



NATIONAL PARK HOSPITALITY ASSOCIATION

# Connecting Americans to Their Parks

## Meeting a Goal of Healthy People and Healthy Parks

Presented by the National Parks Marketing Council  
July 22, 2009

## Introduction

The National Park Hospitality Association (NPHA) believes that the National Park Service and its allies, including NPHA, have a unique opportunity to increase awareness of the benefits derived from visits to park units among all Americans, including those who have traditionally not visited national parks. In addition to important individual benefits – including physical and mental health – increased awareness of park opportunities will have important positive regional and national consequences. Achieving this awareness will require a new, partnership-based outreach, marketing and promotion program.

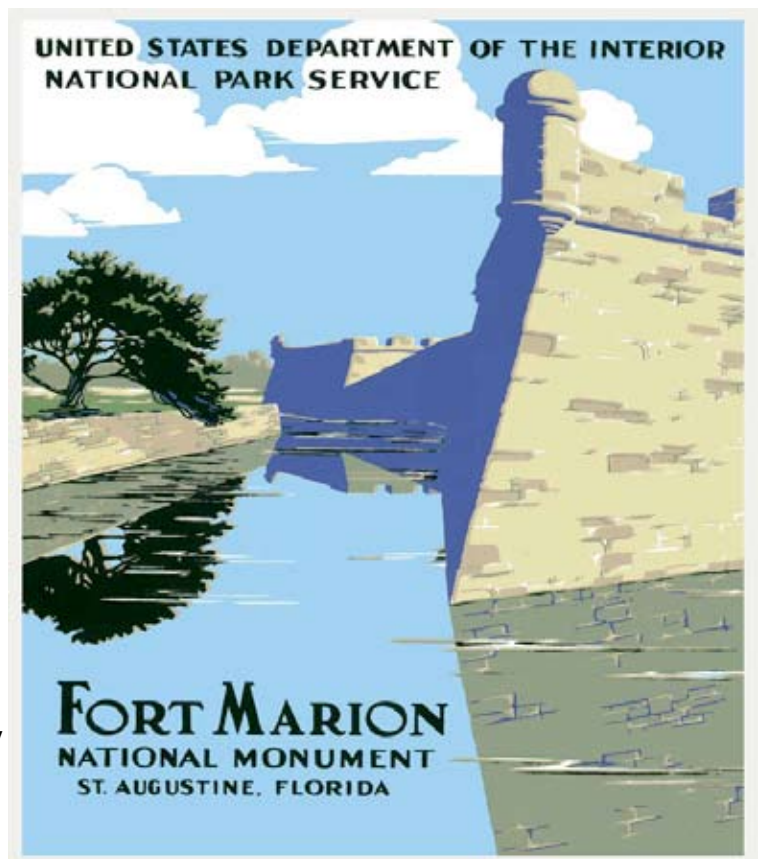
## Mission

The United States has an unparalleled and shared legacy of national park units that offer insights into our nation's history, nature and fun. This legacy is the result of vision, values and actions. Our mission is to allow this legacy to benefit the nation and all Americans in ways which protect this legacy for future generations. Key to achieving this mission is creating awareness within the American public about where, what and when they can benefit from visits to parks.

## Background

Our nation's national park system began in 1872 and has served the nation well. It is larger than ever today, and more diverse – with remarkable natural, historic and cultural assets located in 49 of the nation's 50 states. In addition to nearly 60 national parks – many widely known to the public, the system also includes more than 330 additional units that serve millions in urban environments ranging from New York and San Francisco to Boston to Philadelphia and Los Angeles.

Collectively, the system offers remarkably diverse opportunities for physical, mental and spiritual experiences, and also is a powerful economic engine nationally and regionally. Millions benefit from the national park system each year. The system's widespread popularity is largely the benefit of promotional efforts that began with the very inception of the system, when both federal managers and partners providing services in the parks – the early generation of concessioners – encouraged visits and





provided a range of interpretive and recreational opportunities. Promotion continued in the 20th century –notably through efforts of the Works Progress Administration in the 1930's, when hundreds of classic posters were done by artists under federal contracts – posters that even today capture the excitement of park visits. Promotion continued in the 1950's and 1960's through the U.S. Travel Service and efforts by both the Departments of Commerce and the Interior.

