

UNDERSTANDING THE VITAL IMPORTANCE OF AMERICA'S GREAT OUTDOORS

- Vital to the health and quality of life of more than 50% of the American public. Well over one billion visits annually to the 30% of the nation's surface managed as national parks, national forests, wildlife refuges and through other public lands systems.
- These experiences are compromised by a worn-out, dated, inadequate and poorly maintained infrastructure – tens of billions of dollars in deferred maintenance detracts from enjoyment and even poses safety issues.
- Compounding these problems – **drought, wildfire, hurricanes and other natural disasters.**
- Beyond the impact on visitors, jeopardizes one of the nation's largest and most diverse industries: recreation. Estimated by Outdoor Industry Association at **\$887B and 7.6 million jobs in manufacturing, services and more.** RVs made in Indiana are used across the nation. Prime catalyst for travel.
- Yet the **recreation infrastructure – from campgrounds to lodges to trails to beaches to marinas – is often overlooked in the recovery from disasters.** And that poses a problem for communities that rely on jobs linked to activities on public lands and waters.
- The **Administration's request for some \$50B does not sufficiently address the myriad of problems now facing recreational businesses operating as concessioners and permittees.** 2017 – and carry-over from disasters of prior years – has been a year of extraordinary challenges. We have seen **total devastation in the Virgin Islands National Park** – multi-year and perhaps permanent loss of revered places like Caneel Bay, Cinnamon Bay and more. **Glacier lost Sperry Chalet.** But there have been other, less publicized losses of thousands of campsites and damage to bridges, docks, ramps and buildings key to serving park visitors. **Tours in Everglades NP remain closed.** And even though some of these reconstruction costs can be met with emergency funding and insurance, the system is not nimble enough to deal with the consequences of these disasters. **A ten or fifteen year contract turns disastrous if two years – or more – produce zero revenues.** Replacement of historic structures and facilities in remote, sensitive areas take time, care – and involve unexpected costs. Simply rebuilding physical infrastructure does not mean an automatic return of visitors.
- **Congress needs to conduct oversight into disaster recovery.** It needs to understand that Forest Service **campgrounds, day use areas, roads and trails across the west are closed after severe drought because of the threat of dead and dying trees that could fall on campers** – with no money to remove the trees. And even when the trees are removed ... the Forest Service has no money to haul them away and there is no market for the wood, so the agency creates a **"log deck."** **And where are the log decks created? Again and again, at campgrounds where the immense piles of logs either replace campsites or create major visual impairments.** Just reading the closure notice for major recreation areas like the Sierra National Forest in California is disheartening. And the closures will continue for years.
- Congress also needs to understand the major consequences for recreational businesses that employ tens of thousands. As the infographic on national park concessioners shows, businesses operating in roughly 100 national park units employ more workers than the National Park Service and built and operate many of the key buildings serving visitors. If closed, the agency loses its share of this business – nearly 10% of total revenues. **Yet time and time again, reopening of concessioner operations and restarting a sustainable economic system has not been made a priority – even communications with these businesses has often been shut down.**

For more information:

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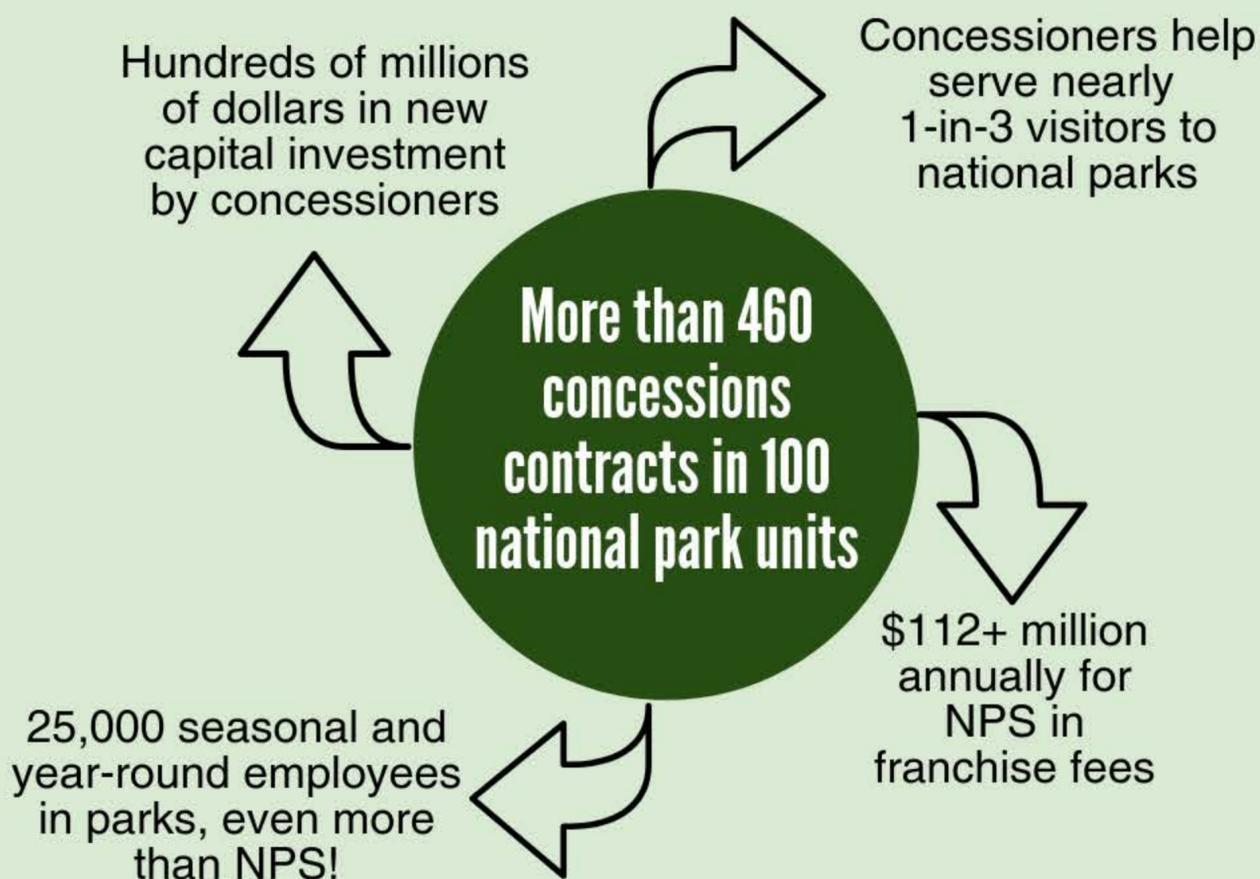
A “log deck” now covers a once-popular campground at Sierra NF – and the current view of a lakefront campground on that forest.

