

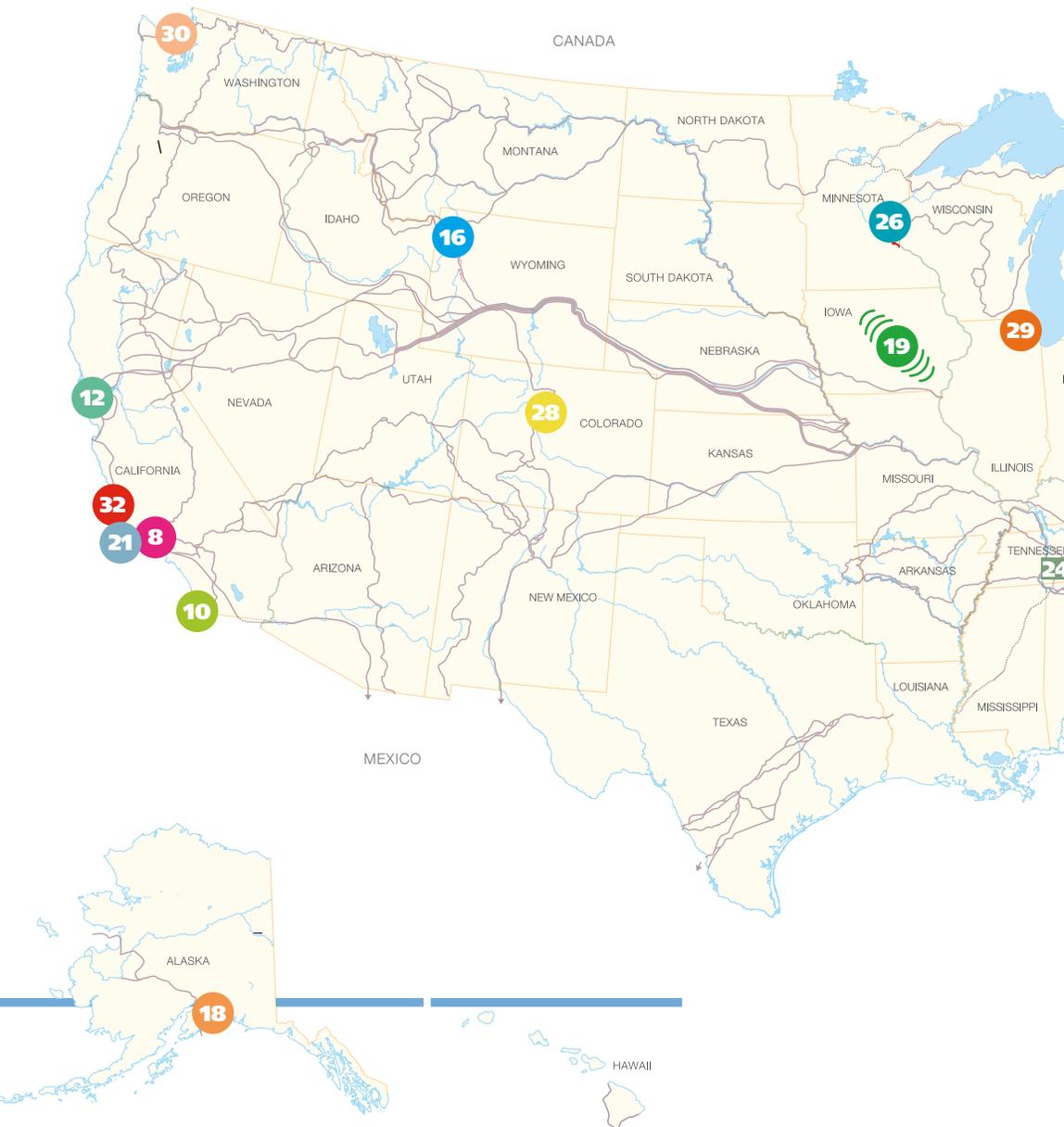


# Urban Lights

illuminating Progress  
on the NPS Urban Agenda



Locations of the examples described in this book, keyed by page number, suggest their geographic spread. This is a representative sampling of both the existing presence that the National Park Service has and the growing number of places where the National Park Service supports urban programs.



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FRONT COVER: Thrival Music Festival guests enjoy an iron pour demonstration at the Carrie Furnaces blast furnaces at Rivers of Steel National Heritage Area, PA.

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## Introduction

The National Park Service was founded in 1916. At that time, the country's population was around 100 million people, with approximately half living in urban areas. More than 100 years later, the US is home to more than 324 million people, with 80% of the population living in cities. This and additional demographic changes affect how parks are valued, how they are visited, and the level of support for parks. Success for the National Park Service in the coming years will depend on its ability to stay true to its mission while also aligning with community-driven agendas that serve urban communities and their social, economic, recreational, and health needs.