Promotion of parks continues today – but not in a comprehensive and strategic manner. Concessioners continue to promote specific offerings – lodging, transportation

and other services for many of the 116 parks in which concessioners operate. And several key states actively promote park visits – states like Wyoming and Montana and Arizona with major national park units that are vital to statewide economies.

In addition, an important marketing initiative was undertaken in 2009 with the creation of three fee-free weekends – when entrance fees were waived – and coordination with concessioners to offer further inducements to visitors. The concessioners' offers website received 320,000 "hits" between the fee-free announcement in early June and July 13. And while the effort is still underway and a full evaluation will not be possible until this fall, it is clear that the fee-free weekends offer generated substantial media interest. "Earned" media coverage - stories carried in national and local papers and in television news stories - is regularly compared to the value of equivalent purchased advertising. The computation for this initiative would definitely exceed several millions of dollars.

But the lack of a comprehensive and coordinated marketing and promotion effort has been central to the significant and disconcerting decline in the percentage of Americans visiting – and deriving great benefits from – national park system units. Visitation has declined significantly over twenty years even as the overall population has grown and diversified, and even as a higher percentage of the visits have shifted to close-to-urban center units like Golden Gate National Recreation Area and Lake Mead National Recreation Area. Equally importantly, lengths of stays have shortened, and

visitation to parks remains largely homogeneous: Caucasian, affluent and educated.

There are exceptions. But the exceptions are invariably linked to park units that have worked hard to be visible and relevant regionally.

The approach of the 100th anniversary of the National Park Service offers an important opportunity to reestablish a strategic forum for discussion of communications and marketing issues, as well as to create partnerships with defined responsibilities among the principle organizations vital to the agency's successful second century, including:



- the National Park Service;
- the National Park Foundation;
- the National Park Conservation Association;
- the National Park Hospitality Association;
- the Park Friends Alliance.

Of these, the National Park Hospitality Association, through its members, has the greatest experience in promotion and marketing efforts and has both high interest and capabilities to play a leading role in meeting current challenges.



### **The Challenge**

We have already lost a generation – perhaps two generations – of Americans who regularly utilize parks and the Great Outdoors

for relaxation and recharging – mental and physical. Large portions of the post-Boomer adult generations have turned to shopping malls and electronic entertainment for leisure pursuits and have limited traditions or skills in the outdoors. And absent intervention and assistance, this pattern will repeat, as parents fail to introduce kids to the outdoors.



The truth is that there are major and potent competitors for the leisure time of all Americans, and especially youth. These competitors use advertising and other promotion extensively, and have effectively “hidden” many traditional leisure choices, including park visits. National park visits can't compete ad for ad, but there are strategies for making parks and fun outdoors more “top of mind.”

Fast-growing segments of the U.S. population also have limited park traditions and

little understanding of ways to enjoy time in parks appropriately. Parks have been slow and inconsistent in responding to changes in demography and interests, often resisting introduction of new activities and new technologies which, if managed properly, could increase enjoyment without impairment. Not only must the story-telling that marks good interpretation be done in several languages, but it must be done in differing styles and formats to suit generational differences – including use of audio-visuals dependent upon platforms such as iPhones and iPod Touches. New activities such as geocaching can be managed and utilized. And while riding a horse is a wonderful way to experience a park, so is riding a mountain bike – an activity largely underutilized in parks.

Marketing of park experiences is not free. However, there is no need to replicate the full, traditional media marketing efforts of corporate America and state tourism agencies – social networks are an attractive and effective alternative. But even Facebook and YouTube have costs. A stream of revenue to underwrite a partnership-developed marketing strategy is needed.

