



## American Recreation Coalition

*Dedicated to the protection and enhancement of everyone's right  
to health and happiness through recreation.*

### AUGUST 2012 NEWSLETTER

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#### **New Survey of 2012 Likely Voters Finds Unity in Support for National Parks**

A new survey of more than 1,000 likely 2012 voters tells us that national parks are viewed as embodying the American experience, and voters want to see national parks enjoyed, honored, cherished, and cared for, not left to crumble into disrepair. Four in five voters report having visited a national park at some point in their lives, and nearly nine in 10 say they are interested in visiting in the future. Especially exciting is the high interest in visiting parks reported by those under 30 and from a Hispanic background. The national parks constituency is not only sizable, it is avid in its support. And support spans the political, ideological, and demographic spectrum. Nearly nine in 10 voters see national parks as an important and appropriate federal responsibility. Even in these challenging fiscal times, very few voters from either side of the political aisle say the federal government should be cutting back on funding for national parks. Commissioned by the National Parks Conservation Association and the National Park Hospitality Association, survey results are available online [here](#).

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#### **White House Hosts Meeting on Travel and Tourism**

The White House Business Council held an initial American Economic Competitiveness Forum in early August. ARC was among about 40 entities invited to participate in a four-hour-plus event that was part victory lap – as Administration participants noted support that had aided the tourism industry's notably faster and stronger economic recovery and creation of jobs than the overall economy – and part open discussion with Cabinet members, the President's National Economic Council's Director Gene Sperling and others.

National parks and the Great Outdoors were frequently referenced throughout the meeting – and especially by Interior Secretary Ken Salazar, who participated actively in about half of the meeting. But he was far from a soloist – Acting Secretary of

Commerce Rebecca Blank labeled herself a "parks lover" and both other Administration and tourism industry attendees (including Brand USA officials) talked about parks as a vital component of domestic and international tourism. In fact, two tourism industry participants offered candid comments to Secretary Salazar, telling him that more infrastructure (including hotel rooms) was needed in parks to provide quality park experiences. He invited follow-up discussions on that topic. For a full report on the meeting, click [here](#).

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## **Improving Recreation Opportunities in National Forests**

Top recreation community leaders met with USDA Under Secretary Harris Sherman and other key USDA and Forest Service officials for a second time on July 17, 2012, moving from June's conceptual discussions to discussion of specific pilots in the **Steps for Improving Recreation Opportunities in National Forests** initiative. The group agreed to proceed with identifying pilot programs representing seven categories of recreation opportunities – largely involving existing campgrounds and marinas but also focusing on increased use of conservation corps and closer ties to gateway tourism organizations. The groups also agreed to form working groups to examine available authorities and a system to evaluate the financial aspects of proposals. The Under Secretary expressed his continuing full commitment to the initiative, and the group plans to complete work in these areas within 45 days and to reconvene no later than mid-September. For a full report on the meeting, click [here](#).

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## **Grand Thoughts at the Grand Canyon: An Invitation**

The National Park Hospitality Association will host a unique program called **Grand Thoughts at the Grand Canyon** between October 16 and 22 on the North Rim of the Grand Canyon. The program will build upon the successful January 2012 **America's Summit on National Parks** and will continue preparations for the 2016 Centennial of the National Park Service. NPHA welcomes national and regional leaders who care deeply about America's national parks. Especially welcome are members and staff of and donors to the National Park Foundation, the National Parks Conservation Association, the National Park Friends Alliance and allies in the health and travel and tourism fields. Discussions will be inspired by the remarkable venue for this meeting – and will be enriched by the diversity and quality of the participants. Each of the seven days will feature a theme and will draw leaders in industry and government for keynote presentations, followed by small group discussions. Daily themes will include: Telling America and the World About Our Parks; Connecting Urban Parks with Remote and Iconic Parks (with a Superintendent's Roundtable); Harnessing Technology in America's Parks; Funding America's Parks; Building Unity in America Around Parks; and Learning in Parks for All Ages. Many of the discussions will focus on the NPS Centennial strategy: [A Call to Action](#). Updates on special guests and programs are

available [here](#). To obtain details or register for the program, contact NPHA at 202-682-9530 or click [here](#).

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## **Update on the Recreational Trails Program, Byways**

The trails community enjoyed a major victory earlier this summer with the reauthorization of the Recreational Trails Program (RTP) as part of the new surface transportation legislation known as MAP-21. Funding for the RTP, which returns federal gas taxes generated by off-highway recreation to the states, was set at \$85 million for each of the next two fiscal years. One new provision added to the law allows state governors to “opt out” of the program and use the funds for other purposes as long as they notify the U.S. Department of Transportation of their decision by September 1, 2012. The Coalition for Recreational Trails (CRT), co-chaired by ARC President Derrick Crandall, has taken pre-emptive action to make sure that its legislative success is not short-circuited by this opt-out provision. The International Mountain Bicycling Association, a CRT member, created a signature-collection web site, allowing more than 700 local, state and national organizations to sign letters to the governors urging support for the RTP. Several governors have already announced that they will **NOT** “opt out” of RTP – including the governors of Kentucky, New Hampshire and Pennsylvania. These governors will receive thank you letters. CRT members are also planning follow-up media contacts to ensure that public attention is drawn to the pending decision. In the next two weeks, CRT members will be bolstering their efforts further by encouraging their individual members to also contact the governors with messages of support for the RTP. Another CRT member, Americans for Responsible Recreational Access, has organized the online effort to collect individual signatures. To read the CRT’s alert, click [here](#). To sign a letter to your governor supporting the RTP, click [here](#).

The National Scenic Byways Program was ignored in the new MAP-21 transportation legislation. This situation leaves existing designations in place, permits use of apportioned federal funds for many byways projects and even permits new byways designations. Efforts are underway at the National Scenic Byways Foundation and by the consortium of national transportation, recreation, scenic and historic preservation and tourism organizations that led efforts to create the byways program originally to prepare the byways program for new successes. Initial plans call for adding a fourth “leg” to the byways program – promotion – to complement the processes of designation, grant making, and technical assistance and substituting a non-federal entity for key functions including technical assistance and recertification of byways eligibility. For more information or to become part of the byways program redesign coalition, contact Derrick Crandall at [dcrandall@funoutdoors.com](mailto:dcrandall@funoutdoors.com).

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