



Bringing outdoor recreation to residents of our cities



Commemorating the places where our history unfolded



Saving samples of America's most endangered ecosystems



From sea to shining sea—not just the land but waters, too



Putting a face on the amazing stories making us who we are

## We Work for You

The National Park Service helps preserve cherished pieces of all Americans' shared heritage.



Every American citizen owns a share in the 84 million acres of national parklands, from northern Alaska to the U.S. Virgin Islands, and from the rocky shores of Maine to American Memorial Park in the Northern Marianas, west of the International Date Line.

Congress created the **NATIONAL PARK SERVICE** in 1916 to protect and preserve these special places for your use and enjoyment. We serve proudly as your stewards of these national treasures. And Congress continues to build this network of places that tell rich chapters in the American story—of our lands and our waters, of our people and their dreams and accomplishments.

This owner's guide presents your National Park System legacy, the National Park Service's role as caretaker of that legacy, and some facts about what we do that may surprise you.

## Harboring History

"We the People" are the owners; we the Service are the caretakers—on your behalf.



Today's National Park Service manages almost 400 parks. Two-thirds recognize benchmarks of American history. The rest honor nature's gifts to our great land. Generations of Americans have saved these special places, to pass them on so coming generations may enjoy and learn from them much the way we have experienced them.

The National Park Service promotes public understanding of the events, people, and natural communities that relate to these properties we care for on your behalf. We do this through museums, publications, electronic media, and talking with you when you visit parks. Parks teach lessons of civics, society, and nature. They stimulate the sedentary, restore children to outdoor adventure, and connect with the ever-widening cultural pool of neighbors who share in the complex legacy of America.

But we do much more. We help America's communities identify and restore historic buildings. We help partners design and manage long-distance hiking trails and protect their rivers and streams. We study the life cycles of parkland plants and animals. We give grants to improve state and local parks. We encourage and support physical fitness. We even help turn outdated military posts and old government buildings into newly productive community assets.

The Service seeks to reflect the needs and interests of the broad spectrum of America's population, both through the diversity of our workforce and the variety of our programs. We encourage those with disabilities and members of minority groups to share the lessons and pleasures of the parks.



Maintenance crews keep your parks in tip-top shape. Parks conduct yearly surveys to make sure you have a safe and enjoyable visit.

TO BE SELF-CREATED BY THEIR

## The People's Story

The nation's special places tell who we have been, who we are, and who we hope to be.



The National Park System's natural, cultural, and recreational places tell people's stories. Many of its most famous places—Great Smoky Mountains, Grand Canyon, Everglades, Hawai'i Volcanoes National Parks—record the land's natural history. Other places preserve homes and farms where people lived ordinary lives on a Nebraska homestead, on the remote Hensley settlement in Cumberland Gap, in the Atlanta neighborhood of Martin Luther King, Jr.'s youth, or in the quiet Iowa town that spawned a president.

Some places protect elements of native cultures far older than European exploration and settlement. Others keep alive the Revolutionary and Civil Wars and their key surrender fields. There are the New Jersey laboratories where Thomas Edison and his staff led a technological revolution more dramatic even than the coming of the computer age. The National Park System also reflects the development of both art and industry in America, along with landmarks of social and political change.

The features of parks demand meaningful, caring protection. Natural features define the land's legacy. Cultural features define the people's legacy. America's parks preserve many parts of our heritage that the American people have decided we must not lose. People visit these places to experience America's story, to marvel at her many wonders, and to have fun. Famed places like Yosemite, the Statue of Liberty, and Independence Hall are worthy destinations, but so too are lesser known gems like the Apostle Islands in Wisconsin, Lava Beds in California, or Little Rock Central High School in Arkansas.



Parks provide places to keep alive America's great weave of cultural traditions—like this Pow Wow in progress in North Dakota.

## Nurturing the Natural

Americans were determined to save parts of our heritage before there was a National Park Service.

