



Spring 2014 Newsletter

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NPHA HOLDS ANNUAL MEETING IN D.C., MARCH 16-19, 2014

NPHA’s Annual Meeting was held during a snowstorm that closed federal offices in Washington but didn’t deter NPHA leaders from active discussions regarding the National Park Service (NPS) Centennial in 2016 and expanded visitor services. Participants discussed the visitation decline in 2013 as well as indications NPS and other park partners are newly resolved to spur visitation to parks.

Highlights of the meeting included:

- Reports on a pilot effort in Shenandoah National Park now underway to restore a historic structure under a partnership involving the National Trust for Historic Preservation, The Corps Network, Delaware North Companies and the National Park Service (NPS). Eight conservation corps members, mentored by skilled restoration architects and craftsman, are rehabilitating a visitor facility at sharply lowered costs than with normal contracting and with many important serendipities, including new skills attained by the youth.
- Discussions about new strategies to enhance national park interpretation and education programs, including active involvement by concessioners. NPHA has a representative on a new advisory body aiding NPS Associate Director Julia Washburn in the development of a new interpretation and education business plan.

- An update on the NPHA RentMyTent program being developed in cooperation with The Coleman Company which will allow thousands of visitors to camp in national parks beginning this summer using tents and other camping equipment reserved through NPHA members.
- A review of efforts underway to expand cellular and Wi-Fi connectivity in visitor services areas of national parks.
- In-depth conversations with NPS Director Jon Jarvis addressing the challenges of 2013, including Sequestration and Shutdowns, and the important opportunities ahead to continue the essential role of concessioners in serving visitor needs in national parks long into the next century of NPS operations.
- A presentation on the exciting efforts underway by Brand USA, the Congressionally-chartered corporation charged with increasing international visitation to the USA. Brand USA is sponsoring an IMAX film which will celebrate the Centennial of the National Park Service and is also using America's Great Outdoors as its overall promotion focus for the next two years.
- An update on the NPS and National Park Foundation (NPF) efforts to use the 2016 Centennial of the NPS to build awareness of, connection to and actions on behalf of America's national parks. Grey New York is leading development of a comprehensive campaign using the overall theme of Find Your Park, and involving targeting of Millennials for special invitations to connect with parks.
- A conversation with NPF President Neil Mulholland about cooperative efforts on the Grey campaign, on the guest donations program and on a new undertaking to define private investment strategies in national parks under the leadership of the Urban Land Institute.
- A review of key legal issues involving the October Shutdown and the 1998 Concessions Act, including recent court actions; and
- A conversation with key park partners including leaders from the National Parks Conservation Association, the Association of Partners for Public Lands, the U.S. Travel and Tourism Advisory Board, NatureBridge and health and Latino partners.

NPHA's board elected Terry MacRae as Chairman and added Alex Klein as a new Vice Chairman of the organization. Mr. MacRae is CEO of Hornblower Cruises and Events, serving visitors to park sites in San Francisco and New York City. He has led NPHA efforts in the marketing field. Mr. Klein is Vice President and General Manager of Grand Teton Lodge Company and Flagg Ranch Company, both in Wyoming. Information about NPHA's leadership is available [here](#).

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NPS DIRECTOR PUBLICLY EXPRESSES CONCERN ABOUT “WANING RELEVANCY” OF PARKS

NPS Director Jon Jarvis expressed concern about recent developments ranging from Congressional actions to amend the Antiquities Act to a decline in park visitation and told National Parks Traveler's Kurt Repanshek that “the challenges that we're facing on

a variety of fronts are symptoms, to me, of a waning relevancy to the American people. And a lack of understanding of really what the Park Service provides to society."

But the Director is not about to concede that national parks and his agency have enjoyed their best in years past. Repanshek reported that "Director Jarvis noted how the Park Service's first director, Stephen Mather, convinced the railroads to build the grand lodges to lure Americans to the parks and how he worked with the National Geographic Society to compile a portfolio showcasing the then-fledgling National Park System and place copies on the desks of every Member of Congress."