In 2015, the National Park Service launched the *NPS Urban Agenda*, a provocation to pilot new ways of working in urban areas by emphasizing three core principles.

Seeking proof-of-concept, the Park Service selected ten cities to model the core principles of the Urban Agenda and learn valuable lessons from the field.

Fellows (staff specifically tasked to the Urban Agenda) collaborated with park and program leaders as well as external partners to activate these principles in the field. Some of the stories featured in this publication share learnings gleaned from the model cities.

These model cities are only a piece of the NPS urban engagement. *Urban Lights* is a collection of stories and learnings from across the country, showcasing the breadth and depth of innovative work in the urban sphere from coast to coast. The programs and partnerships featured here illustrate a variety of relationships between public lands and urban communities. These stories shine a light on new approaches to working and illuminate a path forward for parks and programs working in urban areas.

This publication is designed to demonstrate that the Urban Agenda can be actualized anywhere. This publication should expand awareness in individuals inside and outside government about just how urban the NPS already is. The following programs, projects and partnerships showcase the National Park Service as a convener, collaborator, and catalyst for urban engagement and provide scalable models to extend and institutionalize a new way of working for the NPS.

## The Urban Agenda Principles



### Be Relevant to All Americans

NPS must curate a more culturally competent workforce and adapt traditional park models to better meet the needs of growing diverse urban communities it serves.

### Activate One NPS

NPS must leverage and connect its powerful portfolio of 417 parks and 54 community assistance programs via a unified conservation, education, recreation, and economic strategy.

### Nurture a Culture of Collaboration

NPS must commit to fostering strong networks among a sizable array of private and public partner organizations by aligning operational goals and embracing work beyond park boundaries.



“Our world has changed many times...but one constant in this changing world has been our continuing need for parks and quiet places—our need for places of beauty at which we may renew our strength; and our need for places of history where we may draw inspiration from our heritage...Each park contributes to a deeper understanding of the history of the United States and our way of life; of the natural processes which have given form to our land, and to the enrichment of the environment in which we live.”

—George B. Hartzog, Jr.  
Director of the National Park Service (1964–1972)



## URBAN MATTERS

The National Park Service is already more urban-oriented than you might think.

- NPS has sites in 40 out of 50 of the most populous cities in the U.S.
- More than one-third of all national park sites are located in metro areas, comprising 30% of NPS's operating budget.
- 36% of all NPS visitation takes place in urban units, which are home to 17% of NPS employees.
- NPS's urban park sites alone generate an estimated \$1.8 billion in labor income and \$4.7 billion in economic output. This is 26% of the total economic output of National Park visitation.
- Over 50 NPS programs serve urban communities.



- Land & Water Conservation Fund State and Local Assistance grants have created close-to-home parks, playgrounds, and ball fields in over 42,000 communities across the country.
- More than 1,520 park and recreation areas have been touched by Urban Parks and

Recreation Recovery money in 43 States, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico.

- NPS's Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance program catalyzes 300+ community-led projects in over 8,000 communities across the country.

- The Federal Historic Preservation Tax Incentives Program, administered by the NPS, has generated over \$69 billion in private investment in historic rehabilitation and created over 2.4 million jobs.



# Carrie Furnaces Revitalization: Rivers of Steel NHA



Innovation characterizes revitalization efforts at the Carrie Furnaces site at Rivers of Steel National Heritage Area. For example, following its addition to the Rivers of Steel National Heritage Area in 2005, Heritage Area staff discovered graffiti artists tagging walls on the site. Instead of arraigining them, the National Heritage Area agreed to offer to the community two large “non-contributing,” or historically non-relevant, structures on the site for them to tag provided the images were not gang related, and that these graffiti artists would help set up and support graffiti classes from local community members. Classes still run today, but even more impressive is the public art installation that reflects the voice and support of the community in which it is based.

Carrie Furnace is a retired blast steelworks once part of the former U.S. Steel Homestead Works, and the site spans two boroughs just outside of Pittsburgh (Rankin and Swissvale) identified as distressed communities. The furnaces are among only a few remaining pre-World War II 20th century blast furnaces, and were incorporated into the master plan for the Heritage Area in 1996

with the intention of historically ascribing the site to industrial society, and linking culturally back to the people that live there.

The strategy for the revitalization of Carrie Furnaces is designed around “addition by reduction,” or changing the perspective of negative site attributes through low-impact adaptive reuse. To increase site attractiveness,



vegetation was allowed to recolonize the site and grow on the existing structures. This illustrates a powerful contrast of scene—a flowering meadow nested in a site that was once environmentally degrading. Due to low-cost but impactful efforts like these, the site is a green space for the distressed communities it abuts. Diverse programming and events familiarize community members with the Heritage Area’s abundant cultural and natural resources. These events range from daily tours led by retired steel workers to rock and roll concerts in the historic buildings, and continue to connect culturally to 50,000 annual visitors.

