates them as a “Let’s Move Outside” Junior Ranger. It is a great way to learn and have fun in a park.

#### **PARK SPECIFIC YOUTH PROGRAMS AND PARTNERSHIPS**

The following programs are just a few notable examples of the many outstanding ways we are working with our partners to make national parks more accessible and meaningful to the younger generation, to new Americans, and to people who have rarely, if ever, experienced a National Park.

Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area is strategically partnering with non-profit and government agencies in youth employment, education and service-learning, volunteerism, and urban outreach. The park collaborates with the Los Angeles Conservation Corps and more than

30 education partners and public school districts in Los Angeles and Ventura Counties, to provide programs that engage approximately 50,000 urban youth annually with quality outdoor learning experiences. These programs help connect young people in cities to the outdoors and to principles of stewardship, while promoting civic responsibility and appreciation of our national heritage.

The Golden Gate National Park Conservancy’s I-YEL (Inspiring Young Emerging Leaders) Program is initiated, designed, and coordinated by young people, who receive support and training in planning and implementing projects that create positive change in their communities. Participants engage in many activities, such as teaching drop-in programs at the park’s environmental center, conducting outreach activities in communities, attending conferences, or creating their own community service project.

Also at Golden Gate National Recreation Area, the Linking Individuals to the Natural Community (LINC) Summer High School Program allows high school students to join a team that works on outdoor service-learning projects throughout the park, including trail work, plant propagation, and habitat restoration. In addition, students attend leadership workshops and take field trips to special park sites like Alcatraz and Muir Woods, and participate in a four-day camping and service trip to Yosemite.

The Tsongas Industrial History Center is a partnership of the Lowell National Historical Park and the University of Massachusetts’ Graduate School of Education, providing heritage education programs for 50,000 school children per year. The park provides the center physical space in its Boott Cotton Mills Museum building, the university takes the lead in grant-writing and fundraising to fund the exhibits, and both partners work jointly on curriculum, outreach and teaching. This effort won a National Parks Foundation Partnership Award as a model for effective heritage education.

Working with partners, Lowell’s Mogan Cultural Center hosts a series of programs each year, engage underserved populations and over three dozen ethnic communities, earlier generations of whom worked in the textile mills. Recently, the center, through exhibits, lectures, projects, performances, and other special events greatly expanded the Park’s interaction with newer immigrants from Brazil, Cambodia, Puerto Rico, Laos, and Sierra Leone.

Two programs of the Thompson Island Outward Bound Education Center, Green Corps and Island Ambassadors, provide employment for high school students at Boston Harbor Islands National Recreation Area, teach them job readiness skills, and engage them in hands-on stewardship in the park. This summer the Green Corps cleared trails and invasive plants from salt marsh areas on Thompson Island, prepared garden areas, and created compost bins. The Island Ambassadors cleared trails and campsites, and used the green waste to create artwork such as weaving and paper. They also assisted with monitoring marine invasive species, mapping invasive plants, and collecting GPS data for an on-going phenology<sup>2</sup> study.

Island Pass, sponsored by the Boston Harbor Islands Alliance, is dedicated to improving the accessibility of the islands for those who cannot afford to pay the regular public ferry fare. The Island Pass program focuses on bringing groups to the islands from the YMCA of Greater Boston, part of the national Y’s initiative to build “Healthier Youth and Healthier Communities.” The pass is providing approximately 5,000 people this year with free rides to the islands. The Island Pass program also

<sup>2</sup>The study of periodic biological phenomena, such as flowering, breeding, and migration, especially as related to climate. The American Heritage Dictionary.

provides NPS-guided, State-guided and self-guided tours to help Boston's underserved youth explore the islands.

**Conclusion**

Partnerships like these are making a difference. They enable the National Park Service to engage, as never before, hundreds of thousands of young people and new Americans. Our partners are contributing not only funding for these programs, but their valuable time, energy, and commitment to youth education, recreation, and park stewardship.

Mr. Chairman, this concludes my prepared remarks. I would be happy to answer any questions you or the other members of the Subcommittee have.

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Mr. GRIJALVA. Thank you very much, sir.

What aspects of running a national park are the best candidates for private partnerships and which ones are never appropriate for any private funding?

Mr. WENK. A lot of our partnerships center around really two different aspects. There are the infrastructure aspects or the projects that might be, as you mentioned, the new visitor center at Old Faithful. We have many partners who engage in development of trails and other recreational activities where there are distinct projects or segments that are identified first and foremost in the park's general management plan. They can be agreed to with a park partner that it is an appropriate activity to undertake, and then fundraising construction can take place in a logical sequence.

Another area where we work extensively with partners is programs. It could be, for example, the funding of films. Partners may take that on as a project and fund a film, an educational film for a visitor center. They may engage with youth, as we mentioned, where they would work with local communities. Some of our partners have emersion programs where they bring youth into the parks for a period of time. It may be their first experience, but we have positive results that are having a positive influence on youth and their association with the outdoors.

Mr. GRIJALVA. And what would be an example of a private funding that would not be appropriate in the park system?

Mr. WENK. Basically private funding that would go to commercial activities or commercial endorsement.

Mr. GRIJALVA. OK.

Mr. WENK. Partner organizations, we have many different ways that we provide services to our visitors. One of the ways that we provide services is through our concessions contract that are very strongly regulated, and we have concession contracts that we compete for that provide business opportunity within parks.

Some partner organizations have approached us about opportunities that may be for the benefit of a partner as much as for a park, and we would not allow those where they would want to advertise, or they would want to take advantage of that partnership to further their own business cause rather than the park causes.

Mr. GRIJALVA. If partners are best in bricks and mortar construction projects from your answer, does that create an incentive to build stuff even if that stuff is not needed?

Mr. WENK. It could but I don't believe it does, Mr. Chairman. Back in 2005, the National Park Service, along with Members of Congress and the committees, were concerned about projects that had been identified and that were under construction, and at times

had failed because the partner organizations may not have been successful, and they would come back to Congress for additional funding.

As part of that process, we instituted what we call the partner construction process, which is a process that basically assures that before we undertake a partner project of bricks and mortar that, first of all, it has been an identified project within the general management plan of the park so that we are only doing those projects that are of high priority and identified previously by the park by park planning documents.

Mr. GRIJALVA. In reviewing some of the testimony from the other witnesses, a number of complaints have arisen, and they center around the increasing complexity of the cooperative and fundraising agreements, and the length of time it takes the Service to approve those agreements.

What is in the works to streamline or to address those complaints?

Mr. WENK. First of all, I would agree that they are getting more complex, and one of the reasons they are getting more complex is because the partnerships are getting more complex in many cases. These are not just simply perhaps the building of a structure. The partnership may be the building of a structure that also follows with educational components and it may be a long-term commitment on the part of the park and the partner, so they are getting more complex.

One of the things we are doing is we are trying to put templates into place for three different kinds of agreements. One of those is a partnership agreement, a general agreement that certain amount of fundraising could be undertaken to establish, maintain, and to operate a partnership within a park.

Mr. GRIJALVA. But will those three tiers expedite the process?

Mr. WENK. We believe they will.

Mr. GRIJALVA. Templates.

Mr. WENK. Mr. Chairman, what we have recently done in June of this past year, I think it is a fair statement to say that we were stalled to some extent with our partnership agreement in terms of both the partners and the National Park Service coming together on the language in the agreement. We sat down in June with representation of the friends group.

Based on that meeting, they submitted to us a draft partnership agreement. We have now reviewed that agreement that they submitted. We sent it back to them with our comments. So, we believe we have created an atmosphere right now so that we can move forward, and we are going to get that template done. That template will, in fact, describe probably 80 percent of the language that will be common to all partnership agreements, and we will only be negotiating about 20 percent based on the particular circumstance, project or program that partnership may undertake in any one place.

Based on that positive inertia, we think we will move onto the construction and fundraising agreements as well, and we think using the same model will be very successful and will sort of break that stalemate.

Mr. GRIJALVA. Thank you. Mr. Bishop?

Mr. BISHOP. Thank you. Welcome, Mr. Wenk. We appreciate your being here again.

I would have a request of you, if possible. If you would please provide for the record and to my office a list of the cooperative agreements for the last five years, and a separate list of the grants or contracts with nonprofits for the last five years.

Mr. WENK. We will do that.

Mr. BISHOP. Thank you. I understand that the senator with jurisdiction over this area sent you a letter yesterday for basically the same kind of information. Which one, obviously, will you answer first?

Mr. WENK. Mr. Bishop.

Mr. BISHOP. OK, that is the right answer. Good job.

[Laughter.]

Mr. BISHOP. I noticed in your testimony that there was a provision that will be implemented in all the partnership agreements in the future about limitation on lobbying, and you provided that on page 5 of your written testimony.

Mr. WENK. Yes.

Mr. BISHOP. Does that mean that these groups that are participating with you are limited in their lobbying or just not with the cooperative or the government funds that they receive?

Mr. WENK. Mr. Bishop, as I mentioned earlier, there were times when some partner organizations were not successful in raising all the money they thought they could raise through private dollars. There were circumstances when they had done that, and they had gone back to Congress and looked for those funds they weren't able to raise through an appropriation.

What this language attempts to do—actually it is not an attempt—I believe this language does say that they cannot lobby to change the construction dollars in the President's budget. If they have made a commitment to raise \$10 million, they cannot lobby for money out of the President's budget from the Department of the Interior, National Park Service budget any funds—

Mr. BISHOP. So it is a very narrow limitation on that project.

Mr. WENK. It is a very narrow limitation, yes.

Mr. BISHOP. You alluded to the Inspector General's investigation that had detailed missteps at the Park Service with regard to the George Wright Society investigation. To what level of leadership at the Park Service did this wrongdoing rise and what actions have been taking on the specific case?

Mr. WENK. The awareness of this rose to my level. I was Acting Director at the time that this was done. What we have done is we have changed the—we have directed that while employees of the National Park Service can, in fact, be members of the George Wright Society, they can no longer serve on the board of the George Wright Society, and that we also are looking at how we are using the agreements and we are narrowing defining what can be funded through the agreements.

Mr. BISHOP. OK. The Inspector General also instructed the agency to keep arms-length distance with interactions on outside groups. Would it be appropriate for a senior Park Service official to engage in closed meetings with partners on issues such as planning for the Park Service budget?



Mr. WENK. I am not aware that that has happened. I don't believe that that is happening, sir.

Mr. BISHOP. Would it be appropriate?

Mr. WENK. I don't believe it is appropriate.

Mr. BISHOP. OK. I think that is what I have for now. Thank you.

Mr. GRIJALVA. Dr. Christensen.

Mrs. CHRISTENSEN. Thank you, Chairman Grijalva, and thank you for this hearing. I really have had an opportunity to see how partnerships benefit the park and can benefit the community as well, and I think partnerships are really the answer to some of the problems and issues and concerns that you were able to witness when you visited my district, especially in St. John. Before I ask a question I just want to highlight some of them because I think we have benefitted from partnerships.

For example, we have had a long-time relationship with the Trust for Public Lands and the Nature and Ocean Conservancies, which have helped to expand our national parks and continue to help us protect some of our more precious resources. So have some of our local partnerships with, for example, the St. Croix and the St. Thomas Environmental Associations. Our local government has been a great partner, for example, at Salt River. That is even improving and possibly will be a partner with us in Castel Nugent in the future.

The Friends of the Park in St. John have been the best supporter that the Virgin Islands National Park could ask for, and the St. Thomas Historical Trust, which is a new partner, has begun to preserve and awaken the rich history of Hassel Island in the harbor of St. Thomas.

But I would say if there is one area where partnerships could be strengthened in my district, and probably in others, it is with the community and, in our case, the long-time residents or native community in St. John and St. Croix. The park has made good progress, but I think it still could do some more work to see itself as more part of the community and not just in the community. I think more planning needs to incorporate that of the local and longtime often multi-generational residents.

So, I look forward to this hearing through our witnesses to find ways that we can improve the partnership in my district and in other parts of our country.

I do have as many questions as time will allow. So Deputy Director Wenk, and I think the Director is on his way to the Virgin Islands.

Mr. WENK. I believe meetings were held yesterday

Mrs. CHRISTENSEN. Yes. So he is there already. OK. But what methods are used for monitoring whether parks and partners are following policy requirements, and how frequently are routine assessments of park partnerships conducted?

Mr. WENK. We do, in fact, rely on our park superintendents who we are consistently providing more training, better training. The first, if you will, partner relationship and check on the effectiveness and the manner in which the partnership is being conducted is the park superintendent. The regional directors, who are the supervisors of those superintendents, they conduct as part of their appraisal process on a yearly basis those with partnerships, they re-

view that partnership arrangement, and part of the evaluation of a superintendent is based on the effectiveness of that relationship.

Mrs. CHRISTENSEN. And in your written testimony you noted that the National Park Service is dedicated to partnership training annually. Is there a similar program that serves as a prerequisite before a partnership can officially begin with the national park?

Mr. WENK. I would not say it is a prerequisite, but one of the things that I am very pleased to be able to say is that it is not just the National Park Service that does training, our partners do training as well for their organizations. I have participated personally in the training of park superintendents in partnership training. I believe that it is ongoing where you are using more systems that allow us to do it remotely so we can take advantage of the Web and get more partners or more superintendents and partners trained.

We are also training people together so that everyone can get the same information about what the requirements of partnerships are.

Mrs. CHRISTENSEN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. GRIJALVA. Thank you. If I may, Mr. Wenk, the GAO report talks about a risk to the National Park Service. What types of risks are we trying to avoid?

Mr. WENK. I think the primary risk that we would want to avoid is, first of all, we would not want to have a project that was not appropriate to be done; that wasn't a high priority within the planning documents and was not an approved project of the park.

The second risk is we want to make sure that we are building facilities and we are knowledgeable and understand the associated operation and maintenance costs, the life cycle cost, if you will, of that structure. We also would like to make sure when we sign the agreements with our partners to the extent possible we would look at what kind of structure can we put in place, whether it be endowments, whether it be funding, it may be appropriate in some places, not in others, to cover some of those costs. I think the risk that we have are greater cost at the same time where the base operations and funding for parks are not increasing.

Mr. GRIJALVA. And I think my last question is kind of a general one. One of the assets that partnerships bring to the Park Service and to the parks is creativity, and so how do you balance that part of it with the supervision of projects that the Service must conduct?

Mr. WENK. Mr. Chairman, some of the most successful partner relationships we have had have been with some of our most creative superintendents. One of the things that I think we try to do is that we try very hard to identify those superintendents and bring them in to help train, to help train others so that we make sure that we are operating within the law, regulation, and policy that governs the National Park Service.

I think what we have tried very hard to do is to encourage that creativity, but at the same time make sure that it is operating within the proper constraints.

Mr. GRIJALVA. OK, thank you. Mr. Bishop? Doctor?

Thank you very much, and let me invite the next panel up if I may.

Mr. WENK. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. GRIJALVA. Thank you very much and welcome to the panelists, and let me begin with Donna Asbury, Executive Director, As-

sociation of Partners for Public Lands. Welcome. I look forward to your comments.

**STATEMENT OF DONNA ASBURY, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR,  
ASSOCIATION OF PARTNERS FOR PUBLIC LANDS, WHEATON,  
MARYLAND**

Ms. ASBURY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

As the Executive Director of the Association of Partners for Public Lands, our organization has a history since 1977 of cooperation with the National Park Service. Our membership is comprised of 82 nonprofit organizations, 83 percent of which serve National Park Service sites. These organizations provide more than \$70 million in aid to National Park Service, inclusive of major projects, programs and services that respond to the agency's priorities, and that was in 2008.

All of our members are nonprofit organizations with both IRS 501[c][3] status, and written agreements with one or more public lands agencies. These nonprofit partners enable the National Park Service and its sister public land agencies to accomplish what they cannot do alone: by engaging the American public in philanthropy and volunteerism and helping to protect, enhance, and interpret park resources. Several of these organizations, like the Grand Canyon Association, Mesa Verde Museum Association, Mount Rushmore Society, the Rocky Mountain Nature Association, the Yellowstone Association, and Yosemite Conservancy, have had relationships and agreements with individual parks for more than 75 years.

We were asked to share some of the key components that have made nonprofit partnerships with the National Park Service successful, and our APPL members consistently relate that first and perhaps core to success factors are communication, trust, and a shared vision of the collaborative missions. The second is that of frequent interaction, joint planning and the setting of realistic expectations for the partnerships. Another is when the park and the resource itself is the focus for why individuals give or why partnership decisions are made and for which projects are pursued.

And while it is the big projects that get the attention, the sustaining value is the postcard or the \$3 trail guide purchasers or the thousands of donors who give modestly, these purchased memories and the opportunity to give become the building blocks and the glue that binds the public to our national parks.

We were asked about roadblocks, and the roadblocks to partnerships are typically bureaucratic problems and they relate to what is seen, as was mentioned earlier, the burdensome and time-consuming agreement process, the challenge of bridging both the nonprofit and the public agency cultures, and uneven interpretation of policies across and between levels, locations, and functions of staff.

We would like to see a culture change in viewing partnerships more in a facilitative role rather than a regulatory role so that this can move the focus to one of supporting and empowering partnerships without increasing risk to the agency. Specifically, National Park Service policies and agreements frequently fail to acknowledge that Federal and state law regulates nonprofit organizations. As a result, National Park Service guidelines and provisions and

agreements sometimes overstep boundaries and add additional levels of unnecessary regulation to the nonprofits.

We suggest continuing to engage public and private partners in forums to discuss emerging issues, share the impacts of external trends, and internal policies, and develop workable solutions through facilitative discussion and follow up.

We also see that there is a lack of uniformity in how agreements and policies are applied throughout the Department of the Interior and the National Park System. Policies and requirements for entering into agreements are understood and implemented differently at various levels and locations throughout the agency. We encourage interagency collaboration in developing supportive structures and policies that enhance nonprofit partnerships. This will help to reduce the agreement and reporting requirement's burden for nonprofit partners who work with multiple public lands agencies and across park boundaries.

Partnership relationships are typically managed through procurement specialists instead of partnership agreement specialists. Non-partnerships, while they may engage in contracts or other kinds of agreements as tools to manage the relationship, primarily they are neither grants nor contracts in terms of their relationship. They are voluntary, ongoing, mutually beneficial relationships established for the public good and for the benefit of the resource.

So, we encourage the development of partnership agreement specialists as a discipline and a career track within Interior and within the National Park Service. Ideally if nonprofit partners and agency staff were assigned one National Park Service agreement specialist, even if it was one in each region, this could result in more efficiency and completing the agreements with the parks and more consistency throughout the park system.

Mr. Wenk has already talked about the need for the training both for the public land agency staff and for the nonprofit partners and the ongoing efforts that are being made in that arena. We encourage that to continue with the engagement of both the nonprofit and the public sector so that we can ensure that there is mutual understanding of the business and culture of each entity.

Finally, the practice of rotating National Park Service leadership between the parts results in a lack of consistency and institutional knowledge relative to the park's partnerships. Nonprofit partner organizations often become the point of continuity between the park, the local community volunteers and donors. Park partners comment that they spend a disproportionate amount of time having to start over with new agency leadership in addressing the type, scope and paperwork necessary to effectively co-manage partnership expectations.

We suggest rewarding longstanding tenure that enables partnerships to flourish and institute training mentioned previously so that staff members approach partnerships from the same level of knowledge throughout the park system.

In summary, nonprofit partnerships benefit from the credibility and expertise of agency partners as the agencies benefit from the business, philanthropic expertise and community connections that partner organizations bring through their staff and their nonprofit boards. Together, we are better able to advance innovative ideas,

to ensure the relevancy of national parks to a diverse population of park users, and to ensure that parks continue to be conserved, enjoyed, and valued by the public.

The Association of Partners for Public Lands stands ready to work with the National Park Service to implement the recommendations within this testimony. Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Asbury follows:]

**Statement of Donna Asbury, Executive Director,  
Association of Partners for Public Lands**

**Introduction**

Mr. Chairman and members of the Subcommittee, I thank you for the opportunity to testify today on the role of partnerships in national parks. My name is Donna Asbury, and I am Executive Director of the Association of Partners for Public Lands (APPL) which has a history since 1977 of cooperation with the National Park Service. Our membership is comprised of 82 nonprofit organizations, 83% of which serve National Park Service sites. In 2008, these organizations provided more than \$70 million in aid to national parks inclusive of major projects, programs and services that respond to the agency's priorities.

Through their on-site presence in national park visitor facilities, and in communities nationwide, our member organizations serve as front line ambassadors to the public, building constituencies that care for our nation's finest natural and cultural areas. Their work is based upon a living partnership with each site, anchored in an agreement founded upon the purpose and management plan for the park as well as its rich natural, cultural and historic resources.

APPL's efforts have concentrated on the tradition of membership, volunteerism, education and philanthropy that characterize the best of nonprofit entities. All of our members are nonprofit organizations with both IRS nonprofit 501(c)(3) status and written agreements with one or more public lands agencies. These nonprofit partners enable the National Park Service and its sister public lands agencies to accomplish what they cannot do alone, by engaging the American public in philanthropy and volunteerism and helping to protect, enhance, and interpret park resources.

As the June 2009 GAO report on *National Park Service Donations and Related Partnerships* acknowledges, these mission-based nonprofits are essential and increasingly valuable partners to the National Park Service, providing significant services in addition to monetary contributions. However, it should be noted that philanthropy and partnerships within the parks are not new. Thirty national parks were created through private donations, and many more are enhanced by the contributions of people who care about them. Several park partner organizations, like the Grand Canyon Association, Mesa Verde Museum Association, Mount Rushmore Society, Rocky Mountain Nature Association, Yellowstone Association and Yosemite Conservancy have been partners with individual national parks for more than seventy-five years.

