



## American Recreation Coalition

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

### September 2011 Newsletter

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#### National Park Service Prepares for a New Century

The National Park Service (NPS) unveiled ***A Call to Action*** identifying four key themes and 36 actions to ready the agency for its 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2016. The plan commits the agency to connecting people to parks, strengthening local economies and encouraging organizational innovation within the NPS. The release came on Founder's Day – August 25 – on the 95<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the creation of the agency.

The four key themes of ***A Call to Action*** are: (1) "Connecting People to Parks"; (2) "Advancing the Education Mission"; (3) "Preserving America's Special Places"; and (4) "Enhancing Professional and Organizational Excellence." NPS Director Jon Jarvis outlined the plan and a new emphasis on communications internally and with the agency's key partners at a national town hall held in the historic Ford's Theater in downtown Washington, D.C. The broadcast went nationwide to NPS employees and partners. Joining Director Jarvis on stage were National Park Foundation President Neil Mulholland and three agency employees: Corita Waters, Outdoor Recreation Planner with the Rivers and Trails Conservation Assistance Program; Lizette Richardson, Chief of Maintenance, Lake Mead National Recreation Area; and Dave Moore, Assistant Regional Director for the Northeast Region.

In his opening remarks, Director Jarvis told the employees and partners that the mission of the agency is both unique and centered on the core documents of the nation: the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence. He stressed the mission to provide the American public with enjoyment of special places that are the nation's natural and historic best places. And he also noted the agency's major economic importance to the nation, reminding the group that visitors to parks create more than \$12 billion in economic activity annually and that other agency programs, including historic preservation, also contribute significantly to local and national economies.

The Director emphasized that ***A Call to Action*** does not depend upon new funding or new authorities. Instead, he told the group, the plan is based on flexibility, creativity and partnerships.

Commenting on the report and its release, American Recreation Coalition President Derrick Crandall said, “The focus and the themes of ***A Call to Action*** are appropriate and strategic. And many of the action steps are exciting – the focus on parks as a contributor to health, the call to expand access for water-based recreation, the link to sustainable economic activity in gateways and more. Director Jarvis has made clear that the action steps can be modified and new steps added through partner input. I saw a roomful of younger NPS employees become energized – and that is what the agency needs today more than anything: passionate, on-the-ground staff who want to be in contact with park visitors.”

Crandall added that America’s recreation community looks forward to working closely with the National Park Service and park partners on action steps. One key opportunity for cooperative action will come January 24-26 at the first-ever America’s Summit on National Parks. More than 300 NPS officials and partners will gather to coordinate efforts linked to the 2016 centennial of the agency.

***A Call to Action*** info is at [www.nps.gov/calltoaction](http://www.nps.gov/calltoaction). For information on participating in the America’s Summit on National Parks, email [jmitchell@funoutdoors.com](mailto:jmitchell@funoutdoors.com).

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## **Excitement About First-Ever National Parks Summit Prompts Shift to January**

Organizers of the America’s Summit on National Parks – the National Park Hospitality Association (NPHA), National Park Foundation and National Parks Conservation Association – have found so much enthusiasm for the first-ever Summit that the reserved space was simply inadequate, and other Washington events on the original dates have alternative space booked. The Summit will now take place on January 24-26, 2012, and a National Park Partners Strategic Planning Session has been added on the original November date. The Summit will draw 300+ leaders from across the nation to Washington to review the Five-Year Action Plan of the National Park Service (NPS) and unite park partners around supplemental actions designed to make national parks relevant and valued to all Americans for generations to come.

The National Park Partners Strategic Planning Session will play a key role in planning for the Summit and other partnership efforts, including a possible parks promotional campaign. NPS Director Jon Jarvis and key NPS leaders will participate actively in both the Summit and the November Strategic Planning Session. NPHA board members, as well as key members, will be joined by volunteer leaders and key staffers of NPCA and NPF.

For Summit information, check in at [www.funoutdoors.com/parksummit](http://www.funoutdoors.com/parksummit).

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## **Partners Outdoors 2012 to Focus on Funding Strategies**

Recreation leaders will gather on January 8-11 in Williamsburg, Virginia for the annual Partners Outdoors meeting. The 2012 session of Partners Outdoors is titled “Beyond FLREA: Recreation Fees and Other Strategies for Funding Recreation Opportunities on Federal Lands.” General sessions will focus on a review of current and potential recreation infrastructure and operations funding, including use of fee receipts, special taxes, concessions and permit strategies, partnerships and more to provide visitors with quality experiences.

In addition to focusing on experiences of FLREA (Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act)– which faces the need for reauthorization by 2014 – participants will review key strategies and authorities used for ski areas in national forests, concessions and commercial leases in national parks, NAFI (Non-Appropriated Funding Instrumentalities) used at DOD bases, partnerships with nonprofits and other creative solutions used on federal lands, and invite presentations on innovative funding strategies used by state and regional recreation providers, as well. Information on proven, long-term funding programs including hunting and fishing will be provided. Finally, discussion will be encouraged of alternative funding strategies reflecting the health and educational benefits of federal recreation sites.