Parks without infrastructure are of limited value to 21st Century visitors, yet making investments in that visitor infrastructure is a major challenge because available funding must also compete against needs for operations and maintenance.



## **The Solution**

A new Park Partners Marketing Council should be created, with representation by all key park constituent groups, state tourism offices and key gateway communities and operational leadership by the park concessions industry. The Council's roles would be to develop and recommend to the National Park Service a Marketing and Outreach Strategy for the National Park System and then coordinate efforts implementing the approved strategy.

The development of the Strategy should include surveying, organizing and making available examples of recent and current efforts by NPS and allied agencies and organizations to interest Americans in visiting national parks to gain health, educational and other benefits. The effort will especially seek out information on initiatives focusing on Americans in the following categories: (1) youth; (2) urban; (3) lower income; (4) non-Caucasian; (5) seniors and (6) new Americans. Special attention should be

given to use of new technology communications and media as well as initiatives that rely upon specialized channels, including schools, events and organizations. The results of the survey and evaluation should be available online to NPS offices and allied agencies and organizations in the form of a searchable database. In addition, the effort will recommend ways for an on-going sharing of successful outreach and marketing initiatives.



Included in the Strategy would be plans for using existing resources and developing new resources for marketing and promotional programs. It is important that any use of public funds be discussed fully with the Congress and OMB. Making a portion of franchise fee payments by concessioners available for marketing and promotion efforts should be explored with those entities. And allocation of proceeds from certain merchandise sold in parks could also be discussed, along the lines of the already-approved tie-in with select Igloo products.

### **Time for Action: Now**

There are many reasons for immediate creation of the Park Partners Marketing Council and prompt action:

- 1) a new Administration and new agency leadership clearly interested in making the benefits of parks available to all Americans;
- 2) the Fall 2009 launch of the Ken Burns PBS special, which will generate media opportunities;
- 3) rapid evolution in new communications channels, including the “social media” which relies heavily on peer-generated content, and on new devices such as the iPhone which have dramatically altered delivery of visual and textual information to the public;
- 4) the focus of all major park interests on 2016, and the ability to utilize the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the National Park Service to generate vision and unity;
- 5) national debate about future surface transportation policies and the opportunity to coordinate marketing with new steps to reduce the barriers of accessing park units;



- 6) changes in NPS policies relating to website content which will provide new support to seamless assistance to potential park visitors;
- 7) Administration interest in better utilization of the power of park units to generate jobs, both in and near national park units;
- 8) availability of spokespersons of special interest to target groups to aid in marketing and communications efforts, as demonstrated by the Jonas Brothers willingness to work with the Department of the Interior to urge young Americans to get outdoors; and
- 9) the low-cost benefits of park visits to an American public which remains concerned about economic conditions – and the importance of increasing awareness of these opportunities for many who simply overlook them.

## Summary and Action

America's National Park System is a treasure, but a treasure that is not adequately shared by all Americans. And without action, it is likely that the percentage of Americans directly benefiting from parks will continue to decline as other leisure time alternatives – at home and away – continue to overshadow the benefits of time in parks. It is time to organize the partnership of park entities – public and private, for-profit and not-for-profit, into a Park Partners Marketing Council to significantly enhance awareness of our parks and the opportunities they offer. Concessioners can and should take a leading role in this Council, reflecting both expertise and tradition in the marketing of parks. A parks marketing initiative has substantial precedent for NPS involvement and tremendous benefits to the agency's mission. Attached are three examples of potential components of such an initiative.