A number of partners have made the greater revitalization effort possible at Carrie Furnaces, including the Pennsylvania Council on the Arts, Pennsylvania Department of Cultural Resources, the Sprout Fund, the Pittsburgh Foundation, and a large number of other foundation, corporate, private, and public donors.

In 2006, Carrie Blast Furnaces Number 6 and 7 were designated as a National Historic Landmark. Through collaboration between the National Heritage Area and National Historic Landmark programs at NPS, part of this site is further protected, and is eligible for funding opportunities to maintain its historic character.

It is the collaborative effort both within and outside the Park Service that has rehabilitated an unimproved and dilapidated site into a flourishing green space weaving outdoor recreational opportunities and historic, cultural connections for the adjacent underserved communities. For more information on upcoming events and programming, visit [riversofsteel.com](http://riversofsteel.com)

OPPOSITE, TOP: Visitors tour the Carrie Blast Furnaces and Iron Landscape, where vegetation is minimally managed to provide a striking contrast at Rivers of Steel National Heritage Area.

OPPOSITE, BOTTOM: Former steelworker Jim Kapusta leads a tour for Alloy Pittsburgh artists through Cast House #6 at Carrie Furnaces.

BELOW: View of Oreen Cohen’s temporary installation “Spectre and Shade” beneath Cast House #7 at the Carrie Furnaces, part of the Alloy Pittsburgh 2015 art festival.

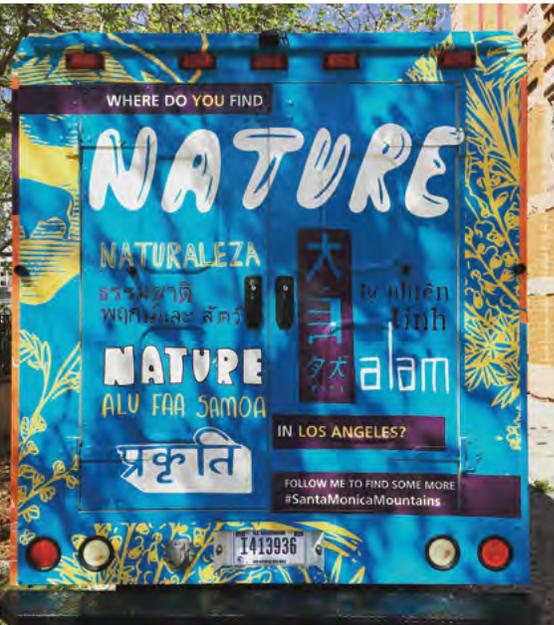


# LA Ranger Troca Mobile Visitor Center

The Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area is the national park of the people of Los Angeles, and it suffers from a major accessibility issue. Although its variety of natural and cultural resources and 500-mile trail system are within driving distance, transportation barriers for diverse and park-poor Los Angeles populations lead to a multitude of communities with a lack of awareness of the resources and benefits the national park offers. Although a number of funding opportunities exist for traditional transportation projects like bike shares and shuttling programs, staff at the park decided to approach the problem differently.

the Santa Monica Mountains Fund, the national park and four other partners—Mountains Conservation and Recreation Authority, BASE Landscape, Conservation Legacy, and California State Parks—coalesced to bring the park to these diverse communities. Out of this effort came the Los Angeles Ranger Troca (stylized LA Ranger Troca as Spanish language wordplay). LA Troca is expanded from a similar pilot effort at Golden Gate National Recreation Area, and is a roving ranger station that distributes park information and provides unique educational and outdoor programming for Los Angeles families that may not see themselves in the park, like many Latinx families. Activities LA Troca provides range from pick-up basketball with a ranger, to playing the scat game, to urban wildlife identification. Interpreters tailor events to fit one of three categories: Los Angeles Culture and History, Recreation, and Citizen Science. By offering a broad array of events, LA Troca has an activity for everyone, and is successful at engaging new community members.

During the pilot, partners did not set a benchmark for people reached, but were impressed by the estimated 60,000 Los Angeles residents that came in contact with LA Troca. Its first and flagship appearance was at the Tournament of Roses. After this event, Park staff and Conservation Legacy fellows met community members where they were: local parks, events, schools, and community hubs. Staff knew LA Troca was successful when community organizations requested it be part of their event or parade. Within a year of implementation, LA Ranger Troca established itself as a vital resource for park-deficient communities. Moving forward, LA Ranger Troca will adopt a schedule of hosting urban programming four days per week at sites across the city. To keep updated with LA Troca, follow them on Instagram: [@larangertroca](https://www.instagram.com/larangertroca)



The back of LA Troca features the word nature translated into eight of the most commonly spoken languages in Los Angeles.