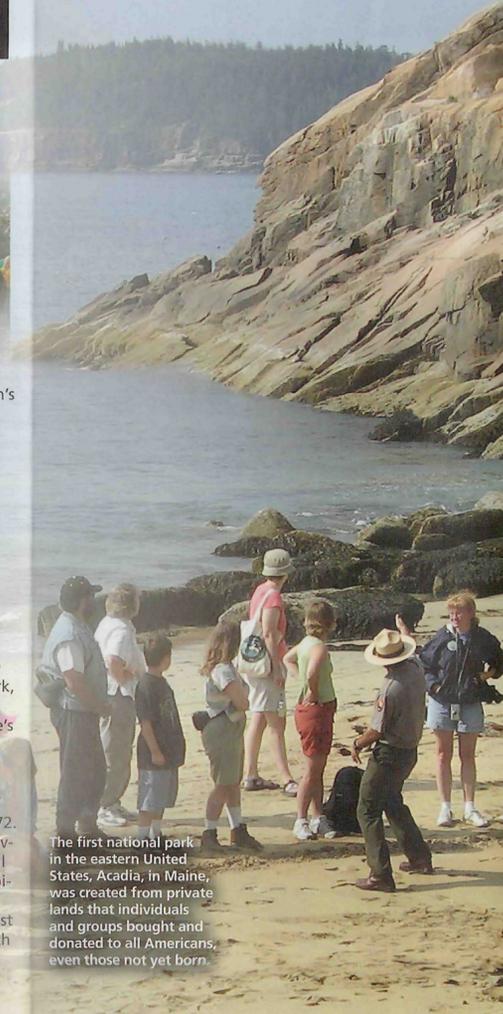


Long before Congress created the National Park Service in 1916, America set aside a variety of special places to be protected. In the 1790s Pierre L'Enfant's plan for the Nation's Capital foresaw much of the public open space we still see there today. It also offered a formal plan for what we now call urban parks.

The oldest conservation unit in the National Park System today, the Naval Live Oaks Reservation in Florida, was set aside in 1819 to assure an adequate supply of trees prized for building ships. In 1971 it became part of Gulf Islands National Seashore. In 1825 the cornerstone was laid for the Bunker Hill Monument, now part of Boston National Historical Park in Massachusetts. It honors the early days of the American Revolution.

Painter George Catlin called for a national park in 1832, 40 years before Congress created the world's first national park, Yellowstone. Catlin advocated "A nation's park, containing man and beast, in all the wild and freshness of their nature's beauty!"

Inspired in part by Thomas Moran's paintings, William Henry Jackson's photographs, and some leading journalists' stories, Congress set aside Yellowstone National Park in 1872. Yellowstone was the first park established by a national government for general public use—not reserved to any special class or category of citizens. It became a model and an inspiration for public parks across America and throughout the world. It also launched what has been described as "the best idea America ever had," our National Park System—in which you are a shareholder today.



The first national park in the eastern United States, Acadia, in Maine, was created from private lands that individuals and groups bought and donated to all Americans, even those not yet born.

## Did You Know?

With nearly 400 national park areas, we have some amazing facts and figures for you.

- National parks protect habitat for nearly 400 threatened or endangered species.
- Wrangell-St. Elias in Alaska is the largest park, 13.2 million acres, with a glacier as big as Rhode Island.
- In the Lower 48 states the largest park is Death Valley in California and Nevada, 3.3 million acres.
- The smallest park is Thaddeus Kosciuszko National Memorial in Pennsylvania, 0.02 acre.
- You can camp at over 120 national parks.
- National parks have 17,000 miles of trails and 10,000 miles of roads.
- Park concessioners have 25 percent more staff than the National Park Service, gross \$800 million a year, and pay \$50 million a year to the government in fees.
- There are 1.5 million archeological sites in the National Park System.
- National parks house 27,000 historic structures.
- Historic Preservation Tax Incentives create \$2.7 billion a year in leveraged private investment—to bring back inner cities and towns.
- National parks have 1,400 water treatment systems and 1,600 wastewater treatment systems.
- National parks generate more than 246,000 jobs in local economies and over \$12 billion per year in economic impacts.
- 170,000 people volunteer in national parks. They donate 5 million hours a year, which is equivalent to 2,400 staff and a payroll of \$86 million. Want to try it? Visit [www.nps.gov/volunteer](http://www.nps.gov/volunteer) to find out more.

## Programs and Support

We have many popular programs for children and adults—and get help from volunteers and donors.