I have organized my testimony around the key questions posed to panelists as being of interest to Subcommittee members, highlighting success factors in NPS-nonprofit partnerships as well as barriers to success most frequently expressed by our membership. Additionally, I have suggested recommendations for consideration that may address, at least in part, the concerns and barriers that can impede these partnerships.

**What have been some of the key components that have made your partnerships with the National Park Service so successful?**

When asked, our APPL members consistently relate the following factors to be central to the success of their partnership with the National Park Service. To illustrate, I have included direct quotes from executive directors of APPL member organizations relative to these partnership success factors:

- Communication, trust, and a shared vision of our collaborative mission. . .  
 "Probably the key component of success for our organization and NPS throughout the years has been a mutual respect for the missions of our organizations and an appreciation for the work we do in the very broad scope of caring for our nation's cultural, historical and natural resources. Always we keep this mind as we work through any 'roadblocks' and challenges."

- “As an association, we do not have any agenda that does not include our partner, and we feel confident that our partner values us and trusts us and sees us as a crucial player in their future.”
- Frequent interaction, joint planning, and making a concerted effort to “be there” for the other partner...  
 “We confer together regularly, participate in joint meetings, and as a result we are able to stay on the same page and have mutual buy-in on decisions. We feel valued by park staff and no one has any hidden agendas.”  
 “We are very fortunate that our offices are under the same roof as the park administration, enabling us to confer daily on big picture issues as well as details.”
  - When the park, the resource itself, is the focus—for why individuals give, for why partnership decisions are made, and for which projects are pursued...  
 “When nonprofit partners and agency staff decide that the priority is the resource, human dimensions change. The focus is moved from the nonprofit or the agency to the park, enabling personal agendas to be put aside in favor of developing solutions, projects, and programs that are meaningful and sustainable.”  
 “Fundraising success is best achieved when both the nonprofit partner and the National Park Service fully embrace the importance of the goal/project and strongly believe the goal/project will benefit both the partner and the NPS.”
  - When park management, from the top down, recognizes and communicates the relationship with the nonprofit partner as critical to success...  
 “The full potential of each partner is realized when communication, cooperation and collaboration between all nonprofit partners at an NPS park or site is encouraged and nurtured.”  
 “The potential for partner success is enhanced when the National Park Service is consistently pro-active in providing generous (and always tasteful) acknowledgment of the support being provided by the nonprofit partner—whenever possible and in as public a way as possible—in order to encourage future support.”
  - A mutual understanding of the tremendous potential of moving people along a continuum in their support for a park...  
 “While it is the big projects that get the attention, the sustaining value is the postcard or \$3 trail guide purchaser, or the thousands of donors who give modestly. These purchased memories, and the opportunity to give, become the building blocks, the glue that binds the public to the national parks.”  
 “Making that very personal connection with park visitors is one of the best ways nonprofit support groups are able to add value to their park’s operations. A casual visit to a park visitor center can result in a low level annual membership with a cooperating association. A follow-up newsletter can generate more interest—perhaps in attending a site-based educational program presented or sponsored by the nonprofit partner. This program presents the nonprofit partner the opportunity to develop a personal relationship with the member/donor and can lead to additional participation in park events or volunteer activities, with NPS staff present to convey the park’s story. This continuum leads to a much higher level of financial support for the park, and results in a very efficient use of park management’s time in conveying the park’s story and supporting the fund raising effort.”
  - Building upon established partnerships, with realistic expectations for what nonprofit partners can achieve...  
 The superintendent began discussions with us about whether or not we would be willing to pursue fundraising in behalf of the park. We agreed to form a foundation under the umbrella of our association and take some small, project-specific steps into the fundraising arena. We maintained our same board of directors and formed a foundation committee to oversee the new fundraising component of our operation. With existing staff we moved forward with annual project-specific goals, starting by raising \$50,000 to help rehab a historic building in the park. The superintendent was sensitive to our need to start small and we have been able to continue to raise more money each year for specific projects decided upon mutually by the Park Service and the Foundation.

**What types of roadblocks have challenged or prevented your organization from fully benefiting from your partnership with the parks?**

Nonprofit organizations work in partnership with the National Park Service to realize common goals and to provide a public benefit. Roadblocks are mostly bureaucratic, and relate to what is seen as a burdensome and time consuming agreement process; the challenges of bridging nonprofit and public agency cultures; and uneven interpretation of policies across and between levels, locations and functions of staff.

Specifically,

- NPS policies and agreements frequently fail to acknowledge that federal and state law regulates nonprofit organizations, requiring them to operate according to their tax-exempt mission. As a result, NPS guidelines and provisions in agreements sometimes overstep boundaries, and attempt to add additional levels of unnecessary regulation of the nonprofit.
- There is a lack of uniformity in how agreements and policies are applied throughout the Department of Interior and the National Park system. Policies and requirements for entering into agreements are understood and implemented differently at various levels and locations throughout the agency. This is especially problematic for nonprofit organizations that work with multiple agencies, that work across park or regional boundaries, or whose activities are at a level requiring multiple agreements or multiple layers of approval.
- Partnership relationships are treated like contracts and managed through procurement specialists instead of partnership agreement specialists, sometimes with the perspective that partnerships should be competitively bid. Nonprofit partnerships are, as a whole, neither grants nor contracts. They are voluntary, ongoing, mutually beneficial relationships established for the public good and for the benefit of the resource. Even in situations where a contract is the appropriate vehicle for accomplishing a goal, the parks often do not have the trained personnel on-site that know how to handle these contracts.
- There is a lack of understanding by many agency staff, including solicitors, contracting officers and procurement specialists, as to how nonprofits work and how they are regulated. In the words of one association executive: *“Typically the contracting officers that are assigned to work through the complexities of building these agreements with us, and getting funds to us, do not understand the mission of our organization and our ties to the parks.”*
- As the 2009 GAO Report on *National Park Service Donations and Related Partnerships* notes, there is a need to improve NPS employees’ knowledge, skills and experience about fundraising and partnerships with nonprofit organizations, and to improve nonprofits’ understanding of Park Service policies and procedures. Meeting this need for targeted and comprehensive training and reference materials requires collaboration and involvement of the nonprofit sector to ensure accuracy of content, and understanding of the business and culture of each entity. Too frequently, training and guidance are developed separately from within each sector rather than collaboratively.
- Care must be taken not to create agreements and policy that attempt to address every possible situation, or to cover any and all potential partnership risks, regardless of the level or scope of the activities to be conducted by the nonprofit partner. This creates unnecessary paperwork and oversight, discourages partnerships from developing, and drains time and energy that could be directed to the agency’s and the organization’s missions.
- The agreement approval process, and the inability of the agency to move agreements quickly through the process, is the most often sighted frustration among nonprofit partners to the National Park Service. These process delays can result in escalating project costs, loss of donor support, and in some cases the delay or abandonment of viable projects and initiatives.
- The practice of rotating NPS leadership among and between parks results in a lack of consistency and institutional knowledge relative to the park’s partnerships; and is disruptive of the type of long-term relationships that characterize the most outstanding examples of NPS partnership success. Nonprofit partner organizations and their staff are often the point of continuity between the park, the local community, volunteers and donors—and the point of continuity relative to the agreements and procedures that define their partnership functions with the agency. Because of the inconsistencies in training and interpretation of policies throughout the NPS system, park partners comment that they spend a disproportionate amount of time having to “start over” in addressing the type, scope, and paperwork necessary to effectively co-manage partnership expectations.

**Have policy changes from within the National Park Service affected your ability to have successful partnerships?**

A continuing focus on “trouble cases” tends to result in a reactionary response within the agency that overshadows the ongoing positive accomplishments that happen daily through NPS partnerships. The more emphasis placed on successes through nonprofit partnerships, the more burdensome the policies and procedures have become. Policies are often in a state of change, and the information regarding these changes doesn’t flow effectively through the system to field staff and partners—resulting in confusion, delays, and at times a negative impact on the ability to implement a program or project.

The time it takes to develop agreements, especially cooperative agreements, consumes valuable agency and nonprofit partner resources that could be applied to meeting park and visitor needs. While APPL itself is not a fundraising partner for the parks, we do at times collaborate under project specific cooperative agreements to conduct training, facilitate meetings, or develop partnership resources and tools. As a result, we have experienced first-hand the variations in how agency staff interpret policies, and the delays that accompany the agreement process. This has become amplified in recent years as cooperative agreements have come under more scrutiny.

**What can be done to address the challenges and roadblocks noted above?**

APPL member organizations endorse the importance of agreements that clarify and support the role of NPS and its partners. However, partnerships are at their core about relationships, and there is therefore no such thing as a “no risk” partnership. But when nonprofit partners and agency staff decide that the priority is the resource, the focus is moved from the nonprofit or the agency to the park, enabling personal agendas to be put aside in favor of developing solutions, projects, and programs that are meaningful and sustainable.

A cultural change from viewing partnerships in a “facilitative role” rather than a “regulatory role” can move the focus to one of supporting and empowering partnerships without increasing risk to the agency. The following opportunities exist to further advance partnerships within NPS, and to help ensure a sound foundation for future partnership successes:

- Develop partnership agreement specialists as a discipline and a career track within Interior and within the NPS. Ideally, if nonprofit partners and agency staff were assigned one NPS partnership agreement specialist—even if it was one in each region—this could result in more efficiency in completing the agreements with parks, and more consistency throughout the park system.
- Encourage inter-agency collaboration in developing supportive structures and policies that enhance nonprofit partnerships. This will help to reduce the agreements and reporting requirements burden for nonprofit partners working with multiple public lands agencies.
- Work with nonprofit partners to provide reciprocal training for agency staff and nonprofit representatives so that all partners carry out their work in productive relationships that are characterized by a high degree of mutual understanding, transparency in management policies, shared goals, and effective communication.
- Streamline requirements within public lands agencies for nonprofit partners to work under mutually beneficial cooperative agreements.
- Involve nonprofit partners at the earliest possible stages in planning and decisions affecting their relationship with public lands.
- Engage public and private partners in forums to discuss emerging issues, share the impacts of external trends and internal policies, and develop workable solutions through facilitated discussion and follow-up.
- Exempt established cooperating associations and friends organizations from competitive bidding of their general agreements. Nonprofit partners to the National Park Service bring durability and tenure not only to the agency but to its donors. Competitive bidding for cooperative agreements and their components sends a contrary message and imposes unnecessary and potentially damaging disruption to these partner relationships at a time when they are most needed.

**What types of accomplishments has your organization achieved that directly benefits parks and their mission?**

APPL helps serve as a bridge to increasing partnership understanding among nonprofits and public lands agencies. We facilitate dialogue through in-person meetings, conference call forums, newsletters, workshops, training materials and site-based consultations.



Among our member nonprofit organizations, the benefit is realized through contacts made with park visitors that reinforce the theme and purpose of the park, the number of site-specific publications now in print because of cooperating association efforts, the educational seminars, field institutes, and the events that connect people to their parks, and the philanthropic dollars raised in support of park priorities.

The following are just a few examples of the variety and impact of these partnerships:

- Through the Acadia Trails Forever program, Friends of Acadia supports maintenance of Acadia's 130-mile footpath system, used by hundreds of thousands of people each year. Some trails have been made wheelchair accessible. Some abandoned trails are being restored, and new village connector trails are being established to encourage people to walk (rather than drive) from island towns into the park.
- Alaska Geographic works with NPS and a concessionaire to distribute a tour booklet program developed collaboratively and provided by the concessionaire to all of its tour participants. Revenue from this initiative supports educational programming at Murie Science Center at Denali as well as throughout the parks of Alaska.
- Pacific Historic Parks (formerly Arizona Memorial Museum Association) has raised nearly all of the significant funding for the new Pearl Harbor Museum and Visitor Center. Phase I of the project was opened to the public on February 17, 2010 and dedication of the completed project is scheduled for December 7, 2010. The completion and success of this project will ensure that millions of visitors each year will better understand the history of Hawaii, Pearl Harbor, and WWII as well as appreciate the sacrifices made by many at Pearl Harbor.
- Friends of Big Bend raised over \$250,000 for the new educational exhibits that grace the walls of the newly re-opened Panther Junction Visitor Center in the park. Other support to the park includes a \$10,000 project to lay the foundation for future Big Bend National Park podcasts and other multimedia video materials.
- Over the last twenty years the Rocky Mountain Nature Association has tackled 44 special improvement projects benefiting the park, ranging from educational exhibits to visitor centers, from wheelchair accessible trails to land purchases, from publications to saving historic buildings.
- Sequoia Natural History Association (SNHA) works with NPS to educate the public about environmental issues, not just through interpretive programs and materials, but through their own actions. Two years ago, SNHA began eliminating plastic bags in visitor center stores, asking visitors to hand carry small purchases or consider buying an inexpensive reusable bag. This effort has taken an estimated 50,000 plastic bags out of the waste stream annually. Last year the association partnered with NPS to obtain grants and donations to make Crystal Cave interpretive tours, operated by SNHA in Sequoia, the first cave tour operation to be operated 100% on solar power. Through interpretive signage, this project is also a visible message to the 55,000 annual cave visitors.
- Western National Parks Association—operates educational bookstores in 66 national park areas in 12 states and then returns proceeds of sales to their NPS partners for interpretive, educational and research projects. Eastern National operates in 150 national park areas in 30 states. These cooperating associations, by applying shared resources, enable parks that could not support their own independent bookstore operation, or that are not viewed as “commercially viable” to have high quality park specific themed items that convey the story of the resource to the visitor.
- Yosemite Conservancy over the last 22 years has funded over 300 projects totaling more than \$55 million in support. Many of these projects have improved the infrastructure supporting visitor enjoyment. As one example, support for the Junior Ranger program provided the opportunity for 27,000 kids to get their badge in 2009.

**How does your organization benefit from your relationship with the parks?**

Our organization, as well as our member organizations, benefit from the ability to fulfill our nonprofit mission—which complements the mission of the National Park Service. Nonprofit partners bring expertise in areas that balance agency staff members' expertise, and vice versa. Nonprofit partners benefit from the credibility and expertise of their agency partners, as the agencies benefit from the business, philanthropic expertise, and community connections that the partner organizations bring through their staff and nonprofit boards. Together, we are better able to ad-

vance innovative ideas, ensure the relevancy of national parks to diverse populations of park users, and ensure that parks continue to be conserved, enjoyed, and valued by the public.

In most cases, cooperating associations and friends groups were formed to support a specific park or a group of parks. Therefore, they view their organizations as existing to benefit the park(s), not the other way around. As one association executive director put it, *“the only benefit is seeing projects and programs funded for the protection of the resource and the enjoyment of the visitor.”*

**In working with parks, how are projects determined? Are project ideas driven by park needs or are they more likely to originate with your organization?**

National park partners agree that projects are driven by park priorities and needs. However, ideas are often spawned because of the strong partnership, planning and dialogue that enable nonprofit partners to bring ideas to the table for consideration.

The nature of philanthropy and earned revenue requires significant advance planning to ensure that staffing and resources are dedicated to activities that will have the most impact; and to ensure adequate time to plan for business operations and to nurture philanthropic support.

Typically the park submits its requests to the board or a project review committee of the cooperating association or friends group, which then selects or approves projects for a given year based upon the park’s recommendations and the capabilities of the partner to achieve the requested level of support. Depending upon the type of project or program, and the capacity of the partner or the park to manage the project or program, decisions will be made as to how the project will be carried out. In some situations the association or friends group will fund the project to be carried out by the Park Service. In other instances, the association or friends group collaborates with the park to accomplish specific projects or programs. This collaboration spawns creativity, better planning, and more productive and sustainable projects.

The following example is illustrative of how a program need was articulated by park leadership and then implemented collaboratively with the Park Service. *“In the case of our Field Institute, the superintendent laid out his vision to us, then charged us to move forward and create a business plan. Initially, our association’s vision for the Institute was markedly different from that of the Park Service, but both sides kept their doors and minds open and trust and cooperation prevailed, resulting in an institute that has worked for everyone.”*

**Summary**

Americans have always treated their public lands generously. Today, more than ever, the means to do this rests with the nonprofit partners of those public lands, as the nation wrestles with multiple demands upon the federal budget and public land agency budgets are stretched. APPL and its members are at the nexus of the connection to public support for public lands.

The time has come to fully acknowledge, encourage, and foster the partnerships that provide the heart and soul of our stewardship efforts to protect our world-class natural, cultural and historical resources. The key to the long-term health of our nation’s treasured public lands is partnerships.

APPL provides information, facilitates communication, and delivers training to build the capacity of these organizations and their agency partners to deliver the highest quality programs, products, and visitor services. APPL fosters standards of excellence for nonprofit partners and helps agencies understand how to approach productive relationships that extend resources and serve visitors. We have developed organizational assessment tools to assist parks and partners in determining their strengths, potential obstacles, and capabilities to increase their programmatic, fundraising, and earned income benefits. We stand ready to work with NPS to implement the recommendations within this testimony.

We believe that caring for our national parks is a shared responsibility. The job is big and resources are limited. As more and more Americans turn to national parks for their recreation and green space, as more and more schools seek laboratories for learning, as communities and citizens look for volunteer and economic opportunities, nonprofit partnerships grow increasingly necessary.

Mr. GRIJALVA. Before I turn to Susan Smartt, let me ask our colleague who has joined us if he has any opening comments at this point?

**STATEMENT OF THE HONORABLE BILL SHUSTER, A  
REPRESENTATIVE FOR THE STATE OF PENNSYLVANIA**

Mr. SHUSTER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and I want to thank all the witnesses for being here today. I appreciate you holding this hearing.

Our national parks are a great source of pride and it is imperative that they thrive and tell the story of this nation. As I said, I want to thank the witnesses for being here today.

I have the great honor of having Flight 93 National Memorial in my congressional district. From the beginning, I have been involved in the process of completing a memorial honoring those that gave their lives on September 11th, and I want to take a moment to point out that the building of Flight 93 Memorial has been a collaborative process and a great experience and a great example of how these public-private partners should work.

From the tragic day when the heroes of Flight 93 gave their lives to stop a terrorist attack on our nation's capital, this work continues on the memorial, and the local community has been there, first establishing a temporary memorial site with volunteers to show folks around and they continue to protect the site and tell the story of the heroes of Flight 93.

In 2002, Congress authorized and President Bush signed into law the Flight 93 National Memorial Act creating a permanent national memorial as part of the National Park Service System. The Flight 93 Advisory Commission was created as part of this law to ensure that local citizens had a voice in the process, and we have had several leaders in Somerset County: Jerry Spangler, Pam Tokar-Ickes, Greg Walker, Gary Singel, Donna Glessner and Dan Sullivan, they have been involved to make sure the local concerns have been heard all along, which I think is extremely important.

Together with the National Park Service and the National Park Foundation, the Flight 93 Advisory Commission, the families of Flight 93, and the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, the progress on the memorial is being made with the first phase of construction being completed by the tenth anniversary, which will be next year. Over \$17 million in private donations has already been raised for the completion of the first phase of the memorial, and the families of Flight 93 are targeted to reach their committed goal of raising \$30 million for the construction of the memorial.

Mr. Chairman, this is exactly how the process should work, strong local support, community input and collaboration among affected parties should always be part of the process.

So, again, thank you very much for holding this hearing, and again appreciate you taking the time to let me make a statement.

Mr. GRIJALVA. Thank you, and congratulations on the fine work on that memorial.

Mr. SHUSTER. Thank you. And they have broken ground and we should be on target.

Mr. GRIJALVA. Congratulations.

Mr. SHUSTER. Thank you.

Mr. GRIJALVA. Let me now ask Ms. Susan Smartt, President and CEO of NatureBridge in San Francisco, I had an opportunity to meet with when I was there to meet with some of your folk involved in that, and it is an excellent program, by the way.

**STATEMENT OF SUSAN SMARTT, PRESIDENT AND CEO,  
NATUREBRIDGE, SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA**

Ms. SMARTT. Thank you, Chairman Grijalva, Ranking Member Bishop, and other Members of the Subcommittee. Thank you for the opportunity to testify this morning.

I am Susan Smartt, President and CEO of NatureBridge and I am honored to be provide testimony on partnerships in the National Park Service.

Our mission at NatureBridge is to provide science and environmental education in nature's classrooms to inspire a connection to the natural world and responsible actions to sustain it. We do this by providing three- to five-day residential programs in our national parks, and we contract directly with schools for these programs and other community groups. We have been working in partnership for 40 years and currently operate in four national parks. Our first institute was in Yosemite National Park in 1971, inspired by a science teacher from Los Angeles who thought his kids could learn science better in nature's classrooms. We were then invited to expand to the Golden Gate National Recreation Area, and then invited to expand to Olympic National Park, and finally last year we opened our fourth institute in the Santa Monica National Recreation Area, again at the invitation of the National Park Service.

We have a long history of collaboration with the National Park Service. It is easy to focus on partnerships that have not gone well, but it is critically important to remember that far more partnerships are working extremely well, so I would just like to share with you some of the things we think we have learned in our 40 years about partnerships.

First of all, as was mentioned by Donna, close alignment of mission and programs is essential to a good partnership. Also, our financial model does not require any funding from the National Park Service. We have always been financially self-sufficient organization, which has served us well. We raise money from fees for the programs, but we also raise about \$2 million a year to scholarship schools and kids from underserved communities that would not otherwise be able to afford our programs.

Finally, we are in close communication with the National Park Service, and I cannot emphasize that enough at all levels, not only the park level, the regional level, and the national level to make sure that we remain in alignment with National Park goals and missions.

So, our accomplishments over these 40 years we have educated one million participants in our national parks in environmental science education. They are the next generation of national park supporters and stewards. We are reaching and building diverse and underserved audiences that better reflect the face of America through our scholarship program. We are building community: all very important benefits to the national parks.