"Now, in the age of Twitter, Foursquare, Facebook, and other social media outlets, along with smartphones and tablets, the Park Service needs to connect with the so-called Millennials, as well as reconnect with other American generations that have lost touch with the National Park System," said Director Jarvis. "That is the goal of the 'Find Your Park' campaign that will be launched early next year to build excitement in advance of the Park Service's Centennial in 2016."

Read the full article at:

<http://www.nationalparkstraveler.com/2014/03/nps-director-jarvis-national-parks-are-losing-relevancy-americans24842>

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NPHA MEMBERS IN INTERMOUNTAIN REGION MEET WITH NPS LEADERS AND THE COLEMAN COMPANY

Top national park concessions industry executives active in the Intermountain Region met with new Regional Director Sue Masica and her team on March 4th in Denver. Many topics were covered, including recovery from the October Shutdown, the NPS/NPHA Cell and WiFi Initiative and RentMyTent. The discussions were encouraging and the Regional Director expressed hope that similar meeting would occur several times annually. Approximately 20 concessioner representatives participated in the meeting.

The NPS regional meeting was followed by a working session at the Denver headquarters of The Coleman Company to focus on joint efforts to implement the RentMyTent program on a pilot basis in 2014. Coleman's team at the meeting was headed by Coleman USA President David Allen and included more than a dozen product specialists and marketing execs. Discussions focused on the components of the camping packages which will be offered as well as steps Coleman and concessioners can take to create awareness of the opportunities. A temporary website is already up to answer consumer and travel industry questions: www.rentmytent.org.

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RENTMYTENT FEATURED AT IPW, SUBJECT OF NEW NPS GUIDANCE DOCUMENT

Coleman and NPHA joined to highlight RentMyTent in cooperation with the major annual international tourism show called IPW, held this year in early April in Chicago. All tourism reps holding appointments with agencies and companies on the new Federal Row at the show received a colorful flashdrive containing a PowerPoint explanation of RentMyTent along with information on America's Great Outdoors. The flashdrive bears "RentMyTent.org" and the Coleman logo. Federal Row is the result of great efforts by the National Parks Promotion Council. It features large displays of National Geographic images and was integrated into the central part of the show anchored by Brand USA.

NPS national guidance on RentMyTent is in the final clearance process. We expect that the guidance from the Deputy Director will welcome many of RentMyTent's objectives – including making campground stays easier and more enjoyable for younger and urban Americans with limited camping equipment and knowledge – and will outline a process to use 2014 as a means to test ideas and strategies and assess public interest. Once the guidance document is issued, it will be posted on www.parkpartners.org.

Click [here](#) to read the full report.

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CMAB MEETING HELD IN WASHINGTON

The NPS Concessions Management Advisory Board held its first official meeting in over a year on March 19th. Its March 2013 meeting fell victim to sequestration pressures and its October 2013 meeting lacked a quorum, and was therefore unable to take actions. The meeting was attended by a large group of concessioners and included reports on the status of concessions contracts as well as discussions about three working groups created by NPS to look at simplification of the concessions prospectus and offers process, recognition and rewarding of excellence by concessioners and additions of new visitor services in parks by concessioners. Much of the information presented at the meeting is available at <http://concessions.nps.gov/index.htm>.

Minutes of the meeting will be posted at http://concessions.nps.gov/advisory_board.htm.

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CENTENNIAL UPDATE

The NPS Centennial Campaign will be themed as FIND YOUR PARK and will launch in the first quarter of 2015, according to a joint presentation by NPS Centennial Coordinator Alexa Viets and National Park Foundation (NPF) Senior Vice President

David French. The Campaign will also include new logos for the NPS and NPF which include the arrowhead shape but left blank. A toolbox is being developed to enable concessioners to be actively involved in efforts designed to build awareness of NPS and national parks, encourage visitation and also stimulate action – volunteerism, advocacy and philanthropy.

A ten minute video explanation of the Centennial effort by NPS Director Jon Jarvis and more details on program will be shown on May 1st at 3 PM EDT via a webinar. NPHA members are welcome to register to see the presentation and ask questions. Contact Julie Williams, National Park Foundation, at jwilliams@nationalparks.org.