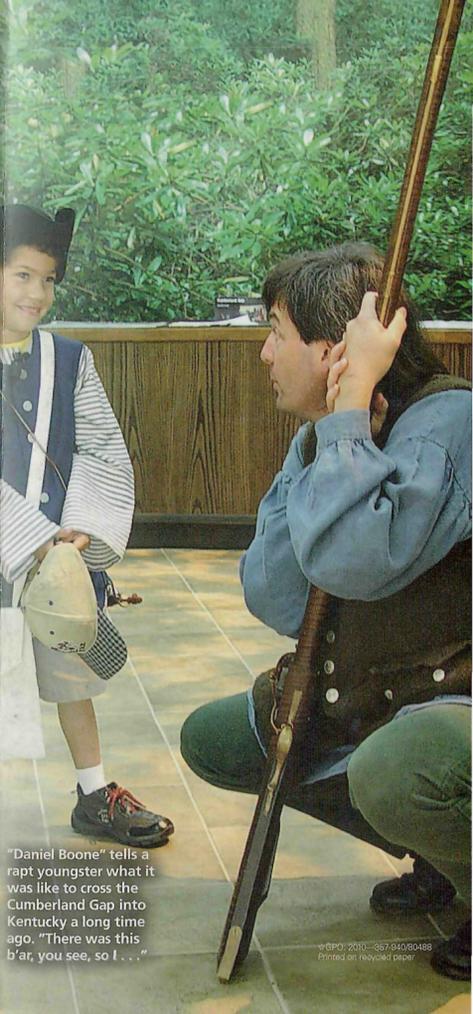


Many national parks offer children opportunities to join the National Park Service family as Junior Rangers. Students complete activities in a park, share their answers with a park ranger, and get an official Junior Ranger badge or patch and Junior Ranger certificate. Check out these popular programs the next time you visit a park or online at [www.nps.gov](http://www.nps.gov).

Other programs reach far beyond parks. Affiliated Areas preserve significant properties outside the National Park System. We give technical help or financial aid because these areas contribute to the American fabric and to your national parklands legacy. We also give advice and technical support to national parks and their managers around the world.

National Park Service budgets vary from year to year; recent budgets have run about \$2.2 billion. Personal and corporate philanthropy—individual gifts of time and labor, and large donations of property and money—are very much a part of the national parks tradition. Many people give to parks in appreciation for the values they find in or take from their experiences there. This public generosity makes possible a range of programs, services, and facilities far beyond what the government could achieve without such help.

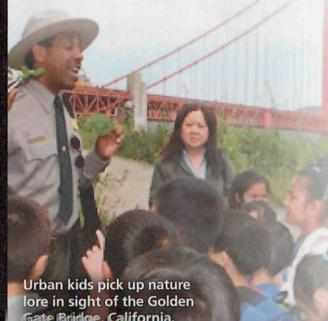
Consider becoming a park philanthropist yourself. Congress chartered the National Park Foundation to seek donations to help national parklands and the programs offered in them. Visit [www.nationalparks.org](http://www.nationalparks.org) to learn more. Many Friends and Partnership groups also support the mission and operation of a specific park or group of parks. Check with your nearest or favorite park to see how you might help. Or visit: [www.nps.gov](http://www.nps.gov)



"Daniel Boone" tells a rapt youngster what it was like to cross the Cumberland Gap into Kentucky a long time ago. "There was this b'ar, you see, so I..."

As we work toward our 2016 centennial, the NATIONAL PARK SERVICE looks back with pride and forward with optimism. A century of caring for special places makes our passion to protect them stronger. Today the Service not only serves the national parks—and you as an owner—but we serve heritage tourism, historic preservation, and outdoor recreation needs of American communities, large and small.

We lend expert help. We make grants. We help with tax credit programs that spur private investment for your community's project. In all this we hold ourselves to the highest standards of a productive partner.



Urban kids pick up nature lore in sight of the Golden Gate Bridge, California.

## A Work in Progress

The National Park Service is a work in progress. Congress still adds to the nation's treasures.

**BIG STEPS ON THE WAY TO A NATIONAL PARK SYSTEM**

The seeds that would grow to become the National Park System were sprouting even before the creation of the first national park, Yellowstone, in 1872, and the National Park Service in 1916. The System has roots in earlier federal government actions to protect areas for a variety of purposes. Today the Service and the System keep growing as the American people, working through their members of Congress, press to save more samples of our heritage.

Once created, the Service started to forge a National Park System from a collection of areas that had lacked central management. We set to work with states and Congress in the 1920s to create more national parks in the eastern United States closer to large population centers.

In 1906 Congress had passed the **Antiquities Act** to protect prehistoric sites from looting and destruction. The Act lets the president proclaim national monuments. The System grew instantly via a **federal government reorganization** in 1933. The Service became responsible for War Department national military parks and national monuments, Agriculture Department national monuments, and the national capital parks.