Appendices: Possible Outreach, Marketing and Promotion Program Elements

- 1) iPhone App: Park Concierge Proposal
- 2) Proposed Cooperative Agreement on Documenting Outreach and Marketing Activities
- 3) Using Electronic Media to Share Park Stories for the 21st century

# LightSpeedMedia.biz

539 Chicago Ave. Downers Grove IL 60515  
Tel. (630) 390-0856 Fax. (630) 964-4619

## **PROPOSAL:**

### **National Park Hospitality Association "Park Concierge"**

### **National "Snapshot" iPod/iPhone Application (also for other smart phones)**

#### **Background**

The rapid adoption of iPhone and iPod Touch devices with outstanding internet capabilities (more than 30 million iPhones and iPod Touch products sold by March 2009) creates an important opportunity to reach a large segment of the American public not now core national park visitors by providing information and visual stimulus. Since introduction of the iPhone, more than a billion downloads of some 25,000 available applications have taken place, and downloading of these applications is actively promoted by Apple. The core "Park Concierge" application can be developed to be scalable and upgradable, so that application users could be provided with in-depth and park-specific interpretive information at WiFi sites in or near parks (the Pocket Ranger now available for Santa Monica Mountains NRA and Lake Mead NRA), either as a service to concessioner customers or on a fee basis.

#### **Project Goal**

- 1) Create awareness of opportunities at specific National Parks and surrounding locations, thereby increasing attendance to national parks and increased opportunities for concessioners.
- 2) Develop an on-going link to a large number of people interested in visiting parks.
- 3) Build traffic for key websites, including a planned NPHA website revision designed to promote park visitation and newly-modified NPS websites which have now been directed to make concessioner services more visible.

#### **Application Creation & Programming Cost - \$ 25,000.00**

#### **To include:**

**National Application Trip Planner** – creation of a "concierge" application to identify specific geographies and/or activities available at National Park locations through user input. National application fee would include:

Programming

General navigation graphics, text and introduction video

Testing of application

**Regional Application Trip Planner** – creation of regional level application (6 U.S. regions to be identified). Application would identify what area/region user is in and provide real time information i.e. trail conditions, current concessioner coupons/specials, recommendations on concessioners (dining, shopping, etc). User can download current

park/concessioner activities and information. Regional application would include:

- Programming
- General navigation graphics, text and introduction video
- Links to concessioner reservation systems
- Testing of application
- Information on current and forecasted weather at park units
- Transportation information, including approximately driving times

**Daily Park Facts and Park Photos Option** – permit those downloading the application to select either or both a daily email with a key park "factoid" – including anniversary dates of key park creations and little known facts like highest and lowest points in the NPS system, most visited parks and more – and/or a daily email with a great park photo highlighting wildlife and visitors having fun which can be used as desktop wallpaper, and with a link to a website

**Additional add-ons:**

**1 - Individual Concessioner Information (concessioner provided content) - \$500 - \$800 each**

Placement of still photos, videos, text and click through links to concessioner(s) websites for additional information. All materials provided by concessioner must adhere to pre-determined project standards and formats. Content determined to be outside of these standards may affect pricing.

**2 – Individual Concessioner Information (onsite creation – camera work only):**

\$3000 each

Custom photography and videography at concessioner's site (park/location), between 2-3 days. Fee does not include script writing or online text. Concessioner to provide script and text at project pre-determined standards. Receipt of content outside of these standards may affect pricing. Price does not include lodging and travel expenses to be set and agreed to by Lightspeed Media and vendor at time of booking.

**3 - Individual Concessioner Information (onsite creation – full content development):**

\$4500 each

Custom photography and videography at concessioner's site (park/location) between 2-3 days. Fee includes script writing and/or online copy. Price does not include lodging and travel expenses to be set and agreed to by Lightspeed Media and vendor at time of booking.

\*\*If concessioner chooses 3+ locations for items 2 or 3 above, a discount would apply.

## **Marketing & Promotional Opportunities**

Opportunity to work with Apple Incorporated

Apple Incorporated to provide:

Feature story in the US iTunes newsletter - circulation 19 million unique emails

Inclusion in the European iTunes newsletter - circulation 8 million

Placement on main iTunes application page for 7 days -average unique views 80 million per time allotted

Apple Incorporated press announcement as to a new application being released.

### **Additional Cost:**

If the application is offered to the public at no charge, Apple Inc charges no fee and the hosting at the iTunes store is free. If there is a fee charged to purchase the application at the iTunes store, Apple Inc. retains a percentage of the application's purchase price.