Of course, our organization has also benefitted tremendously from being a National Park partner. There are no better classrooms for our education than our magnificent national parks. We are honored to be associated with the National Park Service, and the values it stands for. This association provide us with a stamp of approval and credibility, and we honor that.

As I said earlier, we started in 1971, and we have expanded by invitation. Currently there are two parks on the East Coast that have contacted us and are interested in us expanding our programming to their parks. We would not even consider expanding to a new park without strong leadership and commitment from the park to support the program. We work in close collaboration with the National Park Service at all levels, and know that is fundamental to our relationship.

I do want to talk a bit about the difficulty of some of the barriers and things that are affecting our partnership and other nonprofit partners. You will hear a lot today about legal agreements, it has already been mentioned by the first two witnesses, so I will not spend a lot of time on it other than to say that the increasing complexity of these agreements have become unworkable in some respects. The tone has moved from partnership as collaborations to a legal transactional approach which doesn't serve us well. No risk partnerships do not exist and should not be the legal bar that is set.

The inconsistency of policies across parks: For those of us that work in multiple locations, this could be quite significant and frustrating. As we make plans to expand our programs to new parks, it will save countless hours and money if there is a more standardized approach to the manner in which partnerships are established and administered.

The cultural challenges exist also. There are differences between government agencies and nonprofits, and a key to effectiveness is understanding those differences and figuring how to bridge them.

Decisionmaking needs to be done more quickly. When you are working with a donor community they have an expectation that their donations will be used effectively and efficiently, and if it takes five years to negotiate a fundraising agreement, that is the wrong message to our funders. Those kinds of delays are costly, frustrating, and can inhibit timely implementation and execution of partnership agreements, which negatively impact program and fundraising activities.

So, our three simple recommendations are:

First of all, we support the efforts that are underway that Dan Wenk mentioned earlier, the current efforts to streamline and standardize partnership agreements. We think that will go a long way to removing some of the more bureaucratic barriers. This includes the approval process and layering of agreements. It will also improve mission-related results for both partners and save both donor and taxpayer money.

We would like the National Park Service to consider a proven partner status for long-time partners. This would allow partners who have worked successfully with the National Park Service over several years to benefit from that proven track record, and again hopefully eliminate some of the hurdles and barriers we have now to expanding programs.

Finally, we would like to see more inclusion and engagement of nonprofit partners in operational leadership training at all levels of the National Park Service, and we are ready to help with that.

Thank you all for the opportunity testify this morning. We honor and value our partnership with the National Park Service, and we

are ready and willing to work with Congress and the National Park Service to strengthen and improve these nonprofit partnerships. Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Smartt follows:]

**Statement of Susan Smartt, President/CEO, NatureBridge**

Dear Chairman Grijalva, Chairman Napolitano, Ranking member Bishop and other members of the subcommittee:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony to the Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests and Public Lands of the Committee on Natural Resources with specific regard to *“The role of partnerships in National Parks.”* We intend to highlight the enormous benefits to citizens, especially our youth, that are the result of effective and highly productive partnerships with our National Parks. We also will focus on some of the hurdles that must be overcome if we are to make this relationship sustainable over the long term.

We are very pleased that the Subcommittee is seeking information from National Park partners that will enhance our ability to work together more productively. We all understand that partnerships are mutually beneficial and an excellent way to leverage limited resources.

NatureBridge has been working in partnership with the National Park Service (NPS) for almost 40 years. NatureBridge currently operates residential environmental education programs in four National Park locations: the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area, Yosemite National Park, the Golden Gate National Recreation Area, and Olympic National Park. Launching more campus programs in National Parks in the eastern United States is contemplated in our recently completed Strategic Plan. Ours is a history of mutually beneficial collaboration. Indeed, there is great excitement about the impact we are able to have on the lives of youth and the quality of life in their home communities through our partnership with the National Park Service.

One of the top priorities of NPS Director Jon Jarvis is to increase environmental education and outreach to underserved youth. The recent launch of the President’s America’s Great Outdoors Initiative speaks to the need to reconnect Americans to the outdoors. It emphasizes reaching out to underserved youth and building new constituencies for our treasured parks. Director Jarvis’ priorities and the President’s initiative both highlight the need to expand the very programs that NatureBridge offers. The success of these efforts can only be achieved with increased and more effective and efficient public/private partnerships.

NatureBridge is looking to strengthen an already rewarding partnership with the NPS. We seek to advance our common mission and develop a closer working relationship. We are concerned that the hurdles to effective and sustainable partnerships have increased and indeed may severely limit our ability to expand beyond our four campuses.

Our testimony focuses on broad issues that impact our entire organization rather than one specific park. We start with the assumption that we are building on a successful model of shared mission with the National Park Service and this testimony is offered in the spirit of increased effectiveness and the need to leverage increasingly scarce resources.

**Partnership Limitations, Barriers and Frustrations**

*1. Difficulty of Completing Legal Agreements*

The increasing complexity of public/private partnerships has resulted in Agreements (Cooperative, Fundraising, etc.) that are overreaching and unworkable. The staff time and financial resources spent on reviewing and redoing agreements is frustrating and wasteful, can take several years to complete and in the end fosters a climate of legal adversaries rather than partners.

The process of reviewing agreements is highly centralized; drafts acceptable to the Park or the Region may be extensively questioned by the Washington Support Office (WASO), which can at times seem disconnected from the field. “No risk” partnerships do not exist and should not be the legal bar that is set.

For example, our Yosemite Institute has operated under a series of agreements with the NPS since 1971, but in 2010 questions from WASO about the NPS’s legal authority to allow us to enter into agreements has caused extensive delays. Our most recent experience with the Fundraising Agreement for our proposed new Environmental Education Center in Yosemite National Park is a perfect example of what is not working. We first received a 20 page draft modeled from former partner

agreements that has now mushroomed into over 40 pages after review by NPS solicitors.

Meanwhile, at Golden Gate National Recreation Area, NatureBridge's Headlands Institute campus is operating under its fourth successive one-year extension of its general agreement. After operating and providing programs for over 30 years in the Park, the partnership feels more like a landlord/tenant arrangement as we are now being asked to pay approximately \$140,000 annually in "service district charges" to continue our programs in the Park.

NatureBridge recognizes and values the uniqueness of each park but is frustrated by our inability either to use agreements signed in one park as a template for a similar agreement in another park, or to negotiate a master agreement that would cover NatureBridge operations in multiple parks.

**Suggestion:** NatureBridge supports streamlined and standardized partnership agreements. For example, the National Park Service should consider "proven partner status" for longtime partners that have a strong mission alignment and have met their program and financial obligations for a number of years. This would involve setting up a vetting system for new partners and enabling them to use streamlined processes once certain conditions are met and a proven track record is established.

## *2. Inconsistency of Policies Across Parks*

In four different parks, NatureBridge helps the NPS implement its educational mission. Our educational programs are the same in each location, but NPS administration varies significantly from park to park. For example, at Olympic National Park, private bidding and private construction were allowed on a project funded by NatureBridge and located on our Institute's campus. At Yosemite National Park, great uncertainty surrounds whether private bidding and construction will be allowed for the new Environmental Education Center, which has important cost implications.

Another example has to do with park facilities assigned to us so that we can provide the educational programs that the parks have requested. In Olympic National Park, Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area and Yosemite National Park there is a strong partnership relationship. Unfortunately, the Golden Gate National Recreation Area, as mentioned above, apparently sees us as a tenant and wants to charge rent.

As we make plans to expand our programs to new parks, it will save countless hours and money if there is a more standardized approach to the manner in which partnerships are established and administered.

**Suggestion:** For partners who operate in multiple parks, NPS should standardize its administrative requirements and employ a more uniform approach to working with partners.

## *3. Cultural Challenges*

The cultural differences between government and nonprofits are often a barrier to effective partnerships. Understanding this is a key for both the NPS and their nonprofit partners. We recommend that a central part of the NPS partnership training be on the differences in how nonprofits and how government agencies operate, and how to bridge the gap. NatureBridge would gladly participate in this type of training.

**Suggestion:** Include and engage nonprofit partners in operational leadership (multi-level) training opportunities, and already existing National Park Service training. This type of collaborative training will greatly benefit both the nonprofit partners and the National Park Service.

## *4. Decision Making*

Decisions must be made more quickly. This mainly has to do with the layering of agreements and multiple written approvals that are time-consuming, cumbersome and difficult to manage and enforce. Often it seems the delays come from divisions within a particular park's management. These kinds of delays are costly, frustrating and can inhibit timely implementation and execution of partnership agreements as well as program and fundraising activities.

**Suggestion:** Approval processes should be streamlined to fit the pace of business in the 21st century. This will improve mission-related results for both partners and will save both donor and taxpayer money.

## *5. Sharing Information/Changes in Rules*

The complexity of the rules/regulations that we operate under in the national parks makes it difficult to stay abreast of changes in the rules.

**Suggestion:** In order to facilitate compliance on the part of NatureBridge and other partners, NPS should consider a system of alerts and better communication to assure timely notification of changing requirements.

We welcome the opportunity to work with the Subcommittee to find ways to build and foster more effective partnerships while honoring and enhancing the mission of both of our organizations.

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Mr. GRIJALVA. Before we go to our next panelist, let me ask my colleague, Mr. Holt, if he has any comments?

**STATEMENT OF THE HONORABLE RUSH D. HOLT, A  
REPRESENTATIVE FROM THE STATE OF NEW JERSEY**

Mr. HOLT. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and I thank the panel for their good testimony, which I am beginning to go through right now.

This is a very important hearing, and I thank the Chairman for putting this together. Partnerships with the parks and the other agencies that look after our public treasures are really important, and for example, some of us have been promoting an educational partnership with the national parks. But I hasten to state my personal concern that over the real decades now a number of functions that I think should be core functions of these agencies have been shed to other for-profit and nonprofit organizations, and I think it is really important that we take a good look at this and make sure that we provide the resources to the Park Service and other agencies so that they can fully undertake those things that should be the core functions, and not have to go around hat in hand and tin cup rattling to do those things.

Thank you very much for doing this Mr. Chairman.

Mr. GRIJALVA. Thank you, Mr. Holt. And Mr. Sarbanes, any opening?

Let me now go to Dan Puskar, Director of Government Affairs, National Park Foundation. Welcome. I look forward to your comments.

**STATEMENT OF DAN PUSKAR, DIRECTOR OF PARTNERSHIPS  
AND GOVERNMENT RELATIONS, NATIONAL PARK FOUNDATION,  
WASHINGTON, D.C.**

Mr. PUSKAR. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, Mr. Ranking Member, Members of the Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to discuss with you the role and value of partnerships in our national parks.

The National Park Foundation is proud to serve as the Congressionally established charitable and promotional partner of the National Park Service. We strive to benefit and add value to all 392 national parks. Over the past five years, the Foundation has provided over \$124 million to the National Park System. We receive no Federal appropriations. Instead finding these resources from individuals, foundations, and corporations.

In my testimony, I hope to highlight how the Foundation does three things:

First, how we collaborate with the National Park Service to ensure that our work directly addresses its critical needs and individual park priorities. Second, how we help the Service fulfill our shared mission by providing the expertise, resources, qualities that



a government agency cannot; and third, how we support friends groups and the philanthropic work at individual national parks.

The Foundation is honored to continue the rich tradition in which parks were established and sustained—public and private interests working in tandem. The Foundation's activities benefit from our close collaboration with all levels of the National Park Service. We are privileged to have the Director as an ex-officio member of our Board of Directors. Our collaboration extends from the creation of a superintendent's council that facilitates dialogue and the sharing of ideas between the Foundation and the Park Service field, to weekly meetings that I have between myself and the chief of the National Partnership Office.

Because of our shared mission, the Service has called on the Foundation to address its critical needs. In 2007, we were asked to take the lead in the fundraising campaign to build the Flight 93 National Memorial. Within the past fiscal year of the \$17 million raised that Mr. Shuster mentioned, we transferred \$10.2 million to the Service just in the last fiscal year to complete this construction project.

Our common mission and close relationship has allowed us to create grant programs and encourage the Service to help us find what we can do with the funds that we provide, where they can be leveraged most succinctly. Consider our America's Best Idea Grant Program. Here the Foundation has invested almost \$900,000 in the last year and a half in 52 national parks to help them reach underserved group and empower those groups to create strong, lasting bonds of stewardship.

The Foundation does not define for the parks what an underserved group is or the best mechanism to reach them. We rely on that knowledge base there where we can provide a certain level of fundraising expertise in other areas.

In addition, the Foundation managers select national programs of significance, programs that fit our role as the national charitable and promotional arm of the Service. Our Electronic Field Trips give students an opportunity to virtually visit national parks they may never be able to do so on their own. Since 2004, we have participated in 11 of these field trips. And our last one to Bryce Canyon earlier this year, 6,000 teachers registered to allow their 120,000 students to participate on the day of broadcast here in the U.S. and on military bases in six nations. There was a potential additional bureauhip of 7.5 million viewers by working with Public Broadcasting and other educational networks.

In each of these examples the Foundation has brought its fundraising and marketing expertise to complement the Park Service's deep understanding of their local communities, their resources, their needs.

The Foundation has also been tasked by Congress to play a vital nurturing role in strengthening the philanthropic programs of support at an individual park unit level. The Foundation recognizes that bolstering sustainable friends' groups is the key to successfully answering this charge. When friends groups have the capacity to promote and publicize their parks, when they can serve as the liaisons between parks and communities, when they can raise monies

for park-specific programs, the benefits are multi-dimensional and they extend well beyond the parks' boundaries.

In a survey of friends groups that we conducted in April of this year, 41 percent reported, however, that their operating budgets were less than \$50,000. Fifty percent reported having fewer than one paid staff member. More than half of those polled, over 110 groups responded, stated that advanced training, fundraising, and board development would significantly help them to respond to these concerns.

The Foundation is launching an in-depth assistance program that will help friends group become more effective and sustainable. This pilot program will conduct on-site engagements with friends groups across the nation. We will work with them to do an organizational assessment, find a work plan that suits their organization's growth, mentor, coach them, and provide matching funds along the way to ensure that they can build their own capacity.

The state of our parks as the centennial comes in 2016 will say a lot about our priorities as a nation. Philanthropy is critical to creating new opportunities so that the public can relate to their parks and we can generate the creativity and innovation that the National Park Service will need in the next century.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, Mr. Ranking Member, and Members of the Committee for your ongoing support of the national parks and for allowing me the opportunity to report on the important role philanthropy plays in supporting our shared mission.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Puskar follows:]

**Statement of Dan Puskar, Director of Partnerships and  
Government Relations, National Park Foundation**

Mr. Chairman and Members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today. The National Park Foundation ("Foundation") is proud to be the Congressionally chartered charitable partner of the National Park Service (PL 90-209) and commends this committee for its commitment to prepare our national parks for the challenges and opportunities of the next century and for highlighting the role that partnerships will play in this future.

The Foundation serves as the philanthropic and promotional arm of the national park system, much like friends groups service individual parks or park groups. Through its grant-making programs and public outreach, the Foundation works with National Park Service leadership in Washington, D.C. and in parks across the country to fund conservation and restoration efforts, foster stewardship, engage youth, promote citizenship and preserve history in the places where it happened. The Foundation helps the Park Service to fulfill its mission to connect the American people to their parks in ways that a government agency cannot. Unlike other Congressionally chartered nonprofits established to support land management agencies, the Foundation receives no federal appropriations.

In my testimony, I will highlight how the Foundation collaborates with the National Park Service at all levels to ensure that its grant-making directly addresses park priorities. We embrace an entrepreneurial spirit that allows us to pilot projects and ideas that may provide innovative solutions to the challenges of connecting youth and underserved audiences to our parks. Inevitably, we have experienced successes and failures, and continue to learn how to improve our partnership and our practices.

**PHILANTHROPY IN THE NATIONAL PARKS**

Since Yellowstone National Park was established in 1872, private philanthropy has been at the core of the preservation, protection, and improvement of America's national parks, and will continue to be essential in securing their future.

Private philanthropy helped create individual national parks, as well as the National Park Service itself. The earliest philanthropic acts spanned the country from California to Maine. In 1907, Mr. and Mrs. William Kent donated what became Muir Woods National Monument in California. In June 1916, a group of private do-

nors donated to the federal government the land for Sieur de Monts National Monument in Maine, the very same land that would one day grow and develop into Acadia National Park. Stephen Mather himself, the first director of the National Park Service, contributed from his personal fortune to support parks and their administration both before and after he led the agency. In addition to land purchases, Mather enlisted several western railroads to join him in contributing \$48,000 to publish the *National Parks Portfolio*, which publicized national parks and helped persuade Congress to create the National Park Service in 1916.

With the help of friends groups and other nonprofit park partners, the Foundation has carried on this legacy of private support of our national parks for over forty years so that they may be preserved and protected for future generations.

### OUR IMPACT

Congress established the Foundation in 1967 to encourage private philanthropic support for America's national parks. Over the past five years (FY2005–2009) the Foundation has provided over \$89.3 million in grants and program support and more than \$35.5 million in contributed goods and services to the national park system, a total contribution of \$124.8 million.

The Foundation is authorized to accept and administer “any gifts, devises, or bequests, either absolutely or in trust of real or personal property or any income therefrom or other interest therein for the benefit of or in connection with, the National Park Service, its activities, or its services.” This broad mandate has been used to:

- Between FY2005–FY2009, manage an average of \$51.9 million restricted net assets for numerous parks and park initiatives, some of which do not have friends groups.
- Establish the Everglades National Park Freshwater Wetlands Mitigation Trust Fund in 1983 to restore and monitor the 6,600 acres “Hole-In-The Donut” area of the park. The Foundation has received and distributed \$67.4 million since the inception of this massive restoration project.
- Earn interest and increase the impact on restricted contributions until required by the national park system. For example, in February 2010, the Foundation received \$5.5 million for the Martin Luther King Jr. National Memorial. This amount represents 10% of the total estimated cost of construction and has been set aside to offset the costs of perpetual maintenance and preservation of the commemorative work once it is completed. It is unlikely to have any disbursement for more than a decade.
- Provide technical assistance and cost-effective financial operations for facilitating philanthropy at national park units without a friends group.

The Foundation also raises funds for specific grant-making and programs to strengthen park resources and visitor experiences. In FY2010, the Foundation awarded grants to 108 parks and National Park Service offices totaling \$2.5 million. This amount does not include \$10.2 million to complete the first phase of construction for the Flight 93 National Memorial, monies that have been leveraged by \$18.5 million from the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and \$13 million from federal appropriations.

In its grant-making, the Foundation has found in recent years that the best ideas for funding truly come from the parks. Recently established grant-making programs include the following examples:

- Through the *America's Best Idea* grant program, the Foundation has invested almost \$900,000 since 2009 to reach traditionally underserved groups and empower them to create strong, lasting bonds of stewardship.
- The *Impact Grants* program has provided over \$500,000 in two years to help 62 parks that needed a small amount of additional funding to strengthen the efforts of a local partnership or turn an underfunded and innovative idea into a successful project.
- *Active Trails!* grants promote healthy lifestyles and recreation on land and water trails while protecting and enhancing our national parks' trail resources. Volunteers, community groups, corporate partners, students and educators get involved with their national parks through hands-on trail work, citizen science and learning activities.

In each of these grant-making opportunities, the Foundation encourages individual parks to define precisely what the grant will fund and how it will make a difference for the park and the American public. Grantees are encouraged to use this seed money from the Foundation to leverage other monies or contributed services from other partners thus extending their reach and impact.

Regarding the *America's Best Idea* grant program, the Foundation does not specify what constitutes an “underserved group.” Instead, parks provide unique answers that fit their gateway communities and stakeholders needs. Consequently, the Founda-

dation is able to fund a diverse array of meaningful projects. For example, in 2009 grants enabled Puebloan youth to spend weeks exploring Bandelier National Monument's backcountry and educating visitors about their cultural connection to this northern New Mexico monument. At Salem Maritime National Historic Site in Massachusetts, Boys and Girls Club members learned about maritime trade during the 18th and 19th centuries aboard the wooden boat *Friendship*. With this grant program, the Foundation and Park Service leadership look for applicants with projects that are simultaneously fundable, scalable and innovative. To date, 68 parks have employed an *America's Best Idea* grant to give life and legs to new ideas at the local level.

In addition to its grant-making, the Foundation manages select national programs of significance. *Electronic Field Trips* ("EFT"), a signature program of the Foundation, give students the opportunity to virtually visit a national park that they might otherwise never get a chance to visit. An EFT consists of an hour-long broadcast from a national park featuring rangers and youth hosts—often from a local school—who focus on subjects relevant to the park. The broadcast is coupled with a website that offers interactive tools for students and downloadable lesson plans for their teachers.

Since 2004, the Foundation has participated in EFTs to 11 national parks including Great Smoky Mountains, Grand Canyon, Carlsbad Caverns, Hawaii Volcanoes and Grand Teton National Parks. Our next EFT to North Cascades National Park this October will study the effects of climate change in parks. Nearly 6,000 teachers registered for the last spring's EFT to Bryce Canyon National Park reaching 120,000 students in the U.S. and on military bases in six other nations with a potential additional 7.5 million viewers through the subsequent rebroadcast by Public Broadcasting Service (PBS) and other educational TV stations.

The Foundation also makes an impact by bringing specialized skills and technologies to assist the National Park Service in sharing its story with the American people. The Foundation coordinates with the National Park Service to promote the entirety of the national park system through joint awareness campaigns. The Foundation provides marketing, communications and branding support for events and programs that recognize the breadth of the system and may be activated in any park. As an example, for National Park Week 2010, the Foundation developed a tool kit of posters, banners, informational brochures, website graphics, social media templates and press releases that could be customized by individual parks to highlight youth engagement under the title "Share A Park, Shape A Life."