In Los Angeles, partners identified park-poor communities as predominantly Latinx, although a wide variety of ethnic groups exists. Using grant funding from the Ahmanson Foundation and

# Boston Chinatown Heritage Partnership

The Boston Chinatown Heritage Partnership is a collaborative effort to recognize, preserve and celebrate Boston's Chinatown as a place of historical and cultural significance. The initiative includes a strategic mix of short and long-term projects focusing on historic preservation, interpretative media development, and youth engagement—such as the Chinatown Heritage Trail—modeled after Boston's Freedom Trail and Black Heritage Trail. The Partnership also features public events and community-based projects throughout the year to connect and educate, such as documentary film screenings, exhibition talks, walking tours, and an innovative summer field school to introduce high school youth to the field of public history.

The driving force for many of these projects and events is the Chinese Historical Society of New England. Other partners include Conservation Legacy, Boston Asian American Film Festival, and the Castle Square Tenants Organization.

One of the notable aspects of the partnership is the wide range of NPS resources and staff from which it draws. The program originated in part from the Asian American Pacific Islander National Historic Landmarks Theme Study, conducted by the NPS Cultural Resources, Partnerships, and Science Directorate, and in part from the National Parks of Boston Urban Agenda. The National Parks of Boston and the Northeast Region's History Program—historians, architects, community planners, and interpretive rangers—are supporting research and helping to develop interpretative approaches that emphasize the deeper and richer immigrant heritage of the Chinatown community, beyond its well-known tourist stops. NPS Community Assistance is coordinating NPS involvement and funding



Artist and photographer Wen-ti Tsen: "Home Town: Representing Boston's Chinatown as Place of People—Then and Now." Installation on Harrison Avenue. The image is taken from CHSNE archives of two young women, most likely sisters, taken in China in the 1930s, as prospective brides for arranged marriages with Chinese immigrants in the US.

and assisting on the feasibility and design of the Chinatown Heritage Trail—a self-guided walking tour of Boston's Chinatown including intergenerational oral histories that will pull additional support from the Boston African American National Historic Site. The most recent success is the nomination of the Quincy Grammar School to the National Register of Historic Places—the first listing connected with Chinese immigrant history in the Northeast. With funding from the

National Register's Asian American Pacific Islander Heritage Initiative, the Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association of New England and the Massachusetts Historical Commission unanimously agreed to accept and pursue this nomination.

By engaging broader communities in documenting, promoting, and preserving the history and legacy of Chinese immigration to New England and Boston Chinatown, the Partnership continues to illustrate its value and strengthen its connections to Boston's Chinese community. This is One NPS in action: by offering a coordinated suite of resources from the variety of NPS community assistance programs and park units, the Boston Chinese community sees NPS as a valued cultural resource partner.

For more information visit the Boston National Historic site [nps.gov/bost](https://nps.gov/bost) or you can visit CHSNE's homepage at [chsne.org](https://chsne.org)

# Cabrillo Native STEAM

Assorted tribal artifacts and tools used to connect the students hands-on to their culture.

A collaboration by Cabrillo National Monument and the Southern Indian Health Council, the Cabrillo Native STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Art and Math) program offers youth ages six to fifteen the opportunity to explore their cultural heritage for six weeks in the summer. Through storytelling, nature journaling, tidepool monitoring, and ethnobotany, Science Interpretive staff connect participants to educational STEM activities. The Arts element of the Native STEAM curriculum is interwoven with STEM activities, and currently includes a variety of workshops from local Native American cultural educators. Students discover Gabrieleno-Tongva and Kumeyaay cultural traditions including tule boat making, salt and seaweed harvesting, and Kumeyaay language learning.

By funding shuttles for students from reservations up to 60 miles from Cabrillo and providing the program with chaperones, the Southern Indian Health Council is an integral partner to program execution as well. SIHC connects the Park Service to a seven-member tribal consortium in addition to the Kumeyaay Tribe.

The distinctive aspect of this program is the structure of Native American interpreters teaching traditions to Native American kids while Park Service interpreters connect these kids to urban resources they normally cannot access. Due to the rich cultural resources of Kumeyaay tribes surrounding San Diego in 2015, staff at Cabrillo prioritized developing a positive working relationship with the cultural resource educators in those indigenous communities. In its pilot run, the program pulled in educators from the Gabrieleno-Tongva tribe, facilitating a cultural exchange between the Gabrieleno-Tongva educators and the Kumeyaay children. This successful workshop was pointed to when



Cultural Educator Stan Rodriguez, Kumeyaay from Santa Ysabel, showing Native STEAM participant how to lash Tule's together to make a Tule boat.

reaching out to new Kumeyaay cultural educators for the following year. Though fostering these partnerships required flexibility in meeting the programmatic and transportation needs expressed by these indigenous groups, the Kumeyaay tribe now provides multiple cultural educators for the program and is interested in having a permanent presence at Cabrillo due to the success of the program.