Details to follow.

### **Fundraising Opportunity (Potential)**

Price the application at \$ .99; fee collected is given to the National Park Service to use to further electronic education for the parks

## **PROPOSED COOPERATION AGREEMENT ON OUTREACH AND MARKETING**

The National Park Hospitality Association (NPHA), a 501(c)6 trade association, and the American Recreation Coalition (ARC), a 501(c)3 non-profit, propose to join the National Park Service (NPS) in an effort to survey, organize and make available examples of efforts by NPS and allied agencies and organizations to interest Americans in visiting national parks to gain health, educational and other benefits. The effort will especially seek out information on examples focusing on Americans in the following categories: (1) youth; (2) urban; (3) lower income; (4) non-Caucasian; (5) seniors and (6) new Americans. The effort will seek out initiatives that involve use of traditional and new technology communications and media as well as initiatives that rely upon specialized channels, including schools, events and organizations.

The purposes of this agreement include highlighting innovative programs and strategies and document the success of various efforts. The results of the survey and evaluation will be available on-line to NPS offices and allied agencies and organizations in the form of a searchable database. In addition, the effort will recommend ways for an on-going sharing of successful outreach and marketing initiatives.

The results of this agreement will be vital to successful implementation of the NPS Tourism Strategic Plan and to follow-up efforts to the 2009 "fee-free" weekends initiative.

### **Description of Effort**

NPS will identify and provide a qualified and interested employee for a 120 day temporary assignment to lead day-to-day efforts. NPS will also appoint at least one senior staff member to serve on the project coordinating committee.

ARC will provide office space, assistance of an intern and certain support services, including internet and telephone for the NPS employee for this assignment. ARC will also appoint at least one senior staff member to serve on the project coordinating committee.

NPHA will fund any required temporary accommodations for the NPS employee and travel to any required meetings. NPHA will also appoint at least one senior staff member to serve on the project coordinating committee.

The agreement shall be finalized not later than August 1, 2009, and commence not later than September 1, 2009. A final report shall be made available to the participating agencies by January 1, 2010, and shall be presented at the Partners Outdoors 2010 meeting scheduled for January 10-13, 2010, at Cavallo Point – The Lodge at the Golden Gate.

### **Primary Contacts for the Participating Organizations**

ARC: Derrick Crandall, [dcrandall@funoutdoors.com](mailto:dcrandall@funoutdoors.com), 202-682-9530

NPHA: Terry MacRae, [tmacrae@hornblower.com](mailto:tmacrae@hornblower.com), (415) 983-8241

NPS: TBD

## USING ELECTRONIC MEDIA TO SHARE PARK STORIES FOR THE 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY

In the 1930's, the Works Progress Administration sponsored a Federal Arts Project (FAP). One of the signature efforts of the FAP was the production of posters. Of the 2,000 WPA posters known to exist, the Library of Congress's collection of more than 900 is the largest. These striking silkscreen, lithograph, and woodcut posters were designed to publicize health and safety programs; cultural programs including art exhibitions, theatrical, and musical performances; travel and tourism; educational programs; and community activities in seventeen states and the District of Columbia.

One of the six categories of the poster project was travel and tourism, and national parks were a major focus of this effort. Dozens of national park-related posters from this effort still exist – and they helped create awareness and enthusiasm for the national park system for several generations of Americans.

The awareness of our national parks which the posters created in the 1930's, 1940's and 1950's can be duplicated in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century with a new arts project – an invitation to American youth to capture park stories and experiences on video and share them through a new YouTube channel – “Adventures in Our Parks.”

Uploaded videos – limited to not more than three minutes in duration and with nudity, profanity and other inappropriate content barred – would be reviewed and then posted for viewing and voting. Favorite videos would be indexed and archived and available for viewing through both YouTube and relevant park websites. In addition, the favorite video of each month – voted by visitors to the site – would be rewarded with an America the Beautiful Pass, presented by the National Park Hospitality Association in cooperation with the National Park Service.

