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News Release

Date: June 02, 2009
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Salazar Announces National Park Service Will Waive Fees on Three Summer Weekends to Increase Tourism, Boost Economy

BRECKSVILLE, Ohio – Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar today announced that the National Park Service will offer three fee-free weekends this summer to encourage Americans seeking affordable vacations to visit these national treasures. There are 391 national parks located across the country in 49 states.

“During these tough economic times, our national parks provide opportunities for affordable vacations for families,” Salazar said at a press conference at Cuyahoga Valley National Park. “I encourage everyone to visit one of our nation’s crown jewels this summer and especially to take advantage of the three free-admission weekends.”

“National Parks also serve as powerful economic engines for local communities and we hope that promoting visitation will give a small shot in the arm to businesses in the area,” he said.

The 147 National Park Service sites across the country that charge fees for entry will waive these entrance fees during the weekends of June 20-21, July 18-19, and August 15-16, 2009, Salazar said.

Meanwhile, many park partners including tour operators, hotels, restaurants, gift shops, and other vendors will offer additional discounts and special promotions on those dates. More information on the fees and discounts can be found at <http://www.nps.gov/findapark/feefreeparks.htm>.

Visiting Ohio for the first time as Secretary, Salazar also highlighted the \$23 million the department is investing in the Buckeye State under President Obama’s economic recovery plan. This includes more than \$7 million at Cuyahoga Valley National Park to repair the park’s historic railroad and tackle deferred maintenance projects that have been on the shelf for years.

“The investment we are making in Ohio will create jobs,” he said. “For example, here at Cuyahoga, we are improving a park that already attracts two and a half million people a year, pumps \$38 million annually into the local economy and supports 1,000 jobs.”

Most Americans live less than a day’s drive from a park, the Secretary noted. Nationwide, parks last year attracted more than 275 million recreation visits. Spending by non-local visitor provided \$10.6 billion for local economies, supporting more than 213,000 jobs, not counting National Park Service jobs.

“Tourism income helps America’s economic recovery,” Salazar said. “National park sites in the Great Lakes states, for example, attract 8 million recreation visits a year that bring \$211 million into the local economies. Spending by visitors from out of the area supports 4,400 local jobs. So these areas need to maintain and expand this vital tourism.”

The entrance fees being waived at the 147 sites that usually charge for admission range from \$3 to \$25. The 244 other parks do not charge entrance fees. The waiver does not include other fees collected in advance or by contractors—such as fees charged for camping, reservations, tours and use of concessions.

The National Park Service website provides information to help the public plan their park adventures at www.nps.gov.



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Last Updated on 05/28/09