As Native STEAM enters its second year in 2017, program administrators are scaling up the program by offering twenty spots and shifting the age group up to offer a more connected and targeted curriculum. The program more fully incorporates Kumeyaay educators as well as the previous year's Gabrieleno-Tongva educators and now offers an even more balanced curriculum that provides interpretation from Native American educators at every session. The program diversifies partnerships with a key underserved community in Southern San Diego, and continues broadening urban park opportunities for indigenous youth. To see more about Cabrillo National Monument go to [nps.gov/cabr](http://nps.gov/cabr)

A new partnership between NPS and the Washington Area Bike Association is improving safety, interpretation and visitor service along the Anacostia Riverwalk Trail in the summer of 2017. National Capital Parks-East, the Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance Program (RTCA) and Conservation Legacy have hired interns and dedicated NPS staff to extend the reach of the Trail Ranger program and creatively connect underserved urban communities with multi-use trail and park amenities. The Anacostia Riverwalk Trail, completed in 2016, links key sites and facilities such as an environmental education center, tidal wetlands, Kenilworth Park and Aquatic Gardens, and historic areas.



On the second Friday of every month, rangers take free coffee and conversation to community members on their morning walk or ride, building community recognition and illustrating NPS's stake in southeastern DC communities.

The Trail Rangers are the public face of Anacostia Park, providing informal contacts with trail users and helping residents see the trail as something relevant to them. Program leads expressed the importance that the Trail Ranger reflect the diversity of residents who live along the trail, especially those in Wards 7 and 8. These communities are predominantly low-income and minority communities with high rates of obesity and associated health risks. The Trail Ranger program gives these members an opportunity to experience new parts of Anacostia, and provides

them with healthy alternative transportation to those resources in the community that members regularly access.

Trail Rangers can be seen biking the length of the trail, providing basic trail maintenance, alerting NPS if there is dumping or debris, alerting U.S. Park Police of any suspicious activity, and projecting a welcoming presence.

The partnership has already resulted in a higher quality of interpretation in the park. The first NPS Ranger-led bike tour in Anacostia Park in spring 2017, in conjunction with Trail Rangers from bike association, brought over 35 cyclists

to the park to learn about the great Bonus Army encampment of 1932. Future programs will highlight a variety of history and themes from Captain John Smith's exploration of the river to the desegregation of DC's public recreational areas.

Notably, NPS owns 90% of park lands in the Washington D.C. metropolitan area, meaning most paved trails travel through at least one national park unit. Program leads express hope that because of this the Anacostia River Rangers provides a model to expand existing

programming. As the program at Anacostia evolves, other park units in D.C. are already indicating substantial interest in implementing a similar program. Ideally, as the partnership continues to grow, individual interested parks would be able to secure funding to leverage support for rangers that the bike association and potential additional partners recruit.

You can find out more about the River Rangers, on the WABA blog page at [waba.org/blog](http://waba.org/blog) and on the Anacostia NPS site at [nps.gov/anac](http://nps.gov/anac)

Program staff and participants gather outside Rosie the Riveter/World War II Home Front National Historical Park before a day of processing and reflection.



## Bay Area Civil Rights Spring Break Park Hop

A five-day spring break program for at-risk youth of color connected African American heritage and culture across five different Bay Area NPS sites and bridged generations by paralleling the civil rights movement with current events. During the first four days, fourteen high school students shuttled to park units and heard from African American rangers about numerous struggles of African Americans in the Bay Area, starting long before the 1960s Civil Rights Movement. They were asked to relate these stories to present-day themes of race relations and expression of cultural identity. During the last two days of the program, at the Crissy Field Center, students were tasked to reflect and synthesize the week's themes through one of three interpretive media projects: collage, video, or music production.

While inventorying anecdotes from groups such as multicultural contract workers in the salmon canning industry and the Buffalo Soldiers, rangers linked African American narratives and civil rights struggles across the Presidio, San Francisco Maritime, Alcatraz, Port Chicago Naval Magazine, and Rosie the Riveter park units. Local educators noted that these stories were going untold—particularly at schools with higher proportions of underserved youth.

With what was referred to as “street hustle,” or in-person individual meetings, an Americorps member united African American rangers across park units and galvanized them to tailor their interpretations to at-risk youth of color. This tailoring offered participants a more complex and contextualized illustration of civil rights and civil disobedience. The program brought together eight partners: the five park units, the Golden Gate National Parks Conservancy, and two continuation high schools: Downtown High School, and Civic Center Secondary School. Initial outreach to the Parks Conservancy for shuttle funding led coordinators to realize that the Crissy Field Center could provide a supplementary youth development aspect to the program. The Crissy Field Center cultivated the artistic capstone element of the program as well, providing resources, stipends to each student, and professionals to guide the students through using the multimedia equipment.

