



American Recreation Coalition

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

MARCH 2015 NEWSLETTER

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NPS CENTENNIAL TO INCLUDE YOUTH OUTREACH, BACKLOG REDUCTION



President Barack Obama announced an initiative to keep parks relevant to an increasingly urban and diverse nation and to invite all Americans to help support their parks in Chicago on February 19. **“Every Kid in a Park”** offers all 4th grade students and their families free admission to National Parks and other federal public lands and waters sites for a full year and will invite trips to parks for up to 4 million 4th graders.

The President’s FY2016 budget requests \$20 million to transport over a million urban youth to national parks and public lands. Dedicated youth coordinators will welcome them and their families. It also includes a significant increase in the National Park Service (NPS) Centennial Challenge program, which leverages federal spending at least 1:1 with contributions and partner funding.

Federal, state and local park and recreation agencies and other organizations are expected to coordinate hosting the visits, designed to be both fun and educational. Recreation community research has repeatedly shown that exposure of kids to the outdoors is critically important to later-life participation in outdoors activities.

The recreation community has also expressed great concern over a backlog in deferred maintenance of NPS visitor infrastructure now estimated to total nearly \$12 billion. The President's proposal outlines a strategy to end the non-transportation component of that backlog within 10 years. It will do so through increased appropriations and partly by inviting support from individuals, organizations and corporations.

"The nation's recreation community applauds the President's action," said Derrick Crandall, President of the American Recreation Coalition (ARC) and an active member of the National Park Service Centennial Advisory Committee. "We have stressed for two decades that there has been a decline in outdoor activity by America's kids. We noted declines in kids' bike sales and overall park visits, a surge in obesity among youth and dramatic increases in hours spent by kids staring at screens. We helped build partnerships to lure kids outdoors – offering ideas to parents and schools and youth organizations and park agencies. We have united groups around action through Great Outdoors Month™, including efforts by governors of both political parties. The President's proposal will supplement and energize programs like these."

The program is expected to put a special emphasis on the nation's Title I schools – schools with concentrations of low-income students. These same students often have limited exposure to America's shared legacy of parks, forests, refuges and other public lands and waters.

According to Crandall, there will be strong support for the youth-outreach and backlog-reduction efforts from the recreation and tourism communities. "There are communities that already have similar youth-oriented programs in place, including use of overnight environmental education centers, and national park concessioners assist with food and transportation. In addition, the current backlog threatens the quality and quantity of park visitor experiences, even as the agency seeks to invite all Americans to visit and benefit from their parks. This proposal is an important step forward."

Outreach to youth is expected to be a primary focus of the Federal Interagency Council on Outdoor Recreation (FICOR) for 2015-16 and will be a focus of Partners Outdoors 2015, to be held in Washington, D.C., on June 2-4, which ARC coordinates.

To see the video of President Obama's announcement, as well as his designation of three new national monuments, visit <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QV6MowDIq4k>.

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GOVERNORS GET ACTIVELY INVOLVED IN GREAT OUTDOORS MONTH™

The Great Outdoors Month™ Partnership is inviting Governors to take a central and personal role in Great Outdoors Month™ 2015 and the response is exciting.

At least eight Capital Campouts are in the planning stages, with two already on the calendar. Governor Terry McAuliffe (D-Va.) will host Virginia's first-ever Capital Campout June 22, and Governor Jay Inslee (D-Wash.) will host his second Capital Campout June 26. Governor McAuliffe expressed his excitement in a letter to ARC, saying, "I commend ... members of the Great Outdoor Month™ Partnership for your great work in promoting America's outstanding parks. I look forward to the Capital Campout becoming an annual event in Virginia. I wish you the best of luck in your efforts to share the importance of outdoor recreation with families nationwide."

Proclamation requests have been sent to all 50 governors, and more than 30 are in the process of being issued. Three have already been issued! The first state to ratify the Constitution is also the first to proclaim Great Outdoors Month™ – with Delaware Governor Jack Markell issuing his state's proclamation just ahead of Nebraska's brand new Governor Pete Ricketts. Governor Ricketts has been in office less than two months and his enthusiasm for Great Outdoors Month™ is already apparent! Iowa Governor Terry Branstad has also issued his proclamation.