Finally, the Foundation is eager to respond to National Park Service needs, even those that cannot be anticipated. In response to the April 2010 oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico that jeopardized the wildlife and coastline of 10 national parks, the Foundation and the National Park Service established a permanent *National Parks Disaster Recovery Fund*. In the case of catastrophic wildfires, floods and even manmade disasters, our two organizations now have a ready vehicle to help Americans direct their time, talents and monies to restore national parks marred by tragedy. Where a responsible party is identified, as with the Gulf oil spill, no funds raised will be used to mitigate what is rightfully owed to the National Park Service.

#### **PROMOTING LOCAL PARK PHILANTHROPY**

In 1998 Congress directed the Foundation to design a program to foster fundraising at the individual national park unit level (PL 105-391). In the intervening years, several models have been adopted to make the most of local community enthusiasm and expertise and the Foundation's own institutional experience.

The Foundation recognizes that bolstering sustainable friends groups is the key to successfully answering this charge from Congress. When friends groups have the capacity to promote and publicize their parks, serve as liaisons between parks and communities, and raise funds to support individual park projects, the benefits are multi-dimensional and extend well beyond park boundaries. Successful friends groups provide the National Park Service with better resources to fulfill its mission of preserving parks for future generations. Communities reap the economic development benefits of public-private partnership and a vibrant tourism draw. Perhaps most importantly from the Foundation's perspective, citizens are afforded proactive, tangible and varied ways to connect with the lands and resources they own in common trust as Americans.

There is tremendous potential to expand the activities and reach of friends groups today. In a survey of friends groups by the Foundation in April 2010, 41% reported operating budgets of less than \$50,000 and 50% reported having fewer than one paid staff member. More than half of those polled stated that advanced training in fundraising and board development would significantly benefit their organizations.

These results reflect impressive passion for our parks and a desire for greater guidance.

This year the Foundation is launching an in-depth pilot program to assist friends groups and help them become more effective and sustainable. This in-depth model has a proven track record, particularly within the land trust community, of creating more robust and efficient organizations that are better able to meet their missions. The potential also exists to help a national park form a friends group if there is sufficient community interest.

The pilot program will conduct on-site engagements with friends groups in each of the seven National Park Service regions for approximately twelve months per organization. The engagements begin with an organizational assessment that will consider such areas as organizational policies and procedures; strategic and program planning and evaluation; fundraising and resource development; and community relations and networking. In addition to fulfilling the promise of our Congressional charter, the Foundation's goal is to steadily increase the number of sustainable friends groups across the nation, broadening the landscape and growing the appetite for park philanthropy.

This pilot program builds on previous efforts whereby the Foundation successfully created new sustainable friends groups for Biscayne, Crater Lake, Dry Tortugas, Everglades, Glacier, Grand Teton, Mount Rainier, North Cascades, Olympic and Shenandoah National Parks, as well as Gateway National Recreation Area, Lake Mead National Recreation Area, Mississippi National River and Recreation Area, and the U.S.S. Arizona Memorial.

#### **SETTING PRIORITIES**

The Foundation is honored to help continue the rich tradition in which the parks were established and have been sustained—public and private interests working in tandem. The Foundation's activities benefit from our close collaboration and deep, positive relationships with all levels of the National Park Service – from the park rangers in the field to the Director himself.

As noted in our charter, the Secretary of the Interior serves as the *ex officio* Chairman of the Foundation's Board of Directors and the Director of the National Park Service serves as its Secretary. In cooperation with their fellow citizen board members, these officials direct the activities of the Foundation staff and help set its mission, budgets, grant-making areas and fundraising goals. The Secretary of the Interior and the National Park Service Director have always been invaluable resources to the board as it charts a course for our organization.

In 1998, the National Park Service and the Foundation jointly established a Superintendents Council, a platform for open dialogue between the Foundation and the National Park Service field. The Council provides a forum to receive critical feedback and advice on its current and future projects from park managers connected to the lands, resources and visitors. The Council is composed of two superintendents from each of the seven National Park Service regions who are nominated by their regional directors to exemplify the rich diversity of talent and training found in the national park system. These park managers constructively evaluate and critique the Foundation's fundraising, marketing and grant-making programs. This routine engagement helps ensure that the Foundation's projects support park-level interests and have the likelihood of on-the-ground success.

Additionally, the Foundation's offices are located in the National Park Service headquarters building in Washington, D.C. permitting daily contact between operations and program managers and Foundation staff. The primary liaisons between our organizations – the Chief of the National Park Service Office of Partnerships and Philanthropic Stewardship and the Foundation's Director of Partnerships and Government Relations – meet weekly to discuss new opportunities, manage ongoing activities and evaluate projects. This collaborative approach extends to staff-to-staff communications between Foundation and National Park Service staff in parks, regional offices and Washington, D.C.

Recently, the Foundation helped convene National Park Service and friends group leaders to discuss agreement templates that codify their partnerships and define fundraising activities. The Foundation has provided private legal counsel for these discussions, encouraging solutions that remove limitations to effective and sustainable National Park Service – friends group partnerships. Like the National Park Service, the Foundation applauds investments in templates and training that will streamline the process of establishing and growing these partnerships.

#### **THE CHARITABLE COMMUNITY FOR PARKS**

The National Park Foundation has benefited from the generosity of many individuals, foundations and corporations.

The Foundation has seen the greatest growth in its individual giving program in the past five years. In our 2010 fiscal year, the Foundation received donations from over 52,000 individuals. A robust website and a new online parks community have expanded our ability to attract donors in addition to an active direct mail program. In 2006, the Foundation established a major gift program to energize and retain individual donors who want to help connect the American people to their national parks. The Foundation benefits from the significant outreach of its Board of Directors, composed of leading philanthropists, business leaders and nonprofit directors.

Throughout its history, the Foundation has also worked with many significant corporate and foundation partners. Their support has enabled the National Park Service to enhance and expand important programs in such areas as education, preservation, community engagement, health and wellness, habitat restoration and volunteerism.

As noted in the 2009 GAO report commissioned by the Subcommittee for National Parks, Forests and Public lands and titled *Donations and Related Partnerships Benefit Parks, but Management Refinements Could Better Target Risks and Enhance Accountability*, the Foundation employs several models for corporate partnerships. The Foundation continues to pursue long-term relationships with existing and new corporations in a way that provides greater cash resources and minimizes Park Service risk.

With the support of the National Park Service, the Foundation is currently phasing out one specific model for corporate partnership. Launched in 2000, the "Proud Partners of America's National Parks" program permitted corporations to commit certain donations, primarily in-kind services, by entering into a tri-party agreement with the Foundation and the Park Service. In return, the corporations were designated as Proud Partners, permitted to affiliate themselves with the National Park Service and the Foundation in promotional materials and granted national marketing exclusivity. To ensure marketing exclusivity, the National Park Service agreed to abstain from entering into any other nationwide advertising agreements with companies that sell the same product or service as the Proud Partner.

Although this program has reaped significant benefits for the parks, its marketing exclusivity requirements prohibited the Foundation from soliciting new corporate donors for significant periods of time. Where the Foundation and National Park Service had five Proud Partners in 2006, only one, Coca-Cola, is active today. The Foundation and the National Park Service have learned that a robust fundraising program that connects the parks and corporate partners is possible under a different model.

A new model of successful corporate partnership is one with Macy's, Inc. From 2008 to 2010, the *Turn Over A New Leaf* campaign was designed to support, educate and inspire sustainability and eco-friendly practices in everyday life, as well as raise substantial support for the Foundation and its programs. Macy's has raised over \$6.4 million in unrestricted funds for the Foundation in three years. The partnership was formalized in a two-party agreement with the Foundation that provided for limited marketing exclusivity (i.e. 4-6 months) with the Foundation but not the Park Service, and leveraged a substantial corporate marketing budget to generate national awareness.

Partnerships like Macy's benefit the National Park Service and the Foundation through both the funds they provide and information in advertisements, which promotes public engagement with national parks. This model minimizes the appearance of commercialization within national parks by having corporations affiliate with the Foundation rather than directly with the National Park Service.

## CONCLUSION

The state of our parks at the Centennial Celebration in 2016 will say a lot about our priorities as a nation. Opportunities for philanthropy must be central to the future of our national parks. The Foundation is confident this can be accomplished in a manner that allows our local partners to be successful and helps programs at the national level extend the benefits of philanthropy to all parks. Philanthropy is critical to create new opportunities for more of the public to relate to their parks and to generate the creativity and innovation the National Park Service will need in the coming century.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for your ongoing support of national parks and for allowing me the opportunity to report on the important role philanthropy plays in supporting the noble mission of the National Park Service and in connecting all Americans to these very special places.

Mr. GRIJALVA. Thank you. Mr. Derrick Crandall, Counselor, National Park Hospitality Association. Welcome, sir.

**STATEMENT OF DERRICK A. CRANDALL, COUNSELOR,  
NATIONAL PARK HOSPITALITY ASSOCIATION, WASHINGTON,  
D.C.**

Mr. CRANDALL. Thank you, Mr. Chairman and distinguished members. I am delighted to be here representing the National Park Hospitality Association, one of the longest partnerships that the Park Service has had, stretching back more than 125 years. Concessioners now operate in some 160 national parks, providing a billion dollars in goods and services to nearly 100 million visitors to the parks every year, generating some \$70 million payments through franchise fees, and doing far more. Our guest donation programs in 13 national parks in cooperation with the National Park Foundation have generated more than \$1.1 million over the last five years, including more than \$300,000 in just the year concluding in June of 2010.

We look forward to doing much more in terms of partnerships in the second century of the National Park Service, and we would like to talk about several of the key issues of concern to concessioners.

First of all, we would note that park visitation by Americans is lower today than several decades ago even as our population has increased by 25 percent. We believe there are many units of the National Park System which offer wonderful experiences, but are highly underutilized and can, in fact, serve the Nation well while also protecting the resources.

We believe that concessioners can be an effective partner in calling these parks to the attention of the American public and building the infrastructure needed to satisfy visits. I would note that park-appropriate, LEED-certified ADA-compliant and architectural significant park structures need to keep up with the growth in population of the United States.

Earlier this year, Ken Burns, who produced the PBS series "America's Best Ideas," honored Stephen Mather, the first Director of the Park Service, for his unique role as a promoter, and pointed out that many of the roads to and through our national parks and many of the facilities in our parks were a result of the same individual that is so often credited with directing the culture of the Park Service in terms of protection.

One of his often quoted statements is "Scenery is a hollow enjoyment to the tourists who sets out in the morning after an indigestible breakfast and a fitful night sleep on an impossible bed."

We enjoy world-class facilities that are the result of Stephen Mather and his contemporaries, the El Tovar, the Ahwahnee, the Many Glacier Hotel and many more.

I would also note that Ken Burns ended his comments by saying, "If you think you have a good park, but no one knows about it, you don't have a good park."

What I would like to do is address four areas for partnerships in which concessioners can and should be playing a major role. The first is to create a new generation of enduring visitor infrastructure. I mentioned to you before that many of the lodges, restaurants, and other structures that now exist in the National Park

System and are synonymous with visits to many of those units date back nearly 100 years ago. It is time to look at how we can ensure 100 years from now, we have a similar generation of new grand structures serving the public in 2116. And in order to do that we believe that we need to look at several strategies to enhance the building use of the private sector, including concessioners, to invest in the national parks.

I note that there has been limited development of new infrastructure in the national parks over the last 20 years. Cavallo Point in Golden Gate National Recreation Area is an exception to that. I would note that Cavallo Point was offered initially as a concessions contract, and attracted no bidders from existing concessioners or other major hospitality entities. It was eventually offered as a commercial lease because that made it an investment of over \$100 million, when augmented by the money raised by Federal and friends' organizations, and the possibility of a 50-year lease.

What we would like to do is urge that the Congress consider a variety of ways both to encourage additional concessioner investment in infrastructure, and that would be to look at lengthening the current maximum concessions contract, which is now normally 10 years, but at a maximum of 20 years, to reflect the need of recovering that investment and also protecting the LSI investment, and if the Congress is interested we would be willing to talk more about the complexities of LSI.

But very quickly, we believe that there are alternatives. The Chicago lakeside and the investment in marinas under alternative revenue bonds where those are paid for by the boaters and other users of the lakeshore are one example; historic tax credits that could be used to encourage investment in facilities needed for makeovers, both existing Park Service properties as well as perhaps facilities that come to the Park Service through military base reuse strategies. We think that the President's suggestion of an infrastructure bank for surface transportation may have applicability to the national parks and would be willing to talk about that.

We also think that the Park Service, like Agriculture and Transportation, would benefit immensely from a multi-year program and an appropriations process to allow the kinds of thinking by both partners and the Park Service in needed infrastructure.

Finally, we urge the Congress now, after more than 12 years, to look at the implementation of the 1998 Concessions Act.

Mr. Chairman, we are proud of the job that concessioners have been playing. We think we can, in fact, help the Nation continue to have a close and beloved relationship with their national parks, and look forward to working with the Subcommittee.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Crandall follows:]

**Statement of Derrick A. Crandall, Counselor,  
National Park Hospitality Association**

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Subcommittee, my name is Derrick Crandall and I am delighted to appear as a representative of the National Park Hospitality Association (NPHA) to discuss the future of the National Park System and, in particular, the role of increased partnerships with the National Park Service (NPS) to protect parks, promote park visitation and provide outstanding services and experiences for the millions of people who visit units of the National Park System each year.



Concessioners are proud of the important role they play in helping people enjoy parks. Visitors come to the national parks to be inspired by the beauty of the parks while relaxing, recreating, learning, and having a good time with family and friends. What we do as concessioners has a great deal to do with the overall experience when they visit the park. We're an integral part of the national park experience and an important element in helping the NPS meet its mission. We are working hard at demonstrating best practices in environmental management, and are ISO-certified in many parks. We are active in offering healthy, sustainable foods to park visitors. We are true partners with the National Park Service.

Concessioners have served park visitors since the 1870's and today serve some 100 million park visitors annually in approximately 160 park units. NPSA members have a combined workforce of nearly 25,000 persons – mostly front-line, visitor-contact jobs – and provide in excess of \$1 billion in goods and services to visitors annually. Franchise fee payments to NPS generated from the approximately 600 concessions contracts exceed \$70 million annually, or about the combined sum raised annually by the National Park Foundation and members of the Friends Alliance. And concessioners do far more than generate franchise fees. Our Guest Contribution programs operate in partnership with local friends organizations and the National Park Foundation. The NPF-associated programs alone, in 13 parks, have generated \$1.1 million for deserving park projects since 2006, including more than \$300,000 in the year ending June 30, 2010. Concessioner marketing and park promotion efforts exceed \$10 million annually, and are coordinated with the marketing and promotion efforts of state and gateway communities that equal that amount. Concessioners are leading efforts to find ways to focus promotion on the *National Park System* and those *Americans unaware of the great benefits available through time in our parks* rather than on *specific parks and services* and *traditional park visitors*. Most importantly, concessioners are committed to meeting America's needs – needs for healthier lifestyles, for better and lifelong educational opportunities, for strong local and regional economies that can sustain and protect our parks, and for connecting all Americans to our parks across differences in regions, ages, income and ethnicity.

Concessioners are concerned that park visitation by Americans is lower today than several decades ago – even as our population has grown by 25%. While visitation to showcase parks remains stable, many other units of the National Park System offer wonderful experiences but are highly underutilized. In many cases, these less-visited, high-potential parks have limited visitor services, and this is an area we urge the Congress to examine. Some have argued that in today's complex, fast-paced world, even if we build new facilities in these park units, people might not come. We can tell you that the evidence seems conclusive: if we don't provide park lodging, restaurants and more, people won't come and the relevancy of parks to our society is threatened. As we look at partnerships and parks, we suggest that concessioners can and should be prime partners in building a new generation of park-appropriate, LEED-certified, ADA-compliant and architecturally significant park structures. And concessioners can be equally prime partners in outreach and promotion – promoting not just increased park visitation **but targeting especially use of the many under-visited and underutilized units of the park system.**

At a hearing on national parks earlier this year, Ken Burns, producer of the "America's Best Idea" series about national parks, praised the National Park Service's first Director, Stephen Mather, as a premier promoter and for working actively with railroads and others to build roads to and through parks and to build visitor facilities ranging from lodges to restaurants in the expanding National Park System. Mather's motive is clear from his oft-quoted statement: "*Scenery is a hollow enjoyment to the tourist who sets out in the morning after an indigestible breakfast and a fitful night's sleep on an impossible bed.*" We enjoy the legacy of Stephen Mather today in the world-class facilities concessioners operate: El Tovar, Ahwahnee, Many Glacier Hotel and more. Ken Burns concluded his testimony by saying, "If you think you have a good park but no one knows about it, you don't have a good park."

**Promoting national park visitation is important for many reasons. Not only is it good for jobs, but it also reconnects people to nature, provides them with an opportunity to be physically active, promotes learning, and strengthens families. Today we live in a world that is filled with distractions – a world where we can connect with information and communicate with people almost instantaneously. Unfortunately, these alternatives seem to increase the extent to which people become disconnected from nature and focused on virtual connections to places and to people.** A recent study by the Kaiser Family Foundation indicated that the average American youth spends

7.5 hours a day focused on a screen of some sort. No wonder that so many of the nation's youth are obese and at risk of Type II diabetes.

The National Park Service and its partners – including concessioners – need to undertake new outreach and marketing efforts. The efforts would not be based on advertising – as if we were selling a car or a theme park. But the efforts should include outreach to schools and to families with children and greatly improved information on the internet. In fact, Secretary Salazar undertook a major outreach and marketing effort last year – which he is repeating again this year – creating fee-free periods at national parks.

Mr. Chairman, we urge the Congress to act on several important opportunities to assure that the parks are able to remain relevant and loved over the next hundred years.

#### **New, Enduring Visitor Infrastructure**

We urge you to help in the creation of new park facilities in the tradition of the grand, enduring structures, many predating the creation of the National Park Service in 1916, that are synonymous with the National Park System. Unique architecture and quality construction mark structures like the Ahwahnee and El Tovar Hotels, lodges in Glacier and Yellowstone and many more historic structures that help make 21st Century park visits lifelong memories. Yet not all visitor structures in our parks are grand, or even park-appropriate. Many of those constructed mid-20th century are quite unremarkable, are costly to operate, and produce inferior visitor experiences. These structures fail to meet expectations of the Congress, the agency, concessioners, and the public that our parks should serve as outstanding examples of design in harmony with nature.

We believe that one of the greatest opportunities associated with the upcoming 100th anniversary of the National Park Service can and should be a limited number of new structures that, even in 2116, will still demonstrate national park-appropriate design and operations. This would mean quality design and materials that meet LEED and ADA design requirements. The resulting structures would minimize barriers to serving all Americans well while also achieving agency-espoused goals in energy efficiency, reduced water use, and other environmental objectives.

The National Park Service has undertaken some important planning in this area, although much of the planning has focused on buildings that would be constructed with appropriated funds and used for visitor centers, offices and more. This base of knowledge, though, could be united with the knowledge of concessioners operating in the park and other companies to achieve truly outstanding results.

New strategies to encourage non-federal capital investment in park visitor services and facilities are needed. Very few of the facilities now operated by concessioners were built with appropriated federal funds, and there is no reason to begin doing so now as the National Park Service approaches its 100th anniversary. Yet invitations to build new park facilities have been rare – certainly not enough to support a growth in capacity equal to population growth. And where new facilities have been added, like Cavallo Point in Golden Gate NRA, it has often been done as an exception to usual practices. It is noteworthy that the reuse of Fort Baker as a world-class conference center was initially proposed as a concessions contract. After careful study, all major current concessioners and other leading hospitality companies declined to offer qualifying bids. Fortunately, the combined vision and energies of GGNRA's NPS leadership and friends organization found an alternative course – a commercial lease which, ironically, could only be offered after concluding that there was no necessary visitor service to be provided at the location.

The creation of the Lodge at the Golden Gate was financially viable only through a 50-year lease, through an approach to regulation of pricing of rooms and food radically at variance from the approach used by NPS with concessioners, and with an infusion of supplemental federal and Golden Gate National Parks Conservancy-raised capital. Contrast that approach with the NPS standard of a 10-year concessions contract and a concerted – and we think misguided – effort to expunge concessioner capital investments and limit clearly legal credit to concessioners for investments, as is being proposed in the now-pending concessions contract for Signal Mountain Lodge and related facilities in Grand Teton National Park. The decision to choose an alternative treatment of Leasehold Surrender Interest (LSI) under this contract is likely to decrease payments to the National Park Service by \$3 million over 10 years, payments which are vital to facility maintenance and, because of the reduction, exacerbating the NPS serious deferred maintenance problem.

We urge the Congress to redirect NPS efforts and we offer several additional ideas for accessing private capital for beautiful, state-of-the-art, and enduring visitor facilities for the next century of park operations – structures that will be as beloved by the national park community in 2116 as the Ahwahnee is today.

First, concessioners remain willing and able to invest in new visitor facilities, major renovations of existing facilities and conversions of buildings to new uses – especially as opportunities may arise at new park units. To do so, a minimum concessions contract of 20 years is needed, possible under law, but a longer contract more comparable to that used at Cavallo Point or for ski areas in national forests would make this more viable. And concessioners need the protection of LSI provisions under the 1998 concessions act to make this investment economic.

Second, Congress and NPS should look closely at the dramatic rejuvenation of the Chicago lakeshore by the Chicago Park District (CPD). Over a decade, some \$250 million in investment has dramatically changed the park infrastructure on the lakeshore. Working in partnership with a concessioner with expertise in marina operation, the CPD has rebuilt and expanded nine recreational harbors with revenues from alternative revenue bonds. The added revenues from these improvements not only service the debt from the bonds – bonds that have no recourse to either CPD or the City of Chicago, but only to the revenue stream from the recreation operations on the lakeshore – but also provide some \$15 million annually in new operating funds for CPD. And those paying the higher fees – mostly recreational boaters – are delighted by the improved safety and services. Happily, millions of other visitors to the lakeshore are also beneficiaries of the investment – at no cost to them!