And the impact of Hurricanes Irma and Maria on Virgin Islands NP was dramatic and devastating. Recovery will take years.

Virgin Islands National Park was pummeled by Hurricanes Irma and Maria.



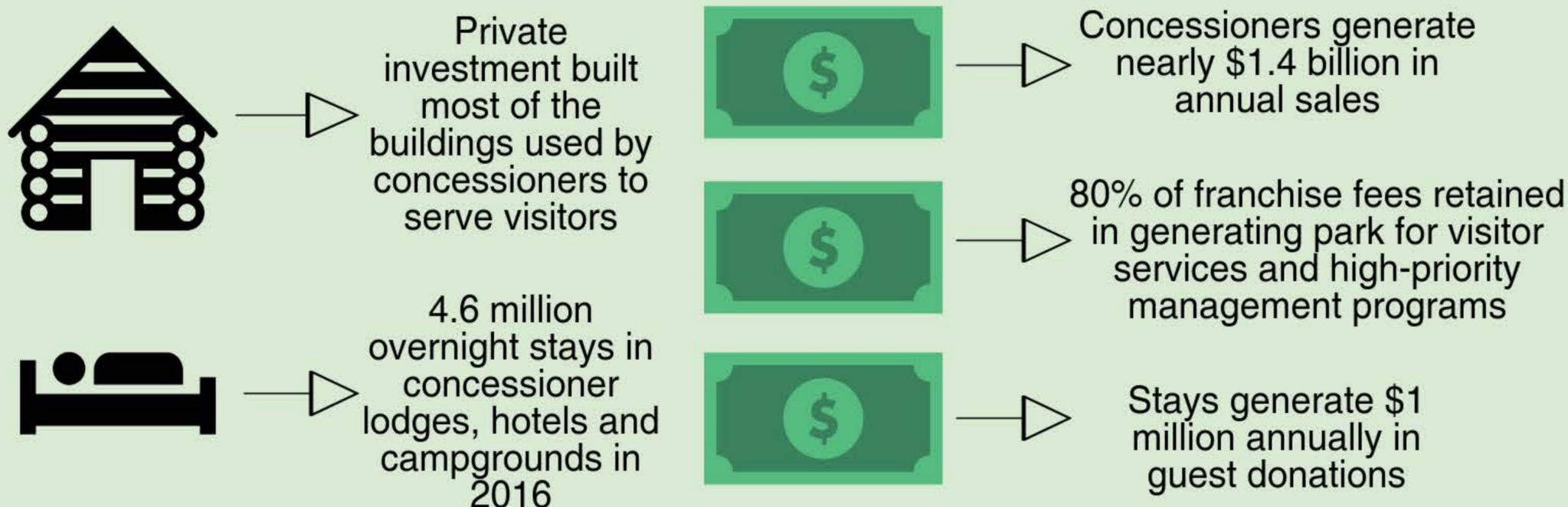
National Park Concessioners: Providing Great Experiences in Great Places



Concessioners have a long history in parks, predating the creation of the National Park Service in 1916. They provide:



and much more including educational services, special food related events, equipment rentals and much more! Concessioners intend to continue serving visitors in the future with broadband and cell connectivity, better campgrounds, new transportation options and more



To learn more, visit www.parkpartners.org