

Statement of John King, Regional Vice President, Forever Resorts
Before the Subcommittee on Interior, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform
U.S. House of Representatives on Modernizing the National Park Service Concessions
Program
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Chairman Lummis and Members, I have worked for concession operations in National Parks for the past 30 years, and specifically for Signal Mountain Lodge (a Forever Resort) in Grand Teton National Park for the past 27 years, and for Scenic Safaris (another Forever Resort) in Yellowstone National Park during the winter for the past five years. We are pleased to be able to offer testimony regarding ways in which we, as concessioners, in partnership with the National Park Service, can improve visitor services and experiences.

Over the years at Signal Mountain Lodge, we have had a great partnership relationship with the National Park Service. For instance, to meet changing needs and requests from visitors, we have worked with the National Park Service to take over existing campgrounds and provide necessary staffing that has helped not only to give visitors better experiences, but also to manage and patrol camp sites and educate visitors regarding bear awareness with great success. With our new concession contract, we have also worked with the National Park Service to find innovative solutions to provide new services for visitors such as constructing a laundry and shower facility without increasing Leasehold Surrender Interest. This service has been needed and requested by visitors for years. In fact, it was our number-one complaint for the entire property. The success of adding these facilities for visitors has been phenomenal.

In looking toward the future, we hope that the National Park Service will become even more receptive to increasing visitor service where it is needed, and where it makes sense, in a timely manner while at the same time, always protecting the National Parks' natural and cultural resources. Prospectuses and contracts could be improved by giving concessioners a credit of some sort or other innovative rewards for making capital investments that do not contribute to Leasehold Surrender Interest. Longer contracts would also allow concessioners to make larger capital investments that could be recovered by the end of the concession contract. And, finally, rewarding excellent concessioners in some way for being outstanding partners with the National Park Service and for providing outstanding visitor services with extra point(s) given in the re-bid prospectus process, or other innovative method, would help to solidify longevity and stability for good concessioners.

In closing, I want to say it has always been a pleasure working with the National Park Service during my hospitality career. I appreciate the entire Business Resource Team we work with in Grand Teton National Park. I feel we work together as a team to tackle issues, and improve the visitor experience. I also want to commend the superintendent and his team in Yellowstone

National Park for finalizing the new Winter Use Plan, which was a resounding success during our first year (this past winter) of the new concession contract term.

We look forward to partnering with the National Park Service to continue to find innovative ways to improve visitor services, protect Park resources, and providing a financially sustainable business model for the concessioner. Thanks so much for your consideration of this testimony.

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