Third, NPS owns, and will be offered ownership of, many structures which, if privately held, would reward qualifying investments with historic tax credits. We urge the Congress to make investments by concessioners in these structures eligible for these tax credits. Noteworthy, after private investors in qualifying historic structures are rewarded with a 20% tax credit, the private owner then has 100% equity in the building and may sell the enhanced property for gain. Were historic credits to be offered to concessioners, ownership of the improved property would remain with the NPS.

Fourth, the President has proposed a creative approach to leveraging federal funds in the surface transportation arena that is worth examining for use in other arenas. Part of his newly announced and ambitious six-year surface transportation measure, expected to be outlined fully in his FY2012 budget early next year, is a new Infrastructure Bank. Using \$5 billion in federal funds as a guaranty, he proposes to raise \$50 billion in private funds to be invested in surface transportation projects. While some of these funds would go toward toll roads and bridges with revenues, the concept also includes investment in projects that are strategic public investments. We urge this committee to look carefully at the concept of an investment bank applied to needed park infrastructure investments – utilities, lodges, campgrounds, marinas, transportation systems and more. It may well be that this new entity could be as vital to the future of the national parks in the century to come as the National Park Foundation is and should be.

Fifth, we urge the Congress to understand the immense advantages accorded to federal agencies with multi-year programs and appropriations. In transportation, agriculture and other fields, a multiple-year program empowers the Congress to express clear long-term goals and priorities, and provides partners – states, local governments and business – to similarly develop multi-year strategies. The savings to the involved federal agencies can also be dramatic. The arguments for multiple-year programs and appropriations for transportation and agriculture seem applicable to America's park system – especially if a sustainable source of funding can be identified.

Sixth, the Congress should conduct oversight on the 1998 legislation, which changed concessions practices, to see if the results are really those intended. The shortening of most contracts, the elimination of preferential rights on contract renewals and the substitution of Leasehold Surrender Interest (LSI) for Possessory Interest (PI) have increased the flow of franchise fee payments to the National Park Service, but it is not clear that goals of reduced burden on concessioners and the agency or increased competitiveness are being achieved. Moreover, there is good evidence that combined with the restrictions of Directors Order 21, the administration of the act has discouraged companies acting as concessioners from adopting best practices in customer service, since guest satisfaction is poorly monitored and offers no advantages for excellence. This committee needs to know the hurdles concessioners often face doing the “right thing.” Not long ago, the long-time practice of a concessioner here in Washington to provide free hot chocolate to children attending the Pageant of Peace on the Ellipse caused a mini-firestorm because Directors Order 21 prohibits concessioners from contributing directly to charitable events in parks which they serve.

### **New Opportunities in Health and Education**

We believe that one of the most exciting opportunities for the national parks in the 21st Century is to recognize the measureable benefits the park system offers in fields such as education and health, and to develop sustainable funding responding to these contributions. There is good precedent. Beginning with ISTEA in 1991, a large share of park road costs has been shifted from natural resources appropriations to transportation appropriations.

There is significant and growing evidence that parks are, and can increasingly be, playing a significant role in reducing the nation's healthcare costs. The nation now spends \$2.7 trillion on healthcare, or about \$8,000 annually per American. Of this cost, an estimated 70% is for chronic illnesses, which are lifestyle-induced and largely preventable. Historically, smoking has been the largest single contributor to these costs. Yet in the 21st Century, there is a new competitor for the top contributor to chronic illness: physical inactivity and eating patterns that are at the heart of an obesity epidemic with resulting illnesses ranging from diabetes to hypertension and strokes, cancer and depression. A growing army of medical experts is looking at parks and open space as cost-effective and successful intervention strategies.

In conjunction with the underway America's Great Outdoors Initiative, we have teamed up with the Institute at the Golden Gate to begin the documentation of parks/medical community efforts. In locations ranging from Albuquerque to Brooklyn, doctors are prescribing parks. In Arkansas, we discovered that cardiologists had personally raised more than \$1 million for construction and maintenance of an urban "Medical Mile," offering both opportunities for healthy fun and information about "minimum daily requirements" for physical activity. Also in Arkansas, we learned that the University of Arkansas has invested \$90,000 in expanding and upgrading a U.S. Army Corps of Engineers campground because studies show that patients receiving long-term cancer treatment recover better and faster while staying in a park-like setting than in a hospital ward, a hotel or other facility – and at much lower costs. We see major healthcare insurers paying for park-focused activities for those diagnosed as pre-diabetic as a cost-effective way to arrest the advance of the disease. We applaud the partnership of NatureBridge, Olympic National Park, TriWest Healthcare Alliance and others that is bringing wounded warriors and their families to that park to heal physical and emotional wounds. And in California, we have found a healthcare insurer committed to helping its insureds control healthcare costs with regular screenings and steps as unusual as treating park entrance fees as reimbursable expenses. These and other initiatives have been collected as a first round of case studies on Health and the Great Outdoors in a booklet submitted with this testimony, and we propose to continue this collection and sharing of best practices.

In short, we believe that partnerships with medical interests are a huge opportunity for America's national parks, and one that should be encouraged and aided by the Congress. Much of this activity can be attributed to the impact of a recent White House Fellow. Dr. Michael Suk, an orthopedic trauma surgeon, was selected and somewhat surprised when he was assigned to spend his fellowship year aiding the Secretary of the Interior. His seminal work connecting health and parks is now paying immense dividends and prompts us to recommend the establishment of a ongoing fellowship program placing a doctor in the Office of the Secretary of the Interior as Special Advisor for Health Programs, perhaps in conjunction with the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, which already places 12 fellows annually within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

And we also believe similar partnership opportunities exist in the educational field. There is a growing body of evidence that experiential learning in parks achieves better educational outcomes and is cost-effective. And the educational community is reaching out to the parks community. Just 30 miles from Capitol Hill, Prince William County Schools – Virginia's second largest and fastest growing school system – is moving from pilot to full implementation of ED OUT, an outdoors learning program that enlists adjunct faculty from federal, state and non-profit entities and utilizes 16 recreation sites in the county, ranging from Prince William Forest Park to wildlife refuges. The program is far more ambitious than a day of outdoor learning, however. Students – and parents – receive information about summer fun that relates to the upcoming year's curriculum. Best of all, programs of this type can actually generate revenue for NPS and other agencies.

### **Funding Sustainable Outreach and Promotion Efforts**

As mentioned earlier, the NPHA believes that the National Park Service should undertake expanded outreach and marketing efforts – especially directed to urban Americans, Americans of color, new Americans, and other portions of the American

public with limited traditions of park visitation. To facilitate this, we offer the following alternatives.

One option would be to provide the agency with authority to utilize franchise fees paid by national park concessioners annually to support NPS outreach and marketing efforts. The NPHA urges committing 10% of the \$70 million in total franchise fees paid, or some \$7 million annually, to a new National Park Outreach and Promotion Fund.

Alternatively, 10% of the receipts from annual sales of the America the Beautiful Pass could be dedicated to a matching fund to support park promotion efforts. Purchase of the annual pass – permitting access to virtually all federal recreation sites for 12 months – should be a major component of park promotion efforts. Holders of passes can be reached to communicate opportunities in parks – and because they can enter any park without paying an entrance fee, they are likely to be interested in learning more about when and where they can add to their park experiences.

Current annual park pass sales are very limited, but a new promotion coalition could boost sales significantly, adding substantially to the current \$175 million in park fees now collected annually. If these funds could be used on a 50–50 matching basis with resources from private sources such as non-profit and philanthropic organizations, concessioners and other private interests, then the NPS could double its money and greatly expand outreach to minorities and other underserved communities, young adults, families with children, and the ever-expanding number of older Americans with grandchildren. This effort would be good for gateway communities, generating jobs and added income, and could help to expand interest and awareness among an entire generation of Americans who, without this promotion, are likely to remain unaware of this wonderful legacy of national parks. If successful, this effort could reverse recent trends in park visitation, and help generate additional income to support the parks and improve facilities and visitor services.

#### **Institutionalizing Creativity**

America's park and conservation community has been blessed with visionary leadership for more than 150 years – reflected in the world's first national park, the world's first national forest and national wildlife refuge systems and more. That vision continues. For many of us who had the pleasure to work with the late Brian O'Neill, long-time General Superintendent of Golden Gate National Recreation Area, we saw firsthand one of the leading contemporary visionaries in our field. We are enthusiastic about the interest of the Chairman of this subcommittee in exploring ways to encourage and nurture this visionary spirit within NPS professionals and partners to the agency. While it seems like an oxymoron to attempt to institutionalize untraditional thinking and partnership-based thinking, we believe that it can and should be done. Our experience with our annual Partners Outdoors program, an effort drawing some 150 carefully chosen, diverse public and private sector representatives to look afresh at challenges and opportunities gives us confidence that the Chairman's objectives can be met with the right kind of governance and leadership.

#### **Summary**

Mr. Chairman and Members, we need to get Americans back in touch with nature, engaged in physical activities and outdoor recreation, and connected to the magnificent culture, heritage and landscapes that are celebrated by our National Park System. We need to reach out to youth to encourage them to share in the wonder and enjoyment of our national parks and discourage the increasingly sedentary lifestyles that are contributing to our healthcare crisis. We need to expand park visitation to encourage minorities, disadvantaged communities, new Americans and urban residents to see their national parks for themselves and to build a broader constituency for America's great outdoors. We need to find new and innovative ways to reinvest in the maintenance, restoration, and expansion of critical park infrastructure – much of which was built either by private investment when the national parks were first created, or in conjunction with the work of the Civilian Conservation Corps more than half a century ago. And we need to take advantage of new opportunities for partnerships in the health and education arenas.

The National Park Hospitality Association and the national park concessioners want to help you, the National Park Service, and all Americans in achieving these objectives. As the 100th Anniversary of the National Park Service shines a light on America's Best Idea, we hope you will help us build on our longstanding partnership with the NPS to find new and innovative ways to improve the parks and create a new generation of Americans who share in the wonder of this amazing legacy. We thank you for considering our thoughts and recommendations. We would be de-

lighted to provide additional information and respond to any questions you might have.

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Mr. GRIJALVA. Thank you very much.

Let me begin with you, Mr. Crandall. Toward the close of your statement you brought up how you encourage non-Federal investment in capital improvements in the parks. Can you expand on the alternative revenue bond and the historic tax credit concept that you brought up?

Mr. CRANDALL. Yes. In Chicago, the entire lakeshore has been rebuilt with some \$250 million worth of alternative revenue bonds issued by the Chicago Park District, but with no recourse to either the City of Chicago or its taxpayers. The recourse on that bond is exclusively from the revenues generated through leasing of slips to recreational boaters, and franchise fees paid by restaurants and other commercial operations along the lakeshore.

The nice thing is that in addition to paying the entire service on the debt, it generates some \$15 million a year to serve visitors who are paying nothing to enjoy the lakeshore. It has been a tremendous success.

In terms of historic tax credits, as you know there are wonderful examples of buildings that have been restored through what effectively is a 20 percent tax credit to the investors in those structures. Now normally when a private individual does that on a private building they then own entirely this tax advantage property. What we would suggest is there is a logic to saying that if, in fact, the concessioner or another interest were to invest in something like the Many Glacier Hotel, the structure would remain the Park Service's, and so, therefore, the benefits of the tax credit would truly accrue to the public and remain with the public as opposed to becoming something that has value to the private investor.

Mr. GRIJALVA. OK. Thank you.

Mr. PUSKAR, give me an idea of how the Foundation determines which projects you are going to fund and what role does the Service play in that determination?

Mr. PUSKAR. The Service plays an integral role in that determination and in that process. I would look at it in two ways. One, as I mentioned, the Director of the National Park Service serves on our Board of Directors. On an annual basis our board meets to discuss what the fundraising and grant program goals are going to be each year. He is a part of that discussion.

Following the GAO report in 2004, we also responded by working with the Park Service to implement a general agreement between our organizations that spells out how, as staff members, we will work together to ensure that we implement those Board interests. What I can say is that from the beginning of each grant program, for example, we are involving the National Park Service Partnership Office, working with the park leadership. When it comes to handing out our grants, decisions are not made solely by the Foundation but experts within the Park Service are used who know best how things will work on the ground.

Mr. GRIJALVA. Yes, one of the grant programs that you have initiated that I think has great potential for addressing some of the issues that other panelists have brought up about visitorship, in-

creasing that number, is America's Best Idea Grants, about a concept of inclusion and bringing more folks in.

Do you think there is enough oversight and enough coordination with the Park Service, because this is a central concept to building up the base of support from a variety of communities? Is there enough oversight going on in terms of those grants so that they are indeed doing the attraction and working to make sure that the parks are becoming more user friendly to a variety of communities?

Mr. PUSKAR. I would argue that it is, by its very nature, entrepreneurial and experimental. In many ways, these grants serve as seeds for the Park Service to determine, at the local level, that this is an underserved community that needs our help. This is the way that community is telling us we may be better served.

Mr. GRIJALVA. At what point, and maybe that is something that we can talk at another time, at what point do you evaluate if that seed took root?

Mr. PUSKAR. At the end of each grant period, let us just say it is handed out in January, by September we are looking for the monies to be spent, a report given that we can then work with the Park Service to evaluate.

Mr. GRIJALVA. OK.

Mr. PUSKAR. And see if there is something that should grow more.

Mr. GRIJALVA. Thank you very much. Mr. Bishop?

Mr. BISHOP. Could I just ask each of you if you would be kind enough to tell me in one sentence, it could be compound but not run on, what is the purpose of national parks?

Ms. ASBURY. I would say it is to connect our nation's citizenship to the culture and the heritage, and to preserve and protect those places for generations to come.

Mr. BISHOP. OK.

Ms. SMARTT. To protect our natural resources, tell the story of America and provide educational and recreational opportunities.

Mr. PUSKAR. To protect the natural wonders of the United States and the places where history was made.

Mr. CRANDALL. And I would say to provide the American public with a shared sense of treasured places that provide education, fun, and healthy activity.

Mr. BISHOP. Thank you all. Mr. Puskar, you provide within one of your services Electronic Field Trips.

Mr. PUSKAR. Yes.

Mr. BISHOP. Which is exciting. Is there any substantial definable evidence that kids seeing the Electronic Field Trips actually attend the parks that they view electronically?

Mr. PUSKAR. I do not have any data on how many children that are able to view this would then go onto their parks. Hopefully between the broadcast and the attendant educational materials they get a good sense of them and are hopefully inspired to get to the park closest to them—or to their backyard at the very least.

Mr. BISHOP. And I appreciate that as well. Some of our resources within the park system, like the mall, for example, are well visited by people who come to Washington, but they don't come to Washington to see the mall. It is a secondary impact. Unfortunately, many of our resources in the park system are out of the way, which

means it has to be a destination point. So could I once again ask each of you, start with Mr. Crandall, how your entity makes the parks a destination point?

Mr. CRANDALL. Well, it provides me with an opportunity to recall that the Park Service was once the Nation's travel department and, in fact, promoted—and I submit this for the record, a series of posters that were prepared during the CCC days. Today, one of the few organizations pushing for and promoting, putting onto the radar screen the national parks would be concessioners, although I would say that promotional activity is largely focused on the parks in which concessions currently operate.

Mr. BISHOP. Can I also recommend for your idea that if you really want to get more people attending the parks certain things be allowed to be found in the parks? Hint. Hint. OK, fine. Mr. Puskar.

Mr. PUSKAR. I don't know how to follow that.

I would say two things. One, I think the work that we are doing with friends groups to ensure that, at a local level, communities are able to engage with their parks, create friends groups, and in some ways drive economic development may help parks get more on a map, which is great. Second, as the national charitable partner, we look to work with the Park Service as best we can to make sure that people know that there are 392 units out there when they may suspect there are 14.

Mr. BISHOP. Ms. Smartt.

Ms. SMARTT. Our organization works with schools that we scholarship, and these are typically children that have not been to a national park. In fact, that is one of the questions that we ask in working with the schools, to survey the class not only their science education, but their experience with national parks. We don't have hard data. It is something we are looking at, their program evaluation, about what the impact is long term on these children in terms of their coming back with their families to the parks, but I think that is a large part of our effort.

Mr. BISHOP. Thank you. Ma'am.

Ms. ASBURY. Our organizations, particularly the cooperating associations, help to provide that intersection of taking the parks' story and putting them into tangible materials that the public can purchase or that they can learn about online, and so that opportunity for sights that are sometimes not commercially viable, or the big, you know, top 10 or 11 sites get their story out and people have the opportunity to connect to that. Also, the education of programs and the activities, such as the field schools and field institutes and the programs that are taking place, engage people in the parks that might not otherwise attend at an early age.

Mr. BISHOP. Thank you. I appreciate that. Obviously one of the issues we have with parks is the visitation. It is declining, the age of visitors is increasing, and those are two trends that are not boding well for the future of our park system. Thank you.

Mr. GRIJALVA. Thank you, sir.

Let me just follow up. Ms. Smartt, in your testimony you discuss some of the new hoops that you have to jump through to get an agreement with the National Park Service, and you also mentioned that these agreements are becoming overreaching and not work-



able. Can you give us some specific examples and discuss how that differs from past experience?

Ms. SMARTT. Yes. We have been working on a fundraising agreement for a new campus in Yosemite National Park. We started on it in draft in 2008, and were told by the National Park Service to quit working on it because we hadn't gotten a record of decision, so we had to quit working on that agreement, and it would be seen as pre-decisional if you are raising money for a project that you haven't gotten your record of decision on. So, we got into this kind of bureaucratic loop with the Park Service. That is the first time that has ever happened, and I am not sure what was driving the sensitivity on the National Park Service side.

We are still in draft. That original 20-page agreement has now morphed into a 40-page agreement. The clause in it on donor recognition is in direct conflict with Director's Order 21, so there are parts of it that don't agree with other legal documents that the Park Service uses to guide its work. That is just one small example.

Another example is we built a facility in Olympic National Park to house our children.

Mr. GRIJALVA. Can I ask, just to follow up on that example, would the uniformity point, the template point that Mr. Wenk was making—

Ms. SMARTT. Yes.

Mr. GRIJALVA.—would that help with—

Ms. SMARTT. It would help substantially, yes. Yes. And to make sure that everything in these agreements are in conformity with other rules and regulations. There are conflicts. There has even been a suggestion that they need to see the by-laws of our organization, so we have had a number of conversations around agreements that have not been particularly productive. We have a 40-year partnership with the National Park Service, and it seems a little odd after 40 years that they are concerned about our by-laws.

We had operated in the Golden Gate National Recreation Area for 30 years, and our cooperative agreement came up for renewal, and they offered us a five-year agreement with the expectation that we were going to invest in facilities there. It goes to the heart of what Derrick Crandall was saying. Even for nonprofits, you cannot invest long term without long-term agreements. It doesn't make any sense. There are a number of those kinds of things that are quite different than when we started operating 25, 30, 40 years ago, depending on the park.

Mr. GRIJALVA. Thank you. Ms. Asbury, tell us about the competitive bidding process that currently exists among nonprofits that are seeking to operate in the parks. Is this a common occurrence among organizations that you represent?

Ms. ASBURY. It is not now a common occurrence but it is something that our organizations see quite often creep into language about the importance of competition, and sometimes in situations where competition is not necessarily productive. I will use an example. It started with the Bureau of Land Management a few years ago when they were kind of the lead organization for placing all opportunities to work with the agency on grants.gov. So, examples would be like a cooperating association that may have had a

longstanding relationship with BLM land, their agreement ended. In the past, it had been open to automatic renewal if they were doing a good job and being productive in the partnership. Suddenly those agreements started showing up on grants.gov, with a suggestion that they needed to be competed.

So we recognize that there needs to be processes sometimes when there is a new opportunity to make sure that different entities have an opportunity to participate. However, when there are long-term established relationships that are productive relationships and are working effectively, it is disruptive to have that feeling of competition necessary to make things work into the future.

Mr. GRIJALVA. Ms. Smartt, one last question.

Ms. SMARTT. Yes.

Mr. GRIJALVA. The conflicts and problems that we were talking about in the last question, are they found at the local level predominantly or is it a higher level?

Ms. SMARTT. Actually, I think what has happened is we feel like we have been working very well with the local park, and then it goes to the region for review, and then it comes to Washington to the solicitor's office for review, and then it gets into this endless loop between the park and Washington with more and more layers of legalese and clauses added.

Mr. GRIJALVA. Got you.

Ms. SMARTT. Yes.

Mr. GRIJALVA. So it is at the higher level?

Ms. SMARTT. Yes.

Mr. GRIJALVA. OK. Thank you very much. Mr. Bishop, any follow up? Thank you very much, and let me invite the next panel up.

Thank you very much and let me begin with Ms. Nancy Chamberlain, Associate Dean, Department of Recreation and Parks, Northern Virginia Community College. Welcome. I look forward to your comments.

**STATEMENT OF NANCY CHAMBERLAIN, M.S., C.P.R.P., ASSOCIATE DEAN, DEPARTMENT OF RECREATION AND PARKS, NORTHERN VIRGINIA COMMUNITY COLLEGE, ANNANDALE, VIRGINIA**

Ms. CHAMBERLAIN. Thank you, sir. Good morning, Mr. Chairman, and Members of the Subcommittee.

Thank you for the opportunity to present the key components of the partnership between the Department of the Interior, National Park Service-Shenandoah National Park and Northern Virginia Community College. I am here before you today due to the dedication of my students and the recreation parks leisure services program at Northern Virginia Community College.

