

**FOREVER RESORTS**  
**STATEMENT ON IMPROVING VISITOR SERVICES**  
**July 2015**

Forever Resorts currently operates as an authorized concessioner in 15 locations in 11 National Park Service (NPS) units. The company has been providing these services for over 34 years, during which time the ownership and management team of Forever Resorts has collectively accumulated hundreds of years of experience living and working in our National Parks. We are both proud and humbled to be an important part of these treasured locations and believe our role as a concessioner is to work in partnership with local park staff and management to ensure each visitor has an enriching and enjoyable park experience.

The hospitality industry has seen visitor expectations change and evolve over the years, often necessitating changes in the facilities and services required to deliver and respond to those expectations. Although it is important to preserve the unique, historic and pristine environment often found in our National Park units, the visitor commercial services provided at these park units must also evolve and adapt in order to be relevant to the visitors coming today.

This need to be responsive to today's visitors creates a challenge for many of the park units that struggle with dated facilities and infrastructure. In addition, a significant number of concession areas are located in remote environments, compounding the costs associated with upgrading services. Park managers struggle with limited financial resources to tackle both the maintenance backlog and these needed visitor enhancements, which would go a long way to not only meeting and exceeding visitor expectations, but increasing park visitation as well. Turning around declining park visitation would also generate needed funds through increased park entrance fees and franchise fees. Concessioners can be part of the solution to this need for funding.

Like many concessioners, Forever Resorts has demonstrated how working together with the NPS in some of our park locations has truly been a win, win, win, for the visitor, the NPS, and the concessioner. An example is a dated NPS-operated campground with no hookups providing services that have been virtually unchanged for over 50 years. In a number of cases, these campgrounds have been turned over to the concessioner and improvements have been made and services added, including electricity for each site. The visitors win, because their expectations are met for improved services. They are gladly willing to pay more for these improved services – often for a longer stay. The park benefits with increased fees. And the concessioner benefits from the higher revenues and occupancies of the campsites.

Forever Resorts would like to provide a few examples in some of the parks we operate where, working with the local park, we can focus on some initiatives in a few areas that would have a positive impact by creating “win, win, win” scenarios for the park visitors, the NPS, and the concessioner. These examples include: extending the operating season in parks where there is demonstrated demand; improving cell phone and Wi-Fi

coverage in concession areas; taking over NPS campground operations and making needed improvements to same; and assisting in providing new and expanded services.

### **Expanding the Operating Season**

A number of our park units experience strong seasonal demand and high occupancies, which can make it difficult to accommodate all the visitors who would like to come to the unit. Expanding the season when facilities can be adapted not only provides additional visitor opportunities to those who would otherwise be turned away, but positively impacts the gateway communities and other stakeholders, where economic activity drops dramatically when the “closed” sign goes up in the park.

This situation is especially true at the **Grand Canyon North Rim** and **Bryce Canyon**, where the park is open year around, but park concession operations are seasonal.

### **Improving Cell Phone and Wi-Fi Coverage in Concession Areas**

Improving cell phone service and Wi-Fi coverage is an extremely important issue that has significant impacts on visitor satisfaction as well as present and future park visitation. Most travelers can no longer go on vacation without at least taking a little time to “stay connected” with business and other important obligations. In addition, the youth of today will shy away from – or not return for a future visit to – areas where access to social media and other electronic content is not possible.

At the **Grand Canyon North Rim**, the NPS needs to be more proactive, and allocate the necessary resources to improve guest Wi-Fi coverage. This site was one of the five locations identified by NPS Director Jarvis at the “Grand Thoughts” conference in October 2012. However, the only improvements that have been made are some minor tweaks that we were able to do. At **Bryce Canyon**, the concession operations receive many complaints on the lack of quality cell phone and Wi-Fi service. **Big Bend National Park** in remote west Texas was also identified as one of the five locations for a test park.

### **Assigning NPS Campground Operations to the Concessioner**

As touched on above, this initiative could increase visitor satisfaction by offering improvements like individual site electricity and other site amenities desired by the guests. Even campers need to plug in and recharge their personal devices! This point has been proven by Forever at Signal Mountain Lodge in Grand Teton National Park and in Badlands National Park, as well as by numerous other concessioners in the system. Most parks do not have the resources to invest the capital needed to accomplish these improvements, and concessioners can often operate these campgrounds more efficiently while providing increased camping and franchise fees to the local park unit. Additional Forever Resorts concession operations that are candidates are **Grand Canyon North Rim**, **Bryce Canyon**, **Big Bend**, and **Mammoth Cave**.

## **Assisting in Providing New and Expanded Services**

Many concessioners have numerous ideas for programs and initiatives to provide enhanced services and activities, as well as additional facilities where there is demonstrated demand. An example at a Forever Resorts concession operation is **Mammoth Cave**, which, years ago, was one of the top tourist destinations in the country. Unfortunately, because of budget constraints, and declining visitation over the years, a number of the popular tours have been significantly reduced or eliminated. The NPS is de-emphasizing the longer cave trips, and even closed the concession-operated Snowball Dining Room on the cave floor. We believe that more creative trip alternatives can be offered. The NPS is now having a difficult time generating interest for the long-term concession contract offering that is not seeing competitive bid responses.