Delaware's proclamation specifically references the many events that take place during Great Outdoors Month™ saying, "...diverse Great Outdoors Month™ events including National Trails Day®, National Get Outdoors Day, The Great Outdoors Month™ National Day of Service, the Great American Campout®, Kids to Parks™ Day and more help connect citizens of all ages to healthy fun outdoors; and...other events during Great Outdoors Month™ such as National Fishing and Boating Week and National Marina Day provide all of us, especially our children, with exciting opportunities for recreation on the great waters of our state."

Governors are excited by the broad state-level coalitions offering to support June's activities including local Boy Scout and Girl Scout councils, state affiliates of the National Wildlife Federation, stores of key national retailers and local youth groups.

The initial Great Outdoors Month™ proclamations are available to be viewed and downloaded [here](#).

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ARC OFFERS NEW IDEAS FOR OUTDOOR INITIATIVES TO GOVERNORS

ARC has developed proposals for America's governors to use during Great Outdoors Month™ to encourage healthy fun activities outdoors. Many of the proposals are based upon efforts already underway in one or more states. The proposals range from making state park passes available for checkout at public libraries to family-based park activities tied to adventure and based on The Amazing Race. Other ideas include corporate sponsorship of state park passes for families caring for foster youth, free fishing in state parks and partner-aided "learn to have fun outdoors" experiences. ARC is suggesting that state coalitions of recreation advocates can offer funding, volunteers and communications support.

One program on ARC's list is Connecticut's YOUth Fishing Passport. In most states, youth under 16 fish free – no license is required. Connecticut uses its YOUth Fishing Passport, though, to connect with kids and deliver a message that having a license is a valuable thing. Passport holders are invited to take part in fishing activities specifically designed for kids. And passport holders receive a variety of benefits from conservation organizations and companies, including free worms, discounts on fishing gear and charters and drawings. The state's fishing website also links to the [Vamos a Pescar](#) website inviting Spanish-speaking Americans to enjoy time fishing. For more information, click [here](#).

This program can be easily repackaged for use by other states. And it can help encourage youth to continue to get fishing licenses after they turn 16 and are required to pay for them.

Another program out of Connecticut that can be adapted to other states is their "Free State Park Passes for Foster Families" program. Thanks to generous donations from the Bank of America Charitable Foundation, the Connecticut Association of Foster and Adoptive Parents – in conjunction with the Connecticut Department of Children and Families – has been able to offer free state park passes to Connecticut's foster families.

Programs like these, as well as others in states like Texas, California, Kentucky and more, are great ways to introduce more people than ever to active fun outdoors. Best of all – most are "battle tested" and sustainable.

For more information on these programs, contact Ben Nasta at bnasta@funoutdoors.com or call (202) 682-9530.

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PARTNERS OUTDOORS 2015 WILL ADDRESS TECHNOLOGY, PROMOTION AND YOUTH

Planning for the 2015 Partners Outdoors Conference is in full swing. The annual gathering of key recreation leaders from both the public and private sectors will once again be held in Washington, D.C. during June – Great Outdoors Month™. The session is co-sponsored by the federal agencies managing our national parks, forests, refuges and other public spaces and ARC. From June 2-4, TED-style presentations by national experts will center on three topics key to the future of the recreation community. Those three areas are:

- Day 1: Digital Strategies for the Great Outdoors
- Day 2: Outreach and Promotion, 21st Century Style
- Day 3: Youth and the Outdoors

The Partners Outdoors Virtual Library, with interesting and engaging articles, videos and pictures and launching a forum for sharing, and seeking, strategies, ideas and information within the recreation community, will be unveiled at Partners Outdoors.

As part of Day 3 activities, Partners Outdoors participants will head to the National Mall for the launch of an Agents of Nature Mission Site. Agents of Nature is a GPS-based mobile game for handheld devices that allows kids to interact with and learn about the world around them in a fun, active way at a rapidly growing number of Mission Sites across the U.S. and Canada.