The successful partnership with the National Park Service-Shenandoah National Park was born of their efforts to bring the love of their national parks, forests and public lands to the lives of youth, primarily school-aged children.

The RPK students, Recreation and Parks, designed a Students Encouraging Environmental Discovery Program or SEED in 2008 to address the disconnect between children and the environment. The SEED goal was to serve children who were both socio-economically disenfranchised as well as nature disenfranchised.

I want to highlight some of the—there are lots of successful components of this partnership. Some are most important, I think, for this Committee's concern. All partners share a common goal in reaching urban youth and providing quality, resource-based education. The National Park Service and the Northern Virginia Community College and our subpartner, Prince William County Park Authority, had this as a student-driven partnership. College students cared for and designed this program.

The National Park Service was receptive to the offer of partnership. It was designed and driven by academic goals and service learning objectives. The operational model between the partners was mutually determined. It was not imposed by either the goals and objectives of either of the partners in isolation.

The task agreement allowed the National Park Service-Shenandoah National Park staff to focus as subject-matter experts, and allowed the other partners to focus on daily operations and disciplinary requirements and monitoring within the program.

I think the most unique feature of the partnership with Northern Virginia Community College and Prince William County is that we are programmatic partners. We are not fundraising partners and we are not research partners.

Neither Northern Virginia Community College nor the Prince William County Park Authority partners proposed long-term projects, or projects that required maintenance or service beyond the actual program period. The Northern Virginia Community College maintains substantial volumes of equipment necessary for backpacking, camping, and hiking, and the goal of this particular partnership was to get youth into camping. Access to equipment made overnight experiences possible and reduced the financial risk to the National Park Service-Shenandoah National Park for equipment.

The National Park Service did design specific programs, destination subject matters, and demonstrated subject matter expertise, which was invaluable to the partners of Northern Virginia Community College-Prince William County Park. They customized the junior ranger program booklets for us and they were a fabulous hit. The National Park Service also made video cameras available to participants so they could document their experiences, and this was a fabulous mechanism to hold the attention of the youth. The goal is to use those materials in historical documentation in future marketing.

There were some challenges as we have all discussed today, some bureaucratic requirements that were time-consuming and took our attention away from programming. The cooperative agreements, task agreements and memorandums of understanding needed to have been in place in January in order for us to implement mid-June operations.

Funding notification needed to have come no later than the 31st of January in order to implement June operations. The cooperative agreement process between the National Park Service and Northern Virginia Community College admitting mutual constraints was time-consuming and somewhere between three and four months.

Time delays affected programming, compromised contracting periods, employee and volunteer screening schedules and marketing

demands for the program. The time to negotiate cooperative agreements between the National Park Service and NOVA was in stark contrast to our time it took Northern Virginia Community College to negotiate a memorandum of understanding between Prince William County Park and the community college.

The date of funding notification in March of 2009, in combination with the final agreement, was too late to deliver the program as originally structured. We went from a six-week program format down to a two-week program format. The date of funding came most too late for the marketing programs and the hard marketing materials for summer programs. Typically that is issued in mid-February. It proves to be difficult to celebrate partnerships with the National Park Service imprinted in static marketing materials in advance of funding notification or clarifications of the task agreements.

As all of us have said, some of the effect of the changes in the partnership and the centralization of agreements seems to have been in response to a set of unknowns. What did the cooperative task agreement look like? What did the documentation look like? And what were the methods for distributing grant monies?

The accomplishments were many—too many to highlight in our time period. The success of the partnerships was evidenced by the children completing the Junior Ranger Program and Leave No Trace Awareness Program that created constituencies between the parks, the National Park Service, and the families. Children have returned to the national parks since the end of this program. Children visited at least four programs in the national parks, and met park rangers. A multitude of high-risk youth were profiled and served—culturally diverse children with documented cognitive disabilities. The parents reported great things. My favorite was, “My child was allergic to effort, but she can’t stop talking about hiking and climbing.” “My child was afraid to sleep in a tent but now wants her very own.”

Program diversity was achieved because the National Park Service was flexible enough to let us visit one and two-night short experiences. The program served as the first experience in a national park for 80 percent of the children and the first time they had participated in a park program delivered by a park ranger. And 100 percent of the participants gave up their cell phones and electronic devices to play in the national park, and forgot to ask for their equipment when they went home. We thought that was great.

The methodology for project determination from our agency is just that it meets our institutional capacity and curriculum goals, and that the principal and county park as a partner are prioritizing their Fiscal Year 2011 budgets for anything that has to do with environmental awareness or education.

Recommendations: Refine partner types. There didn’t seem to be a place for us—

Mr. GRIJALVA. We are going to have to ask you to go a little faster on the recommendations.

Ms. CHAMBERLAIN. That is fine. There was no place for us as program partners. We need some outlines on how to do that. What does the National Park Service need? Give us a list. Maybe we can get help from the academic community where it is not research-

based. Expand questionnaires and qualifications. Make a checklist for who is an appropriate program partner and how that is devised. Share training with us as it has been spoken about before. We would be willing to serve as training facilities for the National Park Service in the local regions, and encourage National Park Service to reach out to colleges and institutions programmatically because there is an educational service learning modality issue and goal in the colleges and communities.

Mr. GRIJALVA. OK, thank you.

Ms. CHAMBERLAIN. Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Chamberlain follows:]

**Statement of Nancy A. Chamberlain, M.S., C.P.R.P., Associate Professor/  
Assistant Dean, Recreation, Parks & Leisure Studies, Northern Virginia  
Community College, Annandale, Virginia**

Mr. Chairman and members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to present the key components of the partnership by and between the Department of the Interior, National Park Service, and Northern Virginia Community College (NOVA) and Prince William County Park Authority (sub-partner).

**Overview:**

I am before you today due to the dedication of my students, in the Recreation, Parks & Leisure Studies (RPK) at Northern Virginia Community College (NOVA). The successful partnership with Shenandoah National Park and the National Park Service is borne of their efforts to bring our love of the national parks, forests and public lands to the lives of youth.

The RPK Program is the only two year Associate of Science program in the Virginia Community College System in the Commonwealth of Virginia. Faculty and students in this program are uniquely dedicated, as are other academicians and students across the United States, to the study of environmental education, recreation, stewardship and sustainability in parks, forests and public lands.

The RPK students designed the "Students Encouraging Environmental Discovery" (S.E.E.D.) program in 2008 to address the disconnect between children and the environment in keeping with H.R. 3036: No Child Left Inside Act of 2008. Students were also touched by the publication of Richard Louv, "Last Child in the Woods".

In a culminating academic assignment they were tasked to design a program that would address the lack of outdoor experiential learning opportunities for children. As a result since spring 2009, the S.E.E.D. program has delivered after-school programs in Fairfax County, Virginia's, School Age Child Care (SACC) centers along the Route 1 corridor. RPK worked with Theresa Jefferson at the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), Lorton, Virginia office to deliver these after school programs to build on existing BLM programs in the local school district.

The S.E.E.D. goal is to serve youth who were both socio-economically disenfranchised as well as youth who were nature disenfranchised. Youth without quality access to parks, environmental education, outdoor discovery and stewardship opportunities were determined to be at risk by the S.E.E.D. program guidelines. The summer camp program "Camp S.E.E.D." was an outcome of the after school program allowing the RPK program to continue its outreach to youth year round.

My testimony will focus on six core areas today:

- 1) Components of Successful Partnership
- 2) Challenges in Partnership
- 3) The effect of National Park Service policy on partnership
- 4) Accomplishments of and benefits to the National Park Service, Shenandoah National Park, Northern Virginia Community College and Prince William County Park Authority by virtue of partnership
- 5) Review methodology for project determination
- 6) Recommendations for future program partnerships

**1. Components of Successful Partnership**

- a) All partners shared the common goal in reaching urban youth and providing quality resource based education.
- b) The NPS/NOVA partnership was a Recreation, Parks & Leisure Studies student driven partnership. Shenandoah National Park was receptive to the offer of partnership. Partnership with NPS was driven by academic and service learning goals of RPK program.

- c) The operational model between the partners was mutually determined and not imposed by the goals and objectives of either partnership in isolation.
- d) Division of responsibilities outlined clearly in the Task Agreement which allowed the Shenandoah National Park staff to focus on subject matter expertise across multiple disciplines while NOVA and Prince William Park Authority staff provided daily operations and disciplinary requirements of the program.
- e) There were substantial and unique contributions made by all partners which truly supported the cooperative agreement.
- f) Northern Virginia Community College (NOVA) and their sub-partner, Prince William County Park Authority, are unique partners. These agencies are programmatic partners not fund raising partners.
- g) NOVA and Prince William County Park Authority have their own infrastructure to deliver similar projects, marketing, web support, equipment, staff, registration capabilities, and therefore did not place financial burdens on the NPS partner.
- h) Each partner had different federal, state and municipal guidelines and accepted tasks and responsibilities based on bureaucratic capabilities rather than focus on restriction.
- i) Neither the NOVA or Prince William County Park Authority partners proposed long term projects nor programs that required maintenance or service by any partner beyond the program period. NOVA contributed equipment and materials necessary for the program and makes this type of equipment available to this and other programs throughout the year. NOVA uses this equipment throughout the remainder of the year to meet educational objectives. The nature of the finite program design reduced financial risk for all partners.
- j) NOVA Office of Grants Development could draw on past experience with the task agreement documents and grants forms from partnership with the Manassas Battlefield.
- k) Professionals in partner agencies had unique and unduplicated skills which contributed to the substantial and diverse offerings within the program and stood as a testament to cooperation.
- l) NOVA's Recreation, Parks & Leisure Studies program maintains a substantial volume of equipment necessary for a backpacking, camping, and hiking programs. Access to equipment made the overnight experience possible. Financial risk for equipment was transferred from the park to the program partner. The sub-partner, Prince William County Partner has a similar challenge with respect to gear to facilitate overnight experiences. Having camping gear available to families made the cost of enrolling their child in the program more cost effective. Lack of access to gear would have been a barrier to both programming and participation.
- m) Grant funding from NPS partner made programming available off site from partner's agency location. New geography and new experiences for staff and participants were afforded.
- n) Grant funding from NPS partner made intense day-long ranger programs available.
- o) NPS partner had developed new programs that integrated technology with resource investigations using hand-held GPS units not available to NOVA or Prince William County Park Authority partners. NPS staff served as subject matter experts and trained staff and participants with GPS units.
- p) NPS partner designed programs specific to the destination demonstrating subject matter expertise which was invaluable to the partners. The customized Junior Ranger programs booklets were a great hit with participants.
- q) NPS partner made Flip-Video cameras available to the participants so they could document their experiences at the park and throughout the week at other NPS locations. This was a fabulous mechanism to hold the participants attention and gave them ownership in an end product. The goal is to use these videos to create marketing materials and historical documentation of program success.
- r) The NPS partner had radio communication in the park thus affording emergency communication. Cell phones were insufficient methods of communication in park due to connectivity challenges. Radio communication was a substantial part of the Emergency Action Planning for the partners when taking children into the wilderness.

**2) Challenges in Partnership**

- a) Legal/bureaucratic requirements were very time consuming and took away from program development.
- b) All cooperative agreements, task agreements and memorandums of understanding need to be in place no later than January in order to implement operations in mid-June.
- c) Funding notification needs to be released no later than January 31 in order to implement operations in mid-June.
- d) Cooperative agreement process between NPS and NOVA (mutual constraints) was too time consuming (3—4 months). Delays consumed valuable programming time and compromised contracting, employee and volunteer screening schedules and program marketing demands. The time to negotiate the cooperative agreement between NPS and NOVA stands in stark contrast to the one month it took to negotiate a Memorandum of Understanding between NOVA and Prince William County Park Authority.
- e) Date of funding notification in March, 2009 in combination with the final Task Agreement completion (June, 2009) came much too late to deliver the program as originally designed requiring major structural program changes as NOVA was not willing to commit funds without the agreement in place and a promise of funding.
- f) Date of funding notification came to both NOVA and sub-partners much after summer program marketing materials had been prepared and distributed in mid-February. One solution discussed for FY2011 is to market the CAMP S.E.E.D. program without regard to the availability of funding and to operate as a full-cost recovery program. In the event grant funding was to become available, scholarships would be made available and publicized in web based format.
- g) It proves to be difficult to celebrate the partnership with the NPS in printed and static marketing materials in advance of funding notification. Clarification of partnership outside the scope of grant funding could be better defined.
- h) Most Ranger programs are for limited time periods of 1 – 3 hours. Partners have expressed concern that without future funding, access to day-long intensive Ranger programs like CAMP S.E.E.D. will not be sustainable in future years.

**3) The effect of National Park Service policy on partnership**

- a) The NOVA partner's understanding of NPS transition toward centralization of agreement approval through regional offices seemed to create a set of unknowns regarding time required to approve the partnership, coordinate task agreement and cooperative agreement documentation and method/mechanism of distributing grant funds.
- b) The learning curve for the NPS in regard to partnership and resulting new policies may create administrative delays.
- c) The learning curve for future partners is steep and can lead unnecessarily to frustration with the timing of programs and program marketing (see Recommendation's section regarding partner training).

**4) Accomplishments of and benefits to the National Park Service, Shenandoah National Park, Northern Virginia Community College and Prince William County Park Authority by virtue of partnership**

- a) Partnership delivered successful resource based learning evidenced by the completion of the Junior Ranger program and the Leave No Trace Awareness program by participants promoting environmental awareness and lasting concepts of stewardship in the participants.
- b) Created sustainable constituencies between partner agencies.
- c) Created connections between partner agencies and participants and their families which have resulted in repeat visits to Shenandoah National Park since program completion.
- d) Participants visited multiple national park sites; Prince William Forest Park, Antietam National Battlefield, Great Falls National Park and Shenandoah National Park and one municipal park, Locust Shade, Prince William County Park Authority.
- e) Exposure of participants to healthy leisure activity choices.
- f) Program gained the attention of the Let's Move Outside campaign which is supported by the Department of the Interior and the Department of Agriculture. The Let's Move Outside campaign is a part of First Lady Michelle Obama's nationwide Let's Move campaign to end childhood obesity. For more

information regarding this program visit: <http://7bends.com/2010/06/21/shenandoah-hiking-and-outdoor-program-for-families/>.

- g) A multitude of youth with high risk profiles were served in both years 2009 – 2010. Participants were referred to our program through Department of Social Services, school counselors, and local police departments.
- h) The program served a culturally diverse group of youth; children with documented cognitive disabilities, children from the local foster system, and children who received free and reduced lunch in the public schools (used to evidence economic need).
- i) The program served a balance of male and female participants.
- j) Parents reported great things as a result of participation in the program:
  - My child is allergic to effort but she can't stop talking about climbing and hiking!
  - My child wants to work for the program next year as a Counselor in Training.
  - My children loved being in the outdoors.
  - My child took me back to the park so I would know about the trees and where we camped.
  - My child wants to come back next year to help teach the new kids!
  - My child has spent his time differently after camp and is beginning to choose better friends.
  - My child has never enjoyed camp before participating in Camp S.E.E.D.
  - My child said that this program was one of his all time favorites and he has lots of family camping experience.
  - My child could participate because you made access to camping gear possible otherwise we couldn't afford to send our child to camp.
  - My child was extremely shy and now has the confidence to express interests.
  - My child was afraid to sleep in a tent but now wants their very own tent and sleeping bag.
  - My child had so much fun, I wish you would teach me how to camp so I could take my whole family camping!
- k) Attached please find photographs of engaged and happy participants and their drawings about the environment (see Appendix A). These pictures are evidence of the successful delivery of meaningful outdoor experiences.
- l) Offered diverse programming in the spirit of the Children's Outdoor Bill of Rights (<http://www.kidsoutside.info/billofrights.php>); hike a trail, discover wilderness, camp under the stars (we even brought in an astronomer), catch and release frogs and insects, explore nature, play in the stream, swim, hug a tree and celebrate the rich heritage of public lands in their neighborhood and in their state.
- m) Offered diverse programming in keeping with the concerns raised in the H.R. 3036: No Child Left Inside Act of 2008.
- n) Successful programs in past years increase likelihood of future program success and increases in registration.
- o) Program diversity was achieved. Not all children are comfortable with a week-long sleep away camp. The use of Shenandoah National Park campsites allowed shorter overnight programs (1 and 2 night experiences).
- p) The program served as the first opportunity for more than half of the participants to spend the night outside, to spend time in the dark, and/or to sleep in a tent. We combated homesickness and fear of the dark by creating night programs and having night-staff that were there to greet a concerned child. We had lots of lanterns too!
- q) The program served as the first experience for 80% of the children to participate a Ranger program in a national park.
- r) This was the first time that 83% of the participants (2009 – 2010) had visited Shenandoah National Park.
- s) The program exposed participants to appropriate field technology by creating exercises using hand-held GPS units for resource investigation.
- t) The 2010 program was the first time that 100% of participants gave up their cell phones and other electronic devices for two nights and three days and forgot to request the return of these devices at the end of the program in Shenandoah National Park. They didn't miss them. They forgot all about them. The participants actually spoke to one another in person rather than texting the child standing next to them. They spent time writing in their journals, taking videos, interviewing each other, interviewing the staff, interviewing the rangers, drawing pictures, playing cards, making s'mores, helping clean-up, pitching tents, and cooking. Children slept on the way home on



- the bus or talked together about their experience throughout the week, admired their patches and their Junior Ranger booklets. They were wet, dirty, tired, and loved every minute of the great outdoors!
- u) Northern Virginia Community was successful in meeting stated commitment to partnerships. Shenandoah National Park was identified as a partner under a 2009 Task Agreement. NOVA is committed to partnerships that “create gateways of opportunity” with “local governments to develop key relationships with local governments that are willing to invest in NOVA as a strategic asset in their localities future”. ([http://www.nvcc.edu/president/strategic\\_vision.pdf](http://www.nvcc.edu/president/strategic_vision.pdf))
  - v) NOVA successfully partnered in 2009 with Community Recreation Services, Camp Ravens Quest, Fairfax County Government, Fairfax, Virginia to deliver the CAMP S.E.E.D. program.
  - w) NOVA successfully partnered in 2010 with Prince William County Park Authority to deliver the CAMP S.E.E.D. program. To view the program page please visit the link: <http://pwcparcs.org/RecreationGolf/LocustShadePark/SEEDSummerCamp/tabid/582/Default.aspx>.
  - x) The Recreation, Parks & Leisure Studies program (NOVA) was academically successful in creating educational service learning opportunities for college students which helped to facilitate career exploration for RPK students. Interest stimulated supports the Student Career Experience Program (SCEP) and Student Temporary Employment Program (STEP) programs. It also planted seeds in the minds of participants about careers related to the environment and outdoor recreation.
  - y) Academic credit was awarded by NOVA to students who studied issues in Camp Management (RPK 121) during the summer programs at Shenandoah National Park.
  - z) The Recreation, Parks & Leisure Studies was successful in placing students in part-time and full-time employment directly related to the implementation of the CAMP S.E.E.D. program with sub-partners.
- A1) NOVA students in the Recreation, Parks & Leisure Studies program have expressed interest in the Camp Management course and working with the CAMP S.E.E.D. program and Shenandoah National Park up to a year in advance of the program demonstrating dedication of college students to the program.
- A2) NOVA Recreation, Parks & Leisure Studies students and CAMP S.E.E.D. participants have expressed interest in becoming National Park Service, or U.S. Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management employees.
- A3) Prince William County Park Authority identifies partnership in general as one of their agency goals in their 2010 – 2015 Strategic Plan. The plan specifically states that the agency is to “Develop partnerships with a focus on environmental sensitivity and awareness”. Therefore partnerships that share dedication to “environmental initiatives” are of highest priority.
- A4) Prince William County Park Authority has reached out to the NPS locally as Prince William Forest Park (NPS) is the home of Camp Mawavi for the last 5 years. Prince William County Park Authority would prefer that the relationship be more than a rental site for Camp Mawavi and enter into a partnership with the park to benefit from the subject matter expertise of the park employees and programs. For more information visit: <http://www.pwcparcs.org/Portals/0/Camps/PDF/Mawavi%20Brief%20Sheet%202010.pdf>.
- A5) The 2010 grant allowed Prince William County Park Authority to expand programming, program destinations and ability to work with another National Park. Without this grant, Prince William County Park Authority may not have considered Shenandoah National Park (NPS) as a potential partner. Prince William County Park Authority is committed to return to the park with programs and hopes to formalize their partnership relationship with the park.
- 5) Review methodology for project determination
    - a) The Recreation, Parks & Leisure Studies program (NOVA) selects projects based on relevance to course content and curriculum goals, institutional capacity to serve, ability to create service-learning opportunities and student commitment from student leaders in the Recreation & Parks Society (a NOVA Student Activities organization which may be found on line at [www.nvcc.edu/rpk](http://www.nvcc.edu/rpk)).
    - b) Prince William County Park Authority places a higher funding (FY 2011) and programming priority on all programs which have components of “environmental sensitivity, awareness, education, and stewardship”.
  - 6) Recommendations for future program partners (non-fundraising partners)

- a) Refine definition of partner types – create guidelines and set parameters for program partners (non-fund raising partners and academic institutions not associated with research) and publish these guidelines on the agency websites.
- b) Develop links “So you want to be a NPS partner”, “What to expect” and “Next steps”, and “FAQ’s” and add to the “About Partnerships” webpage. It looks as though there are links created that are awaiting activation on topics: Forming Partnerships, Partnership Management, NPS Management Realities, Alternative Funding, Special Partnerships that may address these issues ([www.nps.gov/partnerships/about.htm](http://www.nps.gov/partnerships/about.htm)).
- c) Develop a link on the “About Partnerships” webpage to include a link to the “Reference Guide to Director’s Order #21 Donations and Fund-raising” which contains fantastic materials ([www.nps.gov/refdesk/DOrders/DOrder21.html](http://www.nps.gov/refdesk/DOrders/DOrder21.html)).
- d) Develop partner suitability screening mechanism (survey, questionnaire, or checklist) to help federal agencies ensure suitability of and institutional capacity of the partner (perhaps something like this already exists).
- f) Expand “Dynamics of Successful Partnerships” website page in case studies section to include sample task agreements, sample Memorandums of Understanding with sub-partners, participation statistics and program outcomes may be featured to encourage future partnerships ([www.nps.gov/partnerships/inspiration.htm](http://www.nps.gov/partnerships/inspiration.htm)).
- g) To address the concern regarding value of partnership so as to reduce financial risk to the NPS, the NPS may wish to take the opportunity to train existing partners and groups interested in partnership side-by-side with their park managers and employees (after pre-qualifying the partner).
- h) Program partners may be willing to serve as regional training locations in order to reduce demands on NPS facilities and staff preparation for training. NOVA would be willing to serve as a training destination.
- i) Training of partners may be a pre-requisite to partnership. Much as a pre-bid conference, if a partner is not willing to participate in regional training, then their request for partnership may be denied.
- j) Training of partners may help to streamline and the process of the task agreement and help set mutual expectations.
- k) Negotiated timelines would aid partners with regard to resource allocation, support contracts, hiring of staff, background checks and coordinating volunteers and sub-partners.
- l) NPS, USFS, BLM to systematically approach neighboring community colleges, colleges and universities for program support with the agencies as service learning is on the rise as an educational modality.