## San Francisco Public Library Summer Reading Program

*“Create your adventure. Explore your library.  
Read your book. Find your park.”*

Leading up to the National Parks Centennial celebration, staff at Golden Gate National

Recreation Area and its non-profit partner, the Golden Gate National Parks Conservancy knew they wanted to ensure program accessibility to racially and socioeconomically diverse populations. Program staff and librarians realized the potential of libraries as a community's access point for knowledge about NPS and parks in the area. Librarians are trusted community members—not solely purveyors of books. Libraries are informational hubs, providing internet access, event notices, and community gathering spaces. By establishing a formal partnership with the San Francisco Public Library, NPS suddenly broadened their ability for programming at community hubs in every target neighborhood.

The program developed from this partnership is a creative suite of resources and enhancements designed to connect the Park Service and the Find Your Park campaign to the public library summer reading program. Seven pilot library branches housed “community trailheads” in 2016. These contact points featured collections of summer reading books about nature and the outdoors curated by engaged librarians. The trailheads also featured multilingual informational fact sheets and maps about park units close to the branch and within the larger National Recreation Area, and librarians were trained to answer frequently asked logistical questions about the parks. Over the course of the summer these community trailheads functioned as weekly rendezvous points for free shuttles to a variety of national park units nearby.

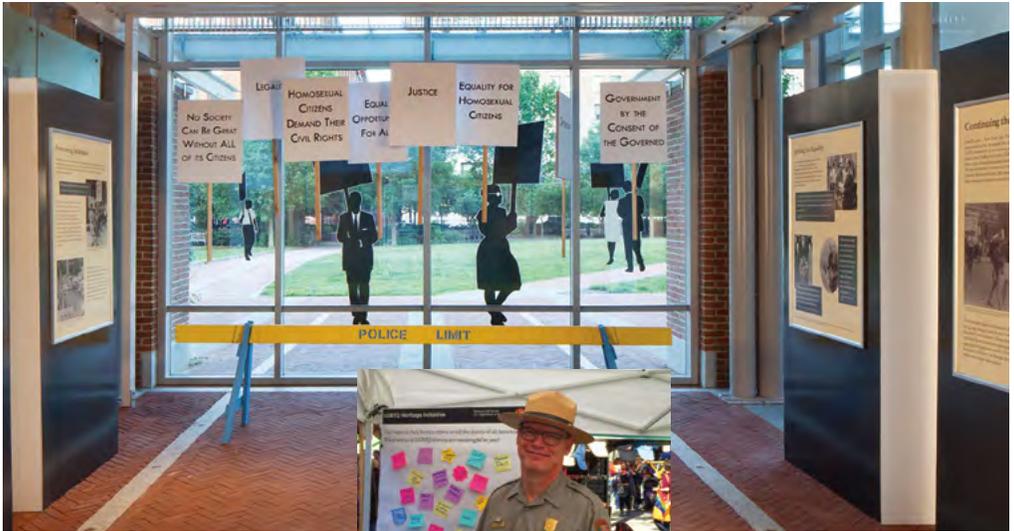
A comprehensive survey taken in the Presidio in 2008 revealed who wasn't already coming to the Parks and why—the most substantial barriers to park access for people of color is transportation and a sense of feeling welcome, leading staff to design and seek funding for a free shuttle program pilot. While developing the program's

infrastructure, the Parks Conservancy was able to include a free shuttle as part of the partnership. Every Saturday throughout the summer multiple buses with rangers on board brought close to 600 people—including multigenerational families, many of whom were first time visitors—to and from their local library branch to a nearby National Park.

In 2016, 19,000 youth, or “reading rangers,” participated in the summer reading program, an estimated 80% of those youth visited at least one park connected to the program. The 19,000 youth represents a 26% increase in summer reading program enrollment as well. With such success in its pilot, the program is continuing in 2017. The program will add more shuttles, as well as “storywalks” to park visits—nature walks with sites that correspond to consecutive page spreads in a children's book.