The System was now a major keeper of the nation's cultural heritage, not just its natural heritage. From 37 areas in 1916, the System grew to 125 areas in 1933. Since then Congress has continued to build up the System, adding seashores, lakeshores, urban recreation areas, and vast wildlands tracts in Alaska. Today there are nearly 400 national park areas. Find out more: [www.nps.gov](http://www.nps.gov)

1906 ANTIQUITIES ACT ALLOWS PRESIDENTS TO PROCLAIM NATIONAL MONUMENTS

1916 NATIONAL PARK SERVICE ACT CREATES THE AGENCY TO MANAGE THE PARKS

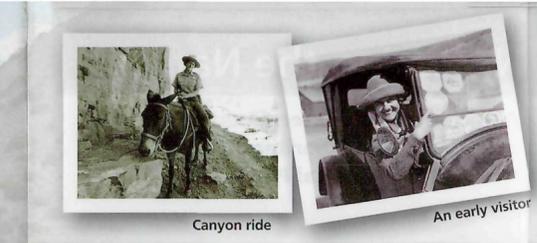
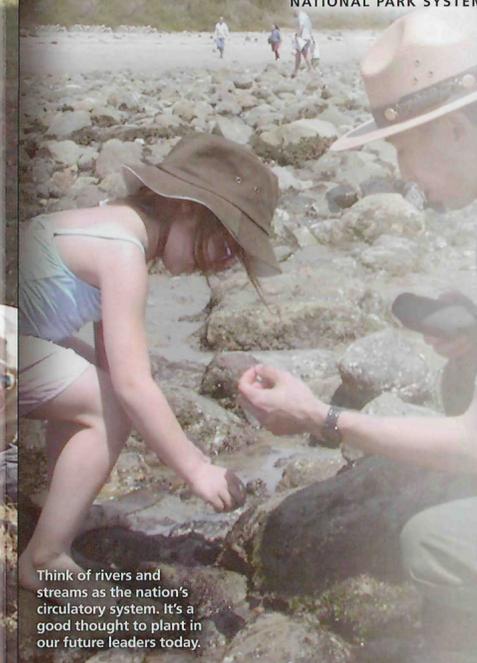
A park ranger in period military uniform brings history alive right where that history took place. It's part of the magic of our national parks.

Think of rivers and streams as the nation's circulatory system. It's a good thought to plant in our future leaders today.



In the Southwest

1933 FEDERAL GOVERNMENT REORGANIZATION PUTS MANY NEW AREAS IN NATIONAL PARK SYSTEM



Canyon ride

1935 HISTORIC SITES ACT

Over 123 million items are kept in one of the world's largest museum systems, national parks:

- 50 specimens of foothill yellow-legged frogs collected in the 1930s that no longer live where they were collected—in Yosemite National Park.

- The derringer John Wilkes Booth used to assassinate President Abraham Lincoln in Washington, D.C. at Ford's Theatre

- Projectile points from Ohio, up to 2,000 years old, made from obsidian mined 1,500 miles away.

- 343 American Indian baskets in the Hubbell trading post and family home in Arizona.

- Poet and writer Carl Sandburg's typewriter and Pulitzer Prizes at his home in North Carolina.



An early visitor

1936 PARK, PARKWAY, AND RECREATION STUDY ACT

- Dummy heads fabricated by three Alcatraz prisoners and left in their beds to mask their escape from the island federal prison in California.

- Movies filmed in the Black Maria, Thomas Edison's motion picture studio—the world's first—in New Jersey.

- The shirt of Chief Red Cloud, leader of the Oglala Sioux of the Lakota Nation, who made a truce by which the United States abandoned army forts along the Bozeman Trail, in Nebraska.

- Benjamin Franklin's desk, in Pennsylvania.

- Totem poles from up and down southeastern Alaska's coast, in Sitka, Alaska.

- Peanut and sweet potato specimens, which George Washington Carver used for new-product development, in Alabama.

## Preservation Programs

Programs run by the National Park Service help America's towns and cities preserve their historic fabric.

1958-1962 OUTDOOR RECREATION RESOURCES REVIEW COMMISSION

**Historic Preservation Grants** that we make help our partners fund projects. We grant millions of dollars each year to help communities like yours save places whose importance exceeds local boundaries. The American Battlefield Protection Program, Save America's Treasures, or Preserve America might apply where you live. Using technology-based research, our **National Center for Preservation Technology & Training** teaches preservation professionals.