### **Conclusion**

The opportunity to partner with the National Park Service at Shenandoah National Park has been inspiring. It has been a pleasure sharing this information with the Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests and Public Lands. All partners look forward to a sustained relationship with the National Park Service.

Thank you Mr. Chairman and members of the Subcommittee for this opportunity to address the these important issues. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.

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Mr. GRIJALVA. Mr. Greg Moore, Executive Director, Golden Gate National Park Conservancy, San Francisco. Good to see you again, and we thank you for the hospitality you extended to us when we visited that fine part of the world. Thank you.

### **STATEMENT OF GREG MOORE, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, GOLDEN GATE PARKS CONSERVANCY, SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA**

Mr. MOORE. It was our pleasure. Chairman Grijalva, Ranking Member Bishop and Members of the House Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests and Public Lands. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today.

At the Golden Gate National Park Conservancy we enjoy a very productive and excellent partnership with the National Park Service. Since our inception about 30 years ago, we have provided almost \$200 million of support to National Park Service projects and programs at the Golden Gate National Recreation Area.

In partnership with the National Park Service, we have developed a volunteer program that recruits 20,000 volunteers a year, providing 400,000 hours of volunteer service, the largest national park volunteer program in the country.

Working with the National Park Service is an important honor for us. Together we have achieved significant results for the American public. We do this by effectively blending National Park Service talents in Federal appropriations with philanthropic dollars in support. We always ensure that the Park Service plans and priorities guide our direction as we seek philanthropic support.

As the Subcommittee considers the important role of partnerships for the National Park Service, I have a few perspectives to offer.

First, partnerships with the National Park Service should be fueled by effective collaboration. Clearly the most successful partnerships result from true team work and cooperation. They thrive when by the Park Service and the partner embrace common goals, realize what each partner can bring to the table, and set a strategy for success. This propels the Park Service vision, a vision of the American public bringing their time, their resources, and their funds to support our national parks. Through a collaborative framework the National Park Service partner can be a valuable ally in achieving that goal.

Second, it is clear that an appropriate framework of Park Service review and approval of partnerships is necessary, yet the current system still needs some fine tuning. All park partners need to understand the fundamental responsibility and authority of the National Park Service to approve and review partnership projects and programs, but effective collaboration can sometimes get lost in a challenging array of regulatory and procedural requirements.

The Park Service partnership review process still needs finetuning since they currently place a huge burden of time and expense, both on the NPS and its partners. The partner is required to secure a wide array of approvals at the local, regional and Washington level with multiple written agreements and many layers of review. This places uncertainty and workload on park partnerships and inadvertently creates barriers to the ultimate goal, bringing Americans together in support of their national parks. I believe a better balance can be achieved, promoting collaboration and streamlining the time and effort required in review and approvals.

Third, supportive partnership tools need to be developed and updated. Partnerships in the National Park Service have clearly blossomed over the past three decades, but the authorities, the policies, and legal interpretations, in essence, the toolbox for implementing partnerships, has not kept pace with its growth and partnerships and the Service. There are really few custom-made tools for partnerships boards.

Today, I don't believe there is any comprehensive legislation endorsing the importance of partnerships to the national park mis-

sion. There is no specific legislation supporting the role of cooperating associations or friends groups. There are few specific instruments for implementing National Park Service partnerships other than cooperative agreement authority and memorandums of agreement, which sometimes are stretched in their utility.

In general, effective partnerships are not something that are secured through Federal procurement processes, competitive bidding, and assignment of significant government requirements and procedures to a partner. That is uncommon in the nonprofit sector. As has been mentioned before, most productive partnerships are long-term arrangements. Many Park Service partners have been operating for decades, some as far back as the 1920s, and the longevity of these partnerships should be considered beneficial and supported.

Finally, a one-size-fits-all model will struggle to respond to the diversity of partnerships in the National Park Service. There are park partners with long tenures with significant project and program accomplishments, and close alignment with the National Park Service. There are mason partners just getting their feet on the ground and developing a relationship with the Park Service. A Park Service support structure should recognize this distinction, offering more streamlined processes for well-established organizations with solid track records, and offering training, support, and dissemination of successful efforts for all partners. This would significantly improve the effectiveness of these relationships across the spectrum.

Chairman Grijalva, and Members of the Subcommittee, thank you so much for seeking our perspectives on this important issue of National Park Service partnerships. It is my distinct honor to work with the National Park Service and Members of Congress in ensuring the best possible future for what has been called America's best idea, our national parks. Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Moore follows:]

**Statement of Greg Moore, Executive Director, Golden Gate National Parks Conservancy, San Francisco, California**

Chairman Grijalva, Ranking Member Bishop, members of the House Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests and Public Lands, thank you for the opportunity to testify today along with my distinguished colleagues on this panel. I'm honored to present perspectives at this Oversight Hearing on Partnerships and the National Park Service.

I serve as Executive Director of the Golden Gate National Parks Conservancy, as the Vice President of the National Park Friends Alliance (the network of 52 philanthropic nonprofits that collectively provide in excess of \$50 million per year to national parks across the nation), and as a Board member of both the Association of Partners for Public Lands and the Conservation Lands Foundation. These affiliations have given me a broad perspective on partnerships with the National Park Service and other federal and state public land agencies. My comments today represent our experiences at the Parks Conservancy and also reflect the ongoing discussions of the NPS and Friends Alliance organizations across the nation.

At the Parks Conservancy, we have provided about \$200 million of support to park projects and programs at the Golden Gate National Recreation Area since our inception more than 25 years ago. We have helped develop a volunteer corps of 22,000 annual volunteers providing 400,000 hours of service each year – the largest national park volunteer program in the nation. We have also raised significant philanthropic support and generated broad grassroots support for the parks through campaigns to restore and improve our parklands.

Working with the National Park Service has been an honor for us. We have enjoyed a long-term, well integrated, collaborative, and very productive relationship.

We have worked strategically and seamlessly together to support and advance park priorities. We have built a broad and deeply committed community of park supporters as volunteers, grassroots donors, and major philanthropists. We receive gifts – small and large – for park projects and programs. Nearly a decade ago, during the campaign for Crissy Field, an elementary school class raised funds to plant native plants, and the lead donor of that project gave the largest cash gift ever given to a National Park Service project.

Nearly 90 years before that project, in 1908, the genesis of the Golden Gate National Recreation Area was a philanthropic gift – when a private donor purchased Muir Woods to save it from logging and damming, and then donated the property to the federal government as a national monument. And all of us know the power of contributing to something we care about – America has a proud national tradition of service, volunteerism, and philanthropy. National parks share that heritage; in fact, the inceptions of many national parks tell a remarkable story of these national traits in action.

We should not think of philanthropic support to our national parks as being contrary to or in conflict with federal support and appropriations to our national parks. Since their beginnings, and for generations, national parks have been founded and made great by the American public – as taxpayers *and* as philanthropists. Partnership is not new to the national park system. Indeed it has long been vital to its existence and its greatness.

Yet as the subject of this hearing suggests, partnership work is not always easy – and everyone seems to acknowledge that there is room for improvement. Especially now, as Americans are being asked to be more generous than ever in their support of their national parks, all of us must work to refine and establish the benefits, policies, procedures, and legal authorities that support partnership work.

In this context, I have a few perspectives and accompanying recommendations:

**Partnerships function best within a structure of thoughtful collaboration, versus rigid regulation.**

The most successful partnerships in the Park Service result from true teamwork and collaboration. They thrive when both the Park Service and the partner embrace a common goal, recognize their strengths, weaknesses, and complements, and share the game plan for success. This is a collaborative framework. The Park Service asks the American public to help and is working to facilitate the public's contributions of time, expertise, and funds. Through a collaborative framework, an NPS partner can provide vital support to realize that vision.

For long-term success, though, there need to be rules of the road and clear partnership parameters. Too often the collaborative framework is superseded by a regulatory framework, which places a huge burden of time and expense on the NPS and partner. The result is a system intended to safeguard the government from philanthropy rather than invite and promote philanthropy. The partner is required to secure a wide array of approvals with multiple written agreements that can require inordinate time and resources; requiring review by solicitors and attorneys at the regional and national level whose opinions may differ; and requiring approvals from officials at the local, regional, national level in both the administration and Congress. This puts tremendous burdens on both the partner and the National Park Service and creates barriers to ultimate goal – the bonding of Americans to their national parks.

I believe a better balance can be achieved – weighing collaboration at least as heavily as regulation. My recommendation is establishing a joint commitment by the National Park Service and park partners to capture, disseminate, and formalize best practices in partnership management and to devote time and resources to training. Together we can develop mutually acknowledged best practices as an effective alternative to more layers of complex partnership regulations.

**Supportive partnership tools need to be developed and updated.**

Partnerships in the National Park Service have blossomed in the past three decades, and more are emerging. But the authorities, policies, and legal interpretations – in essence the toolbox for promoting and nurturing partnerships – have not kept pace and do not always facilitate partnerships. There are too few custom-made tools for NPS partnership work.

To date, I don't believe there is legislation specifically endorsing the function and importance of partnerships to the National Park Service mission. There is no comprehensive legislation specifically supporting the valuable role of cooperating associations, friends groups or National Park Service partnerships, with the exception of the National Park Foundation. There are few specific instruments for NPS partnerships, other than cooperative agreement authority and memorandums of agree-

ments, which are limited in their utility. As a result, NPS partners are sometimes seen as programs to procure through competition and federal processes, rather than durable, long-term partners of our national parks. Many Park Service partners have been operating for decades, some dating back to the 1920s.

Legislation such as Challenge Cost Share Authority seems to give the Secretary of the Interior broad authority to work with partners and share federal resources for common goals, yet we have been told by department and agency officials that more general federal law preempts the full utilization of that authority. As a result, we are not working as effectively as we can to combine federal and philanthropic funds to achieve a common result, and we are leaving untapped significant public goodwill and philanthropic interest.

As one solution, I recommend strengthening the purpose and intent of the Challenge Cost Share authority through legislative clarification that reconciles its specific intent with general federal law.

**NPS partnership policies and processes can be cumbersome, overly cautious and time consuming.**

National Park Service Director Jon Jarvis has said that, “Increasingly partnerships are essential and effective means for the National Park Service to fulfill parts of our mission and foster a shared sense of stewardship that is so crucial for our future.” The Park Service has recognized partnerships as important to its mission and has instituted some sound partnership principles as means to augment the agency’s resources. But the policies that guide partnerships – and the procedures required to advance them – create barriers, lengthy delays, and uncertainty in how park-benefiting projects and programs can be delivered.

A current effort is underway to establish template agreements that meet mutual needs. I recommend that this effort continue with an explicit objective to prioritize, simplify, and streamline the agreements, policies, and procedures that underlie partnership development and management.

**Philanthropy is a competitive environment.**

The competition for philanthropic resources and volunteer support is very challenging, especially in today’s economic climate. Environmental causes compete with social causes, and donors at all levels are bringing an unprecedentedly high level of selectivity and scrutiny to their giving decisions. More than ever, as donors are drawn by a cause, they are also determining which organizations can best deliver effectively, efficiently, and with the greatest degree of certainty and transparency in their projects and programs.

A clear commitment by the National Park Service and Congress to the work of park partners can give a significant boost to our case for philanthropic support. The National Park Foundation has the congressionally chartered role of sustaining the national legacy of private philanthropy for our national parks and has carried out that role admirably. I recommend that local organizations with proven track records, as well, be given the opportunity to earn appropriate recognition and authority for the critical roles they play in sustaining philanthropic interest and action on behalf of the national parks.

**A one-size-fits-all partnership model cannot respond to the diversity of partnerships in the National Park Service.**

Park partners can vary significantly in their scale of operations, the size and diversity of their constituencies, their expertise, tenure, and track record, and their relationship with Park Service leadership and staff at the park level. There are park partners with long tenures, significant project and program accomplishments, and close alignment with the National Park Service. There are also more nascent partner organizations that are newly establishing or growing their support programs and building collaborations with their partner parks. A Park Service support structure that recognizes this distinction and offers more streamlined processes for established partners, as well as training, support, and dissemination of successful efforts for all partners, would significantly improve the effectiveness of these relationships across the spectrum.

Chairman Grijalva, you have suggested that a Center for Partnership could be created within the National Park system to serve this and other functions, and we would be honored to assist in the development of that vision.

**Federal and philanthropic funds should work together.**

Philanthropic and public funding are often considered in isolation. But in many spheres, including our national parks, the commitment of public funds can leverage significant philanthropic investment to achieve common objectives and tangible public benefit. We see this at the Golden Gate National Recreation Area time and

again, and past National Park Service programs intended to leverage matching private support have proven very successful.

Yet this very effective leverage is compromised by a policy that forces the separation of these sources on park improvement projects. Under current policy, the NPS is constrained from providing federal funds to combine with philanthropic funds as partners complete important park improvement and construction projects. This problem stems partly from the lack of legislation and/or policy designed specifically for our partnerships.

I recommend and request that the Department of the Interior, the National Park Service, and Congress work with park partners to resolve the policy barriers to joining federal and private resources to accomplish National Park goals.

Chairman Grijalva and members of the Subcommittee, thank you for inviting our perspectives on National Park partnerships and for considering these recommendations. It is my distinct honor to work with the National Park Service and members of Congress in ensuring the best possible future for what has been called "America's Best Idea" – our national parks.

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Mr. GRIJALVA. Thank you. Mr. Jim Prater, Former Executive Director, Richland County Legislative Delegation. Welcome, sir.

**STATEMENT OF JIM PRATER, FORMER EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR,  
RICHLAND COUNTY LEGISLATIVE DELEGATION, COLUMBIA,  
SOUTH CAROLINA**

Mr. PRATER. Thank you, sir. Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee, it is an honor and a pleasure to be here to talk about one of the highlights of my life—being involved in the partnership that created, designed and built the road and visitor's center at what then was the Congaree Swamp National Monument.

In order to understand the partnership—and I have to add that after a lot of the concerns that I have heard expressed here this morning, I guess we were fortunate. Ten years ago the National Park Service said to us, if you can do it, we will take it, and all we had to do was build it.

In order to set the stage for understanding our project, I am one of the few individuals who had the good fortune to be a part of the Citizen Action organization in 1976 that was responsible for the U.S. Congress creating and preserving the Congaree Swamp, and creating the Congaree Swamp National Monument. That Citizen Action had a profound and powerful effect on my career and choices.

It was with that background and the creation of the Congaree Swamp National Monument that the park began to develop the entrance to the park. It was on a privately owned dirt road, and the family that owned that dirt road was told when the park was created that soon the National Park Service would have their own entrance road. Twenty years later, that family was still waiting on the new road. It was with that context and as a part of a local community effort to look at the three rivers that flow through Columbia, South Carolina, that our task force began to look at the role of the Congaree Swamp National Monument in an economic eco-tourism effort related to the rivers.

And we decided for that portion of the county that the only way the Congaree Swamp was ever going to be part, and a focal point, of any eco-tourism and economic development strategy was if we solved the problem of access and the facilities in the park headquarters building. The headquarters building was so small we didn't have restrooms to accommodate school groups. Further com-

plicating our situation was that the bridge over the local secondary road that was the most direct access to the park had been judged as failing and not able to accommodate school buses.

So, it was with those lemons that we set out to create lemonade, I need to mention here that our partnership was a fortunate formation because of the effort that the local Park Service staff supported, and they attended every meeting. Martha Vogel and Fran Rametta and many of her staff attended every one of those discussions, many of those things not having anything to do with theirs. And out of that we decided that we would ask the National Guard to build the road and the visitor's center, and set about creating a partnerships whereby the National Park Service and the National Guard Bureau allowed troops from the National Guard and 30-some states across this nation to come in, in two-week rotations, and build the road and then the visitor's center. That was accomplished from 1998 until 2001. We dedicated the facility in 2001, and in 2003, Congaree Swamp National Monument became Congaree National Park, South Carolina's first national park.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Prater follows:]

**Statement of Jim Prater, Citizen Advocate for Congaree National Park**

**From Citizen Action to Citizen Soldier**—The partnership between The National Park Service, the National Guard, The River Alliance, The Richland County Legislative Delegation and Richland County that designed and built the Harry R.E. Hampton Visitor Center and Entrance Road at the Congaree Swamp National Monument (now Congaree National Park) in Columbia, South Carolina. A gift to the People of the United States.

**From Citizen Action to Citizen Soldier** was the motto used by the local leaders of the Partnership to convey what we were going to do in the design and construction of a new entrance road, parking lots, and a new visitor center in the Congaree Swamp National Monument. The new facilities were to be worthy of the citizen action efforts of Harry R.E. Hampton, a newspaperman who first raised in the late fifties the issue of preservation of the incredible venue known to locals as the Congaree Swamp, and the powerful grassroots citizens effort that led the United States Congress to create the Congaree Swamp National Monument in 1976.

The new facilities were to be built by the citizen soldiers of the National Guard who would come from units from more than twenty states. Each unit would spend two weeks on the project, complete their portion of the mission and hand off the project to the next unit. The project began with road construction in the summer of 1998 and culminated with the dedication of the new Harry R.E. Hampton Visitor Center in early 2001. The mission was accomplished with only two people from the South Carolina Air National Guard on site from the beginning of construction to the final inspections for occupancy!

With what will soon be ten years of reflection on this project, my admiration for what the partnership accomplished grows by the day. The remarkable cooperation between all the partners, first to the vision and then to the mission, sets a standard for all agencies and organizations whether federal, state or local in joining together for the best interests of all concerned. As in all good partnerships, each party gave a little, compromised a little, contributed a little, and in this case, risked a lot.

The partnership paid off as all well executed ones do, with a synergy that created much more than any partner ever imagined. To support the new facilities, the South Carolina Department of Transportation replaced the aging bridge on the secondary road leading to the site (enabling school and tour buses to use the most direct route to the site). The South Carolina Department of Parks, Recreation and Tourism and local governments increased the public promotion efforts, which prompted more local and national media coverage of the Congaree Swamp National Monument. The new facilities and the increased visibility of our priceless site allowed the National Park Service to pay full tribute to Harry Hampton's original vision by designation of the site as Congaree National Park, the first National Park in South Carolina. Subsequent land acquisitions have added both to the size of the Park and its potential missions. Visitation numbers now rank Congaree National Park as one of the top ten destination sites in the state. The new facilities and the renovated and re-



modeled former headquarters, now allow education efforts that serve K-12 populations, the general public and higher education, both undergraduate and graduate levels.

Visitation, exploration and education have contributed greatly to the local economy and local interest and concern for the ecosystem and Congaree National Park is at an all time high.

We told each person who came to the project, to work, to visit, to contribute to the thank you parties for the Guard units, or who in any way became connected with the effort, that they were participating in the creation of a gift to the people of the United States. I believe that more now than ever.

#### **Background for the Project Partnership**

With the formation in 1995 of the River Alliance, a local non-profit agency to promote the utilization of the three rivers that flow through Columbia, South Carolina, the Congaree Swamp National Monument became a key piece of the strategy to connect rural Richland County to downtown Columbia, South Carolina, by developing new historical and cultural destinations. The CSNM was seen by many as an underutilized and underdeveloped resource but nonetheless a potential lead element in the long term eco-tourism strategy.

There were several major obstacles to the CSNM becoming a focal point for the river related economic and tourism strategy. The first and most serious was access to the CSNM. The only way into the CSNM was a privately owned dirt road. The family who owned the road had agreed to allow access upon the creation of the Monument because they were told that there would be a new entrance road "soon". Twenty years later they were still waiting for the road. Fortunately for them, the Congaree National Monument didn't generate much traffic because of limited facilities at the site. The visitor center was small and cramped and had no bathroom capability for group visits. The bridge on the small secondary road that served as the quickest access to the site was judged not capable of supporting loaded school buses. The conditions in 1996 were hardly conducive to Congaree National Monument becoming the centerpiece for any kind of economic, educational or recreational strategy related to the Rivers.

Fortunately for all of us, the discussions and strategy sessions and afternoon and evening sessions over cocktail napkins led to the enlistment of the four most important people in the partnership that was later to be formalized. These four people not only were crucial in the formation of the initial steps of the plan, but were also to become the chief advocates within their respective organizations and were responsible for bringing their agencies and organizations into the fold.