Want to learn more about creative work supported by and furthered in the larger Bay Area by innovative staff? You can visit the NPS websites for each park mentioned and keep up to speed with the Golden Gate National Parks Conservancy at:

- Alcatraz Island: [nps.gov/alca](https://nps.gov/alca)
- San Francisco Maritime National Historic Park: [nps.gov/safr](https://nps.gov/safr)
- Presidio of San Francisco: [nps.gov/prsf](https://nps.gov/prsf)
- Rosie the Riveter National Historic Park: [nps.gov/rori](https://nps.gov/rori)
- Port Chicago Naval Magazine National Memorial: [nps.gov/poch](https://nps.gov/poch)
- Golden Gate National Parks Conservancy: [parksconservancy.org](https://parksconservancy.org)
- GGNPC Instagram: [@parks4all](https://www.instagram.com/parks4all)



2015 marked the 50th anniversary of the Annual Reminder peaceful protests at Independence Hall National Historical Park in Philadelphia, one of the earliest LGBTQ rights demonstrations in the United States from 1965 to 1969. To celebrate, and with support from local museums, the park hosted a number of events. These initial connections and programs led staff at Independence to take a more critical look at the long term preservation of LGBTQ heritage in Philadelphia, finding that no site beyond Independence Hall had been set aside to preserve the stories of the LGBTQ community. Thus the Philadelphia LGBTQ Heritage Initiative was born.

The initiative rallies the Independence Hall National Historical Park, William Way LGBT Community Center, the Organization of American Historians, Temple University,

TOP: The 2015 LGBTQ Exhibit at Independence Hall; connected to the Heritage Initiative and Theme Study.

INSET: One of the interpretive staff at Independence helping to explain the new initiative and reaffirm the Park Service's stake in the preservation of LGBTQ sites in Philadelphia, and across the country.

and LGBTQ identifying Philadelphians around this key preservation gap. The initiative draws additional NPS support from the Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance (RTCA) program, the Preservation Assistance program, and the Northeast Region History Program. These programs and partners are united in embedding a new grassroots method in

inventorying and pursuing historic preservation efforts of LGBTQ spaces in Philadelphia.

The program's key innovation is its grassroots, publicly outsourced model. Traditionally cultural resource projects and National Register nominations begin by involving well-versed history scholars followed by presentation of the research and results to the larger target community. Instead, the NPS worked with the William Way LGBT Community Center to engage the Center's network and community

members via social media to collect culturally relevant sites and stories for the Park Service to consider preserving. Beginning in 2016, NPS also developed a presence at key community events such as Outfest and Pride, at the recommendation from key LGBTQ community members. At these events staff continued to engage the community to share new suggestions for stories and settings that are culturally and historically significant to LGBTQ civil rights struggles. From these grassroots efforts, partners amassed more than 1,000 recommendations of unrecognized LGBTQ related people, places, and anecdotes for which NPS and its partners can explore preservation options.

Activist sites associated with civil rights movements and ethnic groups are often transient—they are privately owned buildings or property not owned by the community that gathers around it. Because of this, the process of

setting aside sites for long-term preservation can be lengthy and complicated. In 2017, as a graduate student at Temple University parses through the 1,000 recommendations, the partners of the Philadelphia LGBTQ Heritage Initiative and the larger Philadelphia preservation community are trying to develop a more efficient strategy to protect these sites. By working to update and streamline local ordinances that can complicate the preservation process, partners hope to embed a better and more comprehensive way to document and protect both the LGBTQ sites and key cultural and historical sites for other disenfranchised, underrepresented groups in Philadelphia.

To find out how you can contribute, or to learn more about what the initiative has already accomplished visit [nps.gov/subjects/urban/philly-lgbtq](https://www.nps.gov/subjects/urban/philly-lgbtq)





Mountains to Main Street participant jumping for joy in Grand Teton National Park, where the Ambassadors train before heading out to their jobs back home.

As the 2016 National Park Service Centennial approached, Grand Teton National Park staff wanted to create a unique program to celebrate. Knowing the enthusiasm that week-long, immersive programs create, program coordinators explored ideas to harness that energy. Participants in programs like National Park Service Academy often come home from the program inspired but then feel let down without someone with whom to share the excitement. The idea with the new program was to create a framework for them to share their enthusiasm for parks with others.

The release of the *NPS Urban Agenda* sparked the idea to focus recruitment of participants who lived in urban areas. The ideas evolved into “Mountains to Main Street Urban Ambassador Program,” a week-long ambassador workshop. During the workshop, ambassadors design outreach projects to implement in their urban homes. The workshop combines training and collaboration among these diverse, young professionals, park staff and partners.

Ambassadors use a planning model called the Smart Chart to design an outreach project that brings new, urban audiences to a national park near their city. Ambassadors’ projects first identify community needs and then find a way to design a park trip that meets those needs. For example in 2016, the Cincinnati ambassador decided to focus his project on educating low-income neighborhood community members about career opportunities; he took his youth to the Taft National Historic Site to help build a demonstration garden and learn about park careers. Another ambassador in Yonkers, NY, helped address low writing test scores in her community. She tutored girls in writing and explored sense of place with them by reading essays about national parks and hip hop songs. Her group’s final meeting was a field trip and poetry writing activity at African Burial Grounds. Mountains to Main Street ambassadors reached more than 900 under-represented youth through 46 park-themed events and visits to 18 urban national park sites.