Central objectives of Partners Outdoors 2012 are: (1) reach agreement on revisions to FLREA that would allow broad agency and public support; (2) assess opportunities for linking healthcare programs, including wellness efforts, and educational programs to public lands operations and maintenance fiscal needs; (3) increase understanding about current and potential authorities for funding capital and operational costs of recreation programs on public lands and waters; (4) design and recommend pilot efforts to replace recreation services now funded through annual appropriations with sustainable alternative strategies; (5) make recommendations to agency leadership and the recreation and tourism industries about effective monitoring of visitor desires and satisfaction levels, including value satisfaction.

Participation in Partners Outdoors 2012 is by invitation only. Please contact Cathy Ahern at [cahern@funoutdoors.com](mailto:cahern@funoutdoors.com) for more information.

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## **National Park Service on Track to Announce 2012 Fee-Free Days**

The National Park Service (NPS) will announce sometime in the fall – perhaps on National Public Lands Day in late September – that federal agencies will again waive entrance fees for some dates in 2012. The tentative dates will most likely be similar to

the 2011 dates. Please contact Derrick Crandall at [dcrandall@funoutdoors.com](mailto:dcrandall@funoutdoors.com) for information about specific dates.

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## Developing Strategy to Continue Scenic Byways Efforts

The National Scenic Byways Conference in Minneapolis, Minnesota last month was an outstanding show of support for Scenic Byways. Hundreds of byways advocates shared tips on marketing, strategies for using social networking and much more. The networking was fun and productive. The America's Byways Resource Center team deserves high praise for its orchestration of the event, and for building in "Big Ideas," including a great presentation on branding by Minnesota Twins execs and the 2011 byways awards, given in cooperation with the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO).

Support for the Scenic Byways program has come up in other places as well. The *New York Times* featured a story on eastern byways that coincided with the meeting of the byways champions. The article is based largely on an interview with ARC President Derrick Crandall, including these comments:

*"The interstates are great for getting from sea to shining sea, but there's nothing in between," said Derrick Crandall, president of the nonprofit American Recreation Coalition. Of the byways, Mr. Crandall said, "They're like necklaces, or a charm bracelet, adorned with great places to stop."*

To see the August 5 *New York Times* article on byways, please [click here](#).

The National Byways Partners Council, which met last month, has already written to leading Congressional transportation decision-makers supporting continuation of the byways program. It is also cooperating with the National Byways Foundation on an inventory of local data on the economic impact of byways, as well as assembling a list of local champions of specific byways. One key to winning Congressional support in upcoming months will be emphasizing the economic impact of byways in representatives' home districts. Efforts are already underway to compile regional economic surveys and analyses into a national aggregation. For more information on how you can help support these valuable programs, please contact Derrick Crandall at [dcrandall@funoutdoors.com](mailto:dcrandall@funoutdoors.com).

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## Recreational Trails Program Seeks Reauthorization

The Recreational Trails Program (RTP), which has provided more than \$850 million to state trail programs since its creation in 1991, is facing an uncertain future in the U.S. Congress. The program returns a portion of the federal tax on fuel used for nonhighway recreation from the Highway Trust Fund to the states for trail projects.

More than 13,000 such projects have been documented since the program's inception. In recent years, the Highway Trust Fund has come under pressure as gas tax revenues have not kept pace with national transportation spending for a variety of reasons, including the increased use of alternative fuels and more fuel-efficient vehicles.

The Congress is trying to craft new multi-year transportation reauthorization legislation, already two years overdue, and supporters of the RTP, especially the members of the Coalition for Recreational Trails (CRT), have been working hard to make sure that the program is included in the new legislation. In early May, RTP's champions in the U.S. House of Representatives – Rep. Tom Petri from Wisconsin and Rep. Mike Michaud from Maine – were joined by 72 other Members of Congress in signing a letter supporting the RTP's continuation. The letter was sent to the leadership of the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, which is responsible for writing the legislation in the House. Recent CRT-led outreach to key members of that same committee is also bearing fruit as committee members learn from RTP supporters in their district about both the program's importance to local trail-based recreation and its user-pay/user-benefit philosophy, which is completely consistent in practice with other expenditures from the Highway Trust Fund. RTP supporters are also making the point that eliminating the RTP would be the equivalent of raising hundreds of millions of dollars in taxes on nonhighway recreationists since those taxes would no longer be returned to them for trail programs.

In the U.S. Senate, CRT members have been encouraged by the support of Senator Barbara Boxer from California, who chairs the committee responsible for the bill. Sen. Boxer has announced that the RTP will be part of her bill as it is introduced.

To learn more about RTP, CRT and program reauthorization, [click here](#).

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please send an email to [jmitchell@funoutdoors.com](mailto:jmitchell@funoutdoors.com) with the Subject "Unsubscribe."*

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