

## Public Use Statistics – 2006 Regional Report

### Recreation Visits

Units of the National Park System received 272.6 recreation visits in 2006.<sup>1</sup> This was a 0.3% decrease in recreation visits, or 0.9 million fewer visits than in 2005. The decrease would have been more noticeable if National Mall & Memorial Parks in Washington, DC had not counted the 2.2 million participants of the Cherry Blossom Festival.

The Alaska Region experienced the sixth year in a row with an increase in recreation visits, with a 20% increase over the last five years. Klondike Gold Rush Alaska is the largest unit in the Region with 903,000 visits, a 27% increase over five years. Together with Denali National Park & Preserve's 416,000 visits and Glacier Bay National Park & Preserve's 413,000 visits, the top three units are 70% of the Region's total recreation visits.

The Intermountain Region's annual recreation visits decreased again, for the eleventh time in the last thirteen years. It has lost 7.2 million visits over those years. Sixty-eight percent of the units (53 out of 78 units) reported a decrease in visitation in 2006. Amistad National Recreation Area reported the largest regional change of +199,000 as the result of increased interest in fishing tournaments.

Sixty-seven percent of the units reported a decrease for the year but two units contributed over half the Midwest Region's decrease of 1.0 million visits. Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore had 189,000 fewer visits because of the beautiful weather in 2005 and Jefferson National Expansion Memorial had 373,000 fewer visits because of wet weather during its Fair. Missouri National Recreational River's increase of 104,000 was the largest increase in the Region and the result of improved counting procedures.

The National Capital Region has the greatest concentration of heavily visited units. Ten of its thirty-two units have more than 1 million annual visits with ten of those units having more than 2 million visits. The increase in 2006 reflects the counting of the 2.2 million Cherry Blossom Festival visitors for the first time. Without this new count & the opening in 2004 of the National World War II Memorial, the Regional 5-year percent change of 6.7% would actually be -7.7%.

The Northeast Region has been remarkably consistent over the last three years, varying by less than 0.2%. It has the most units with over 1 million visits (15) and the most with over 2 million visits (8). The Statue of Liberty National Monument's decrease of 972,000 visits and Independence National Historic Park's decrease of 419,000 visits were the result of counting procedure changes. Cape Cod National Seashore had 775,000 more visits this year than in 2005 when it had some severe weather.

The Pacific West Region had an annual decrease of 1.3 million visits, the largest regional decrease in the nation. Led by Olympic National Park's decrease of 394,000 visits, 58% of the Region's units reported a decrease in visits. Four units account for 53% of the Region's visits: Golden Gate National Recreation Area had 13.5 million visits; Lake Mead National Recreation Area had 7.8 million visits; San Francisco Maritime National Historic Park had 4.0 million; and Yosemite National Park had 3.2 million visits.

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<sup>1</sup> NPS Public Use Statistics Office, 2006. Comparisons are made against the same time period in 2005.

The Southwest Region is the most visited region with 62.0 million visits. Despite this year's increase, the Region still reported 7.3 million fewer visits than in 2002 when it received its largest annual visitation in its history. Its top three units (Blue Ridge Parkway with 19.0 million visits, Great Smoky Mountains National Park with 9.3 million visits and Natchez Trace Parkway with 5.7 million visits) account for not only 55% of the Region's visits but for 12% of the entire NPS' visits. Both Kennesaw Mountain National Battlefield's increase of 311,000 visits and Mammoth Cave National Park's decrease of 1.3 million visits were the result of counting procedure changes. Blue Ridge Parkway finally repaired its road damage, leading to an increase of 1.1 million visits. Chattahoochee River National Recreation Area's increase of 331,000 visits reflects the renewed interest in water activities in the Atlanta area. The effects of the 2005 hurricanes are shown in Everglades National Parks' decrease of 280,000 visits (unable to complete the necessary repairs) and Gulf Islands National Seashore's increase of 297,000 visits (Florida unit is restored to near normal).

### Change in Recreation Visits by NPS Regions 2005-2006

Recreation Visits	(numbers in thousands)		Difference	% Change
	2005	2006		
Alaska	2,359	2,472	113	4.8
Intermountain	39,886	39,361	-525	-1.3
Midwest	20,627	19,593	-1,034	-5.0
National Capital	43,258	44,133	875	2.0
Northeast	51,166	51,114	-52	-0.1
Pacific West	55,111	53,944	-1,167	-2.1
Southeast	61,083	62,007	924	1.5

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Public Use Statistics Office Web site: <http://www.nature.nps.gov/stats>

Social Science Program Web site: <http://www2.nature.nps.gov/socialscience>