**National Heritage Areas** identify and protect varied natural, cultural, and historic properties in distinctive regions that deserve recognition and continuing use. We help partners launch these areas and encourage private investment to revitalize waterfronts, cities, even regions.

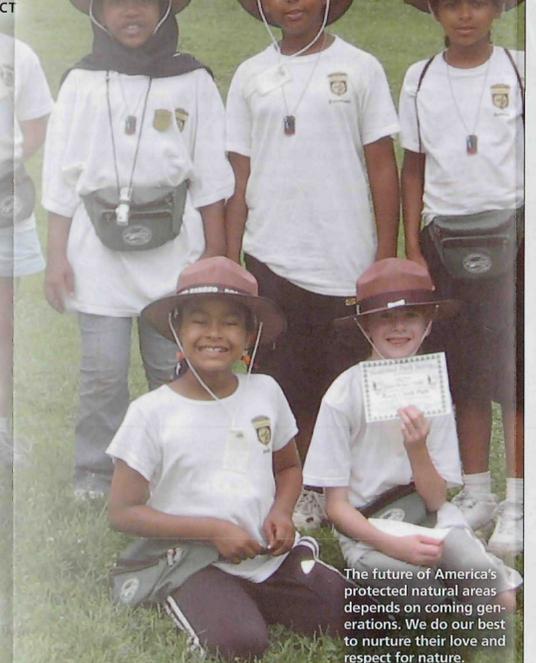
We keep the **National Register of Historic Places**, the nation's official list of cultural resources worthy of preservation, to support public and private work to identify, evaluate, and protect historic and archeological treasures. Registered properties—districts, sites, buildings, structures, objects—number nearly 83,000, with over 1,000 added some years. **National Historic Landmarks** and **National Natural Landmarks** identify sites that our staff and citizen advisory board recognize as having national importance in human or natural history.

The **Historic American Buildings Survey**, **Historic American Engineering Record**, and **Historic American Landscape Survey** all document important human works so that they can be maintained or replicated accurately. Looking for an experienced preservation partner? The National Park Service offers nearly a century of experience.



Mount Rushmore

1964 LAND AND WATER CONSERVATION FUND ACT NATIONAL WILDERNESS PRESERVATION SYSTEM ACT



The future of America's protected natural areas depends on coming generations. We do our best to nurture their love and respect for nature.

## Recreation Revs Up

Americans have taken to outdoor recreation with great enthusiasm—and with a growing role for us.

1966 NATIONAL HISTORIC PRESERVATION ACT

In the 1960s, space for outdoor recreation rode high on the nation's agenda. Since then the role of the National Park Service in recreation has grown tremendously. We make **Land and Water Conservation Fund grants**—sometimes \$37 million a year or more—to help preserve battlefield sites from development, to turn surplus federal property into community parks and picnic areas, and to build playgrounds and trails. Grant projects in communities of all sizes enhance the quality of life and get kids outdoors.

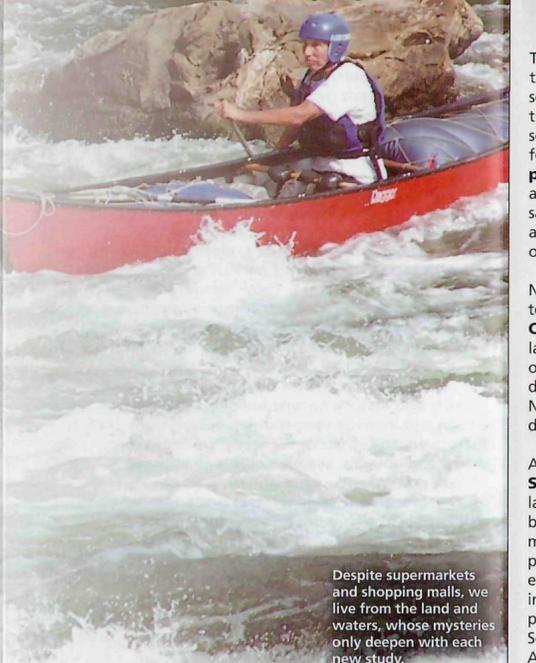
Today the **National Trails System** includes scenic, historic, and recreation trails, from the Maine-to-Georgia Appalachian National Scenic Trail to Ala Kahakai National Historic Trail in Hawaii and Trail of Tears National Historic Trail from North Carolina to Oklahoma. The Service manages many national trails with a variety of public and private partners.