As in 2014, Partners Outdoors 2015 will feature several key events highlighting great work being done across the country, including the awarding of the Beacon Awards, Legends Awards, and the outdoor community's most prestigious award, the Sheldon Coleman Great Outdoors Award.

Partners Outdoors was first held in 1992 and has led to important actions benefiting the access to the Great Outdoors. Partners Outdoors 2015 will continue that legacy. Participation is by invitation of the program sponsors, including federal agencies, ARC and the National Association of State Park Directors. For updates on Partners Outdoors planning, check back often at www.funoutdoors.com.

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TRANSITIONS

Christy Goldfuss – has joined the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) as a senior advisor and will succeed **Mike Boots** as acting head of CEQ when he steps down in

March. Goldfuss has served as the National Park Service' Deputy Director for Congressional and External Relations since November 2013. Prior to joining NPS, she created and directed the Public Lands Project for the Center for American Progress. She can be reached at: [Christina W Goldfuss@ceq.eop.gov](mailto:Christina.W.Goldfuss@ceq.eop.gov). The U.S. Council on Environmental Quality can be reached at (202) 395-5750.

Frank Dean – is retiring from his position as General Superintendent of the Golden Gate National Recreation Area, a position he has held since 2010. Dean served nearly 40 years with the Park Service, including stops at Erie Canalway, Saratoga, the Grand Canyon, Yosemite, Sequoia & Kings Canyon, Point Reyes, and the national office in Washington, D.C. He is moving to the Yosemite Conservancy, where he will serve as President and CEO, succeeding **Mike Tollefson**, who also had a distinguished NPS career. The Yosemite Conservancy can be reached at (800) 469-7275; www.yosemiteconservancy.org.

U.S. Rep. Sam Graves (R-Mo.) – is the new Chairman of the House of Representatives Transportation & Infrastructure Committee's Subcommittee on Highways and Transit. He succeeds **U.S. Rep. Tom Petri**, who retired after years of championing key recreation and conservation issues including the Recreational Trails Program. To contact Rep. Graves' Washington, D.C. office, call (202) 225-7041. For more information on the House Transportation & Infrastructure Committee, visit <http://transportation.house.gov/>.

U.S. Senator Bill Cassidy (R-La.) – was recently named as Chair of the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee's Subcommittee on National Parks. He was the final Senator elected in 2014, defeating former Energy Committee Chair **Mary Landrieu** in a run-off election in December. A physician and former Member of the U.S. House of Representatives, Senator Cassidy has already taken an active role in early hearings of the 114th Congress on Interior's budget. To contact Sen. Cassidy's Washington, D.C. office, call (202) 224-5824. For more information on the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee, visit <http://www.energy.senate.gov/public/>.

Eddie Belk – has been chosen as the new Director of Operations for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers following the retirement of **Jim Hannon**. He will represent the nation's top recreation provider on FICOR. He can be reached at (202) 761-1983; Edward.E.Belk@usace.army.mil.

Jim Kurth – has been chosen as the new Deputy Director for Operations of the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, following the retirement of **Rowan Gould**. Before being appointed to this new position, Kurth served as the Chief of the National Wildlife Refuge System for more than three years. As Chief, he led the management of the world's premier system of public lands and waters set aside to conserve America's fish, wildlife,

and plants. Kurth is a 30+-year veteran of the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service. He can be reached at Jim_Kurth@fws.gov.

U.S. Rep. Tom McClintock (R-Calif.) – is now Chairman of the U.S. House of Representatives Natural Resources Committee’s new Subcommittee on Federal Lands. The subcommittee replaces the Subcommittee on Public Lands and Environmental Regulation and adds jurisdiction over the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Rep. McClintock’s district includes Yosemite and Sequoia & Kings Canyon National Parks, as well as the Tahoe Basin, and the Tahoe, Eldorado, Stanislaus, and Sierra National Forests. To contact Rep. McClintock’s Washington, D.C. office, call (202) 225-2511. For more information on the House Natural Resources Committee, visit <http://naturalresources.house.gov/>.

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For more information or to address questions/comments, please email: bnasta@funoutdoors.com

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