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CONGRESS HOLDS HEARING ON FLREA – FEDERAL FEE LEGISLATION

U.S. Representative Rob Bishop (R-UT) chaired a hearing on April 4th to receive comments on the Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act (FLREA), which allows NPS and other federal agencies to charge entrance and recreation fees and to retain those fees at the collection sites for use without any Congressional action. Prior to 1996, very little of the fees paid by visitors to parks and other federal sites were available to provide needed services and facilities. These fees now provide five federal agencies with more than \$300 million in funding annually, mostly to NPS. Witnesses were generally very supportive of reauthorization of FLREA, although most argued for steps which would increase the transparency of the fee program, more effectively involve the public in discussions about where and how fees would be charged and used and called for new steps to make the fees convenient and less costly to collect.

Among the key witnesses at the hearing was American Recreation Coalition President Derrick Crandall, who has played an active role in federal recreation fee policies since his service on the President's Commission on Americans Outdoors in the mid-1980's. He called upon the Congress to fulfill the promise of the law's title – recreation enhancement.

FLREA was originally slated to sunset in December 2014. Congress extended the program to December 2015 last October. The Administration strongly supports continuation of federal recreation fees. Action before the end of 2014 is likely, perhaps as a component of the FY15 budget. Copies of all testimony can be read and downloaded and an archived video of the full hearing can be watched at naturalresources.house.gov/calendar/eventsingle.aspx?EventID=370652.

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CONCESSIONERS CAN PLAY A ROLE IN GREAT OUTDOORS MONTH 2014

June is proclaimed Great Outdoors Month by the President and by each governor annually, and includes a large number of events designed to connect Americans with

the Great Outdoors. Among the month's events are National Trails Day®, National Fishing and Boating Week, National Get Outdoors Day, National Marina Day, the Great American Backyard Campout and more.

Great Outdoors Month 2014 will be much more ambitious than ever before, with the sponsors of June events unified in efforts to cross-promote and to work with important new national sponsors and partners. The Federal Interagency Council on Recreation (FICOR) is now actively involved, with FICOR Chair Tom Tidwell, Chief of the US Forest Service, serving as a Co-Chair of Great Outdoors Month. Coleman, Walmart, SC Johnson's OFF!® brand and more are also newly involved and will provide links to millions of Americans who are not now active in the outdoors. Planned events include Capital Campouts hosted by governors, special events at hundreds of Walmart stores and a new portal to outdoor fun – www.greatoutdoorsmonth.org. And even more is planned for 2015 and beyond. Among the ways concessioners can participate in Great Outdoors Month 2014 are: posting the colorful Presidential and Gubernatorial proclamations; celebrating the June events by hosting local activities in parks; and adding the Great Outdoors Month URL or QR code to your materials. The QR code is available on request from dcrandall@funoutdoors.com.

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NPHA FALL MEETING PLANNED FOR SHENANDOAH NATIONAL PARK, OCTOBER 19-22

The NPHA Board of Directors selected October 19-22 and Shenandoah National Park in Virginia for its Fall 2014 meeting. Planning for the meeting is underway. A likely focus will be the NPS Centennial Campaign and expansion of visitor services in national parks. More information will be announced shortly. October is a peak visitation period for Shenandoah, so reservations will need to be made well before the meeting.

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TIPS ON HOW TO STAY INFORMED:

Read the Federal Parks and Recreation newsletter, provided as a member service, at <http://parkpartners.org/Federal-Parks-and-Recreation-Newsletter.html> (password is "nphaonly").

For information on upcoming prospectuses and other actions of the NPS Commercial Services Office, check regularly at <http://concessions.nps.gov/>.

To reach an NPS employee, use the NPS locator at <http://www.nps.gov/directory/>.

For reports on park unit visitation, current year and historic, as well as information on overnight stays, go to <https://irma.nps.gov/Stats/>.

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For more information or to send questions/comments, please email
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To unsubscribe, please send an email to tgeorgevits@funoutdoors.com with the subject "NPHA Unsubscribe."

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