Mike Dawson has served as the Executive Director of the River Alliance since its inception in 1995. As a retired US Army officer, he was fully aware of the capabilities of the military and the National Guard in particular. He also was cognizant of the fact that the National Guard had authorization to work on federal properties and knew all about the mechanics of making that happen. Mike is an engineer with a wide range of projects to his military credit and his knowledge of the construction process proved valuable in his recruitment of the second member of the team, Mike Stroble, a retired South Carolina Air National Guardsman who had served for many years in the civil engineering squadron.

Chief Stroble, one of those rare individuals who spent his entire career looking out for the organization he loved, the South Carolina Air National Guard, and the people in it, knew everything about not only the SC National Guard, but also the workings of the National Guard Bureau. That Chief could pick up the phone and talk to anyone up the chain of command and be known and respected was of immense help in gaining the commitment of the National Guard to the project. Mike Stroble believed in the National Guard system and especially in his own South Carolina Air National Guard. His faith in his fellow guardsmen and his belief that they could handle the construction project mission inspired all of us to continue to map out the project proposal for presentation and official endorsement by all of the Partners.

When Dawson and Stroble had convinced each other that the project was a possibility, they began collaborations with the third key member of the team, Martha Bogle, the Superintendent at the Congaree Swamp National Monument. Martha, vetting the project so thoroughly and asking a thousand questions, saw the possibility. She was an advocate for the site, her people, and the National Park Service mission from the start. Fully aware of any career implications, she became a leader in the formation of the partnership and brought with her a staff ally with boundless energy and local standing that became important. Fran Rametta had served as a National Park Ranger at CSNM from the early years and had become a known and well liked and respected member of the community. His boundless and enthusiastic

support of the project, both in concept and later after approval, could not be praised enough. Fran and Martha were glue that held the staff together during any bumps in the process and there were some for sure.

The initial project concept was brilliant. Get the partners to agree that we can replace the current privately owned dirt road access with a road on the National Park Service property. The construction would be done by the National Guard. When the road project is successful, we propose the construction of the new Harry R.E. Hampton Visitor Center with the same process.

The road project was such a success that the private dirt road was replaced with a paved road and three wonderfully scaled parking lots at a minimal cost to the National Park Service. That set the stage for the most important discussion of the construction project and the rest is history.

While I was only involved in this project from a local perspective, I must say that our National Park Service is to be commended for being a valuable and vital partner in this story. While I do not know the names and titles of everyone in the NPS who was involved beyond Martha Bogle and the incredible staff assigned to Congaree, I do know that the project would not have happened without support all the way up the chain of command. I also know that there were plenty of junctures where support could have been withheld or delays created. There was never anything but support for the mission and the NPS staff displayed a wonderfully cooperative attitude all the way to project completion. As a nation, we are to be grateful to the National Park Service that they ventured down this unusual path to provide this gift to the American People.

There are two more projects in Columbia, South Carolina that are near and dear to my heart, and the only way they will ever be completed is through some type of partnership similar to the one I have described. The National Park Service was the first phone call the River Alliance made.

As an illustration of the National Park Service attitude that permeated the Congaree Swamp Partnership, I want to pass on one story that was very important to me.

During the construction project, one of the original citizen action group members, the President of Congaree Action Now, Jim Elder, a science teacher in Virginia, visited the project, one of the few times he had returned to the Swamp since the citizen rallies in the 1970's. He was so proud that the Congaree Swamp was to get facilities that would now do it justice, he was in tears.

I asked Jim what he would put in the exhibits that would convey to visitors, Congaree the place. Without hesitation, he said, "I would put a big Cypress tree in there, big enough that people could walk into it. Then I would have the sounds of the forest inside so that little ones could hear and feel the forest. The tree trunk should go all the way to the ceiling (30 feet high) so that rangers could tell them that in the forest outside that tree would go another 100 feet or more high". That's what people should take away from the building.

Today, if you visit the Harry R.E. Hampton Visitor Center, Jim Elder's vision is the focal point of the main exhibit hall. Executed perfectly. You only have to watch the children to understand.

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Mr. GRIJALVA. Thank you.

Mr. PRATER. Thank you, sir.

Mr. GRIJALVA. Mr. Prater, let me begin with you. From the testimony and from your comment, it sounds like the local partners were very much behind the project. Let me follow up by asking how has the community benefitted with the addition of that road and that visitor's center? And that eco-tourism, economic development concept, how has the community benefitted? Has it been a tangible effect on the economy of the area?

Mr. PRATER. Yes, sir. I had to smile when Mr. Bishop mentioned the declining attendance. Our attendance from the time of dedication, the increase in attendance to the Congaree Swamp or Congaree National Forest has now placed it in the top 10 in destination sites in the State of South Carolina. I don't know what last year's number were but there were well over 150,000 at last count, and from countries all over the globe.

The benefit to the local communities is that the increased visitation has led to the formation of a lot of small businesses in the area, restaurants and shops owned by local families to take advantage of that increased visitation. So, in addition to that, we have gained the visibility and the publicity. If I may, I would like to relate a story.

I was in Maine in August on vacation and wound up in a golf tournament with my partner from Augusta, Maine, who turned out to be a boy scout leader. As a result of the national publicity related to the Congaree Swamp, he brought his boy scout troop from Augusta, Maine, to the Congaree National Park so that his kids could see that priceless piece of property in the face of the earth.

Mr. GRIJALVA. Thank you very much and congratulations. It is good testimony.

Mr. Moore, could you elaborate on the difficulty of combining, because you have spoken about this, the private funds with government monies in building projects? What is the solution to that?

Mr. MOORE. Sure, Mr. Chairman, I will quickly explain the issue. For years, our Conservancy effectively combined philanthropic funds with Federal funds to complete park improvement projects. We believed it was good leveraging because we would bring more funds to the table. The donors saw the effectiveness of this in terms of a Federal commitment being part of the project, and it was cost effective for the Conservancy to implement projects in a timely way.

But in the past year the Department of the Interior has a policy interpretation that has prohibited pooling Federal and philanthropic funds for partnership construction projects. So, as a result, when we work to create a park improvement, we have to run duplicate contracts—one a Federal contract to implement the Federal money, and one a Conservancy contract to implement the private money. In our recent project, this caused the project costs to go up 25 percent from a \$3 million budget to a \$4 million budget.

So, we would like to review that policy determination and see if there is any way to return to what we believe was a very effective system of leveraging Federal dollars for park improvement projects.

Mr. GRIJALVA. And because of the success of the Conservancy and Brian O'Neill's work at Golden Gate, they serve as models for parks and friends groups around the United States. How do we pass on those lessons that you have learned there to other park managers and friend groups around the country?

Mr. MOORE. There is a tremendous demand within the Park Service and among partner organizations to learn the fundamental principles of good partnership. At Golden Gate, we are constantly requested to provide training and support to people from around the country and even around the world. It has been alluded to before. A good training curriculum would be beneficial. Brian O'Neill used to offer a training course at Golden Gate with the regional office that was well received, and even some type of partnership center or curriculum, I think, would be beneficial here.

Mr. GRIJALVA. To formalize that training experience?

Mr. MOORE. Yes, exactly.

Mr. GRIJALVA. Thank you. Mr. Bishop.

Mr. BISHOP. I do not have any specific questions for this panel but I appreciate your traveling here. I appreciate the written testimony you have given us as well as the verbal testimony given here. I am grateful that your visitorship is up, and see what happens when you fix the bridge. Thank you very much. Yield back.

Mr. GRIJALVA. Mr. Sarbanes, sir.

Mr. SARBANES. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. This is a great hearing. I appreciate your convening it. It is a very important topic, the idea of partnerships.

Mr. Prater, you are great advertisement for this national park, and I am feeling myself anxious to get down there and see it. One of my best friends lives in South Carolina, so next time I am down there I have to make sure I do a detour.

I wanted to talk a little bit about what Congressman Holt had raised at the outset—his concern about the proper balance between what the partnerships bring to the table and the government's responsibilities to the National Park Service to maintain those facilities, the infrastructure, and so forth.

I wondered if any of you would speak to kind of where you think the line is, and do you worry that as we celebrate these partnerships we may be creating an unfair expectation that the partners can bring resources to the table beyond their capacity? And how do we sort of police that boundary in a way that makes it work? And I will throw it open to anybody who wants to answer.

Mr. MOORE. I am happy to jump in. The former Chair of the National Park Foundation used to talk about the margin of excellence that partners can bring to national parks, and I believe that is an important concept. There has to be sound public funding of our national parks for partners to be effective at all. We count on the ongoing talents and resources of the National Park Service and even in our best of days could never replace those assets.

So, our work tends to go where we can bring a margin of excellence to the incredible work of the Park Service through education programs, through park projects that we can speed up and make higher quality, and I think that is where the boundary should lie conceptually.

The additional benefit of philanthropy, however, is that it does create stakeholders in our national parks, whether it is a small school child that gives 50 cents to put a native plant in the ground, or a donor giving a multimillion dollar gift, it creates a bonding to our national parks that reinforces their value and their importance in the mind of the American public.

Mr. SARBANES. Thank you. And you gave a compelling example. Once we embrace the idea that there is a partnership and feel comfortable that what is being brought to the table by the different partners is appropriate, then I think we want to make sure that the procedures that are in place help facilitate that, and not get in its way.

You gave an example of a project where the costs had increased by about 25 percent because of the new procedures. I wonder if you could maybe supply us, not now but after the hearing, with a couple of sort of the best examples of how it was done previously in terms of a partnership arrangement where you see the real benefits and efficiencies that could come at a more streamline approach

just so we can kind of compare and contrast that because I think that is a valid point.

I have in my district Fort McHenry. Of course, we are beside ourselves because we are coming up on the 200th anniversary of the War of 1812, so we are planning a lot of activity around that. There is a new visitor center going up at Fort McHenry. It is an amazing resource because it is right there in Baltimore City, a beautiful national park and natural resource, and also, obviously, a very historic site. And we are always looking for ways to maximize that. There are a lot of wonderful partnerships underway. There is a Youth Ranger Program that is bringing high school students there in the summertime to train as rangers with opportunities to come back later. There is what we call the Youth Defender Day. Every September 12th we celebrate the Battle of Baltimore, you know, resisting the British attack on September 12th of 1814, and we have gotten 1,500 young people involved in that celebration in recognition. Every year now the Living Classrooms Foundation, which is a nonprofit in Baltimore, doing tremendous work with job skills and other training for young people is working with Fort McHenry. There are so many examples right at our fingertips of where these partnerships make sense, and nonprofits are coming to the table and philanthropists, and it is really a wonderful thing.

I would like you to comment if you could. I am the author of something called the No Child Left Inside Act, which is an effort to promote environmental education broadly across the country. I think at last count we had 1,900 organizations nationally, regionally and locally who were members of this coalition that supports the legislation and, frankly, is a grass roots movement beyond that. The whole premise is that if you get young people outdoors and if you integrate that kind of approach into the educational program across the country, there are huge benefits. There are public health benefits, there is raising awareness of the environment as a benefit and, most importantly, the research shows that student achievement increases dramatically when they get this exposure to the outdoors.

Now that is a little bit different, there was a comment before about these sort of virtual field trips that people are taking. I think that is great, but we also want to be thinking about how we actually physically get students out into the environment, and the most obvious partner for that is our National Park System.

So, I wondered if any of you would comment, I was hoping to ask the last panel about this as well, but just comment on the idea of the National Park System not really even as a partner with our education system but as an extension of our education system. Really viewing our national parks as the premier outdoor classroom for the next generation, and what the benefits can be of approaching it through that kind of a lens. So, I will ask any of you to comment if you would like and that will be my last question.

Mr. MOORE. I will jump in. At Golden Gate, maybe because of our urban situation, our relationship with schools are fundamental to our work. We support the park's classroom program at Golden Gate, which reaches about 25,000 to 30,000 students a year, and of course the NatureBridge has a campus in the park as well.

The Conservancy operates in the environmental education center with the National Park Service, specifically focused on bringing kids from preschool all the way through college internships into the national park experience, and the benefits to the young people in terms of their education, the benefits in terms of their health, the benefits in terms of their leadership skills, the benefits in terms of their bonding to the National Park System and its values are completely obvious to us. I am happy to provide you more detail about those programs if you would like to see it.

Now, the Children in Nature Network is a great network. We are part of the network, and they are hosting a major event in the bay area I think this November.

Mr. SARBANES. Right. Thank you.

Mr. PRATER. If I might respond to your previous question about the partnerships, I think where we run into problems many times is the failure to define, going in, what we are going to accomplish and what specifically each side of the partnership is going to bring to the table. In our situation, it was pretty simple. We are going to build a road to the visitor's center. How we were going to get there was the complicated part, and I might add to everyone here who is concerned about the National Park Service bureaucracy, you haven't seen anything yet until you deal with the National Guard Bureau and the Department of Defense, and we had both.

But it was, you know, that relatively simple idea, this is what we are going to do, and these are the problems that are going to be solved as a result of our doing this. But then the mechanics of the legal requirements and who is going to supervise what, and at what stages, all of those kinds of questions were the things that we had to solve before we ever got to the point of anyone entertaining our idea. I think, particularly from a citizen perspective, citizen groups tend to quickly assume that because they donate money, they volunteer their time, and they pay their taxes, that what their particular group wants to do with the park is what ought to be done in the park. I think that is where the training aspect comes in. I think we need that on both sides. The bureaucrats need to understand how the citizen approaches things, and the citizens need training and support, and need to understand the requirements of the institution. In our situation, we were extremely fortunate in that we had probably the most outstanding chief of the South Carolina International Guard who knew everybody everywhere in the National Guard Bureau and was liked and respected, and Mike Dawson, the chairman of our group, the Executive Director of the River Alliance, was a retired Army Colonel who had a great deal of facility experience. So we were fortunate in that the people who came together with the original idea knew how both systems worked.

But in talking to other folks and working with other people, it seems to me that the failure is that each side needs to be cross-trained in the other's world, in the other's experience, because where they fall apart are too high expectations or unrealistic expectations sometimes on the citizens' side about what they are going to do, and the failure, I think, sometimes on the bureaucratic institutional side is to understand how that could be.

Mr. SARBANES. Thank you. I appreciate it.

Ms. CHAMBERLAIN. Just one more comment?

I think the training also gives folks an opportunity to focus on what the academic institutions do. Is it an educational outcome when we bring young people to the park? What do we want, what is an immediate learning curve, what is a long-term learning curve? Maybe we should ask partners to track longitudinally what the return rates are for these youth, and how programs can be expanded.

I am obviously not focused on shovel ready, I am more focused on the coming and doing it program. But, longitudinally, my life spans an entire existence with the national park. I even got married on the park birthday of the national park. So for me it is—

Mr. SARBANES. That is commitment.

Ms. CHAMBERLAIN. Yes, it is commitment.

[Laughter.]

Ms. CHAMBERLAIN. But that could be tracked with our youth today. I think we need to focus some more energy on our training, asking what those educational outcomes are, measuring the educational outcomes for young people. I think that way the legislation, No Child Left Inside, can be better supported in the long run, and I would certainly like to see that happen. We also need to include college students. They tend to get left out in the K-12 conversation about bringing youth into the park. They really, truly are our next workforce, and this is a workforce development issue for me as well.

Mr. SARBANES. Thank you.

Mr. GRIJALVA. Thank you, sir. Any other questions?

Let me thank all the panelists, and for all the panelists, the previous panel as well, I thought Mr. Sarbanes' one question was a very important question. Information dealing with best practices and comparisons as to the situation now than the situation then would be very useful information for the Committee. I would urge all the panelists to provide those kinds of examples to us.

With that, let me thank you all and adjourn the meeting.

[Whereupon, at 11:59 a.m., the Subcommittee was adjourned.]

[Additional material submitted for the record follows:]

[The prepared statement of Delegate Donna Christensen follows:]

**Statement of The Honorable Donna M. Christensen, a Delegate in Congress from the Virgin Islands**

Thank you Chairman Grijalva for this hearing, because I do think that partnerships with a mission to benefit the Park AND the community are the answer to issues in my district that you have heard first hand.

Right now I am looking at a Fish Habitat Partnership to bridge the rifts between stakeholders for our fisheries and to comprehensively address the challenges our fisheries face.

But the National Parks have already benefited from partnerships like our sister parks across the country.

Long time relationships with the Trust for Public Lands, the Nature and Ocean Conservancies have expanded the National Parks and continue to help us protect some of our most precious resources.

But our local government has been a great partner, for example at Salt River and possibly at Castle Nugent in the future; the local St. Croix and St. Thomas-St. John Environmental associations also. The Friends of the Park in St. John has been the best supporter the VI National Park could ask for, the St Thomas Historical Trust has begun to preserve and awaken the rich history of Hassel Island and there are more.

But if there is one area where partnership could be strengthened in my district where many of our fellow Americans have made their home it is with the native community. The Park tries and has made good progress, but still needs to see itself more as part of the community and not just in the community.

I hope this hearing will help us, through our witnesses, to find ways we can improve on the partnerships in my district and other parts of our country where National Parks are present.

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[A statement submitted for the record by Grace Lee, Executive Director, National Park Trust, follows:]

**Statement of Grace Lee, Executive Director, National Park Trust**

**Re:** *Where's Buddy Bison Been?* A PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN NATIONAL PARK TRUST AND NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

**Background:**

As the Washington Post recently reported, large numbers of park rangers are due to retire in the coming years and the National Park Service is looking to recruit diverse young people to fill the ranks. In addition, the demographics of visitors at our nation's parks do not reflect the demographics of our country, and the rapidly growing number of inner city youth do not have the means or interest in connecting with our public lands.

To reverse that trend National Park Trust, a 501(c)3 non profit land conservancy that works to protect critical park lands across the country has developed an innovative youth education program to connect kids of all ages and demographics to our parks and public lands. The goal of the program is to cultivate the next generation of conservationists.

**Where's Buddy Bison Been?**

In just one year, *Where's Buddy Bison Been?* featuring our pint-sized wooly mascot, Buddy Bison has engaged more than 2000 students in 20 plus schools across the country. Buddy Bison is the "voice" that tells children "explore outdoors, the parks are yours!"

Along with his toolkit (filled with lessons plans, books, mini-documentaries, games, and fun facts) Buddy Bison has been used by teachers of grades pre-K through 8th grade to transform our parks into outdoor hands-on classrooms. By sparking children's interests in the environment at a young age we are planting the seed for the next generation of park enthusiasts. Children enjoy taking Buddy Bison to different parks and sharing with us their photos and adventures which are included on his map at BuddyBison.org

Currently, Buddy Bison schools are located in DC, Colorado, Maryland, Minnesota, Utah, New York, North Carolina, Texas, and California. In the coming months we will be adding schools in Nevada and Wyoming. Most of our schools are in underserved communities. However, because it is important to connect kids from all socioeconomic levels to our parks, we have four schools that are not in underserved communities.

**Partnership with NPS**

A key component of the program is our partnership with the National Park Service. Working with park officials and educators, NPT has facilitated numerous trips to local parks for hundreds of inner city children who ordinarily would not have the opportunity to play outdoors. Our program would not be successful without their support and expertise.

*NPT does not receive any funding from NPS.* In fact we have provided in-kind gifts of Buddy Bisons and T-shirts to hundreds of DOI and NPS staff members and officials. Since April 2010, in partnership with Eastern National, thousands of our Buddy Bisons have been sold in 60 park stores in 20 states; the proceeds benefit our Youth to Parks National Scholarship Fund for at-risk students. We have been asked on numerous occasions to provide our life size Buddy Bison mascot at DOI, NPS, and Let's Move events. We receive our funding from major donors, corporations and foundations. We hope that the sales of our Buddy Bisons and other educational products will provide an additional steady source of revenue.

Because of our unique relationship with schools, we have the ability to "mobilize" and engage thousands of students. The highlight last year of the inaugural year of our program was our Buddy Bison Earth Day celebration that coincided with the 40th anniversary of Earth Day. Working with NPS and DOI, we hosted more than



650 students on the National Mall with Secretary Ken Salazar, NPS Director Jon Jarvis, teachers, parents, and DOI employees. Most of the funding for the event was provided by NPT's donors and other environmental partners.

More recently, we were contacted by NPS to bring our Buddy Bison students to the first national Fossil Day Celebration at the National Mall and Smithsonian on October 13, 2010.

**Challenges of Connecting Kids to our Parks:**

**Funding new funding resources:** We have more schools that would like to be part of our Buddy Bison program and our current schools have asked us to help facilitate more park experiences. However the rate-limiting factor to grow our scalable program is funding for staffing, resources and transportation. One of our most frequent requests is for funding for school buses.

**Scheduling and planning:** In underserved schools, teachers do not have the resources and time to create a park experience for their students. We address this need with our program.

**Staffing at Parks:** Some parks do not have staffing to work with schools. More staffing/volunteers are needed to work with schools that would like to visit the parks.

**Partnership Challenges:**

Often we are unaware and do not understand the relationships between parks and their friends group and who best to contact if we want to plan an education program at a park. (We do not seem to have this problem when we are working on a land conservation program.) The NPS system is complicated and often challenging for us to comprehend and navigate.

It would be very helpful if the Washington DC office of NPS had a partnership team that could be the first point of contact for non-profits and friends groups to answer questions and direct us to the proper park employees and other potential non-profit partners.

We would urge regional directors and the Washington partnership office to keep the cooperative agreement process streamlined so that they do not take long periods of time placing a financial burden on a non-profit. Also the policies and laws related to partnerships need to be communicated in a concise, comprehensive format to all involved.

As the philanthropic of NPS, would NPF consider hosting a partnership summit where:

- NPF could learn about the work of other non-profits and potential partners
- Non-profits groups can network
- Policies and laws of partnerships be presented; learn do's and don'ts
- Build on their initiative to teach small friends groups about fundraising by providing workshops