Our **Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance Program** may help 900 communities in a single year to protect more than 300 miles of river, develop 2,000 miles of trail, conserve over 60,000 acres of open space, and leverage \$40 million to pay for the projects. Our **Federal Lands to Parks Program** can turn a military base closure into a nearby community's recreation bonanza. In one case, 140 acres of beachfront—valued at \$4 million—now anchors a park that a small community otherwise could only dream of creating. Congress put the Service in charge of recreation at many big reservoirs—like Lake Mead in Arizona and Nevada and Lake Roosevelt in Washington—created by federal dam projects. We are proud of our work to foster America's great love of the outdoors.



Starfish talk

1968 NATIONAL TRAILS SYSTEM ACT NATIONAL WILD AND SCENIC RIVERS ACT



Despite supermarkets and shopping malls, we live from the land and waters, whose mysteries only deepen with each new study.

## Letting Rivers Run

Americans moved to save free-flowing rivers, especially in remote areas of Alaska.

1978 NATIONAL PARKS AND RECREATION ACT

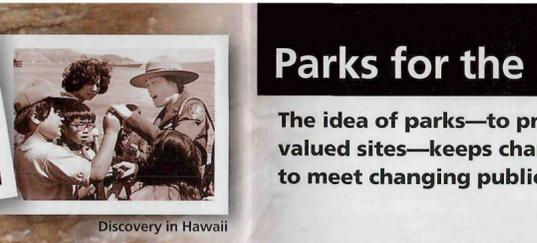
The 1968 **Wild and Scenic Rivers Act** calls on the nation to preserve in free-flowing condition rivers with outstanding scenic, recreational, geologic, fish and wildlife, historic, cultural, or other values. Most of these rivers, classified as wild, scenic, or recreational, flow through federal lands—national forests or national parks. But in 1998 Congress recognized **partnership rivers**. These flow through private and state and local government lands. The Service helps its partners save river-related values, bringing together states, counties, and local citizens for community-based conservation. Many of these projects help revitalize local economies, too.

Not just wild but remote as well, several rivers gained protection under the 1980 **Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act** (ANILCA). One of the most significant land conservation measures in U.S. history, the law protected over 100 million acres of federal public lands in Alaska. It doubled the acreage of the National Park System and the National Wildlife Refuge System. It tripled the amount of designated wilderness on federal lands.

ANILCA followed on the 1971 **Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act** (ANCSA), in which Congress decided what lands the state and Alaska Natives could select as economic bases. ANCSA also set aside 80 million acres—at statehood most of Alaska was federal public land—as potential national parks, wildlife refuges, wild and scenic rivers, or national forests. The upshot: ANILCA expanded the National Park System in Alaska by over 43 million acres, creating 10 new national parks and enlarging three existing national parks there. The Service began its major role as a stewardship partner with Alaskan wildlands and cultural heritage.



Yellowstone coach



Discovery in Hawaii

1980 ALASKA NATIONAL INTEREST LANDS CONSERVATION ACT



What is it about caves that fascinates us so? Perhaps they evoke the home's private spaces of secrecy and mystery that very young children love.

## Parks for the Future

The idea of parks—to preserve valued sites—keeps changing to meet changing public needs.

We the people keep innovating to save our heritage. In the 1980s Congress created the Potomac Heritage National Scenic Trail. It combines features of long-distance trails and heritage corridors. The trail network links the Chesapeake Bay to the upper Ohio River basin and Allegheny Highlands. By foot, cross-country skis, bicycle, horse, or boat, you can retrace areas George Washington found essential to America's economic and political development.

As our partners, communities pursue conservation and economic development goals to preserve historic landscapes and open space, restore riverscapes, and save local sources of food. They also create great outdoor recreation in reach of large population centers. And they can be eligible for grants and other funding programs, and leverage private investment with tax credits and other incentive programs.

While we are hard at work preparing for our Centennial in 2016, please enjoy your national parks today. Use the convenient concession reservation system. For **lodging and campground reservations** at many parks visit [www.recreation.gov](http://www.recreation.gov). Many campgrounds are first-come, first-served, however. For services at a specific park, visit its homepage via [www.nps.gov](http://www.nps.gov). And save money with **Recreational Lands Passes**. To find out about America the Beautiful, National Parks, and Federal Recreational Lands Passes visit [www.nps.gov/fees\\_passes.htm](http://www.nps.gov/fees_passes.htm).

National parks have been called "the best idea America ever had." The idea keeps on growing, and we stand proudly as passionate stewards of the nation's great store of treasures. The National Park Service: A Work in Progress.