Partners nominated the Mountains to Main Street Ambassadors from among their alumni. The partners identified young adults from their ranks who already care about stewardship and have a heart for service. The Mountains to Main Street training workshop would equip ambassadors with new skills channel passion for parks towards engaging youth in the ambassadors' urban neighborhoods. In keeping with Urban Agenda goals, both the ambassadors and the audiences for their projects were under-represented in national park visitation.

In addition to diversity, collaboration played a strong role in Mountains to Main Street successes. From recruiting the ambassadors to delivering the curriculum, Grand Teton worked with NPS Academy alumni, GroundworkUSA, Teton Science Schools, Student Conservation Association, City Kids Wilderness Project, Grand Teton Association and Grand Teton National Park Foundation. In order to have the biggest impact, ambassadors worked with audiences and partners they already knew. As a result, their outreach projects included unique partners—from the Peace and Learning Center to the Mary J. Blige Center for Women—that otherwise would not be connected to national parks. You can follow the work of the Urban Ambassadors across social media with #Mountains2Main.



NYC School 13 Students from the Pollinator Club—a program of an Ambassador—are introduced to the statue of Annie Moore, the first immigrant to be processed at Ellis Island.



The 2016 Urban Ambassador Team.

Group of Urban Ambassadors at Grand Teton National Park taking a break from training inside for some hands on activities outdoors.



## Anchorage Schools on Trails

Schools on Trails engages Anchorage schools near trails, parks, streams, and other natural habitats to educate students about community assets and enrich neighborhoods through increased local awareness. The initiative establishes connections with racially and ethnically diverse students by creating opportunities to participate in project planning and civic engagement that instill the value of safe public spaces as a key component in their quality of life.

In 2008, federal, state, and local land managers held informal gatherings discussing how to reconnect children with nature in and around Anchorage, Alaska. The Get Outdoors Anchorage Coalition resulted from these talks, and it was through this group that the Anchorage Park Foundation and other partners began to create the Schools on Trails program.

This initiative grew into a collaboration including Anchorage Parks and Recreation, the Anchorage Park Foundation, Anchorage School District, and the local chapter of American Society of Landscape Architects, the University of Alaska Cooperative Extension Service, and other private organizations and individuals

In 2015, the Schools on Trails Program requested assistance from the Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance (RTCA) program of NPS to help strengthen the Schools on Trails Program. RTCA staff helped with overall program development, and assisted a teacher from Nunaka Valley Elementary School, her students, and her other partners with designing “learning labs” in nearby Russian Jack Springs Park. These learning labs provide demonstration space and removable seats for students, where they engage in learning about flora, fauna, and stream ecology. Two of the three labs have been completed as of 2017. They see regular use from different schools, and teachers report higher

attendance rates on days the class visits the outdoor learning lab. In 2016, the National Park Service and Anchorage Park Foundation entered into a cooperative agreement to support ongoing program coordination for two years and to help design a broader NPS Urban Strategy for Alaska that will foster new connections to trails and natural new connections to nearby trails and natural resources.

The Schools on Trails group continues to connect urban students to their nearby parks and trails through outdoor learning, civic engagement and stewardship. Program leads are also exploring avenues in which to expand outdoor learning opportunities beyond the school day by helping existing after-school programs get kids outside more often. Schools on Trails works program-by-program to talk about challenges to getting young people outside and identify tools and resources the program staff can use to overcome these barriers.

Students from Nunaka Valley Elementary connecting to nature in their outdoor learning lab with an Adopt-A-Tree lesson.

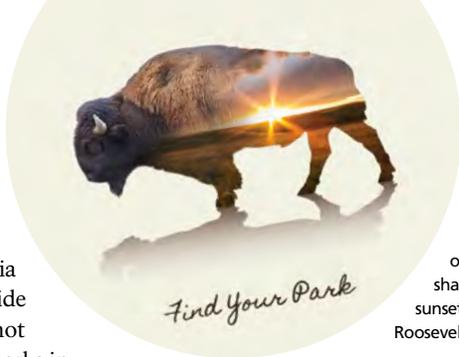


## Inventive Social Media of the Midwest Region

Today, social media is a vital tool for the National Park Service to help all people discover their national parks. Social media offers a unique opportunity to reach a wide array of audiences, many of whom may not have had opportunities to visit national parks in person. In the Midwest Region, parks large and small are connecting with audiences from the windswept plains to busy urban centers, while generating increased awareness of the national parks through the effective use of social media.

Developing successful methods for audience engagement is a collaborative process. Parks, the regional office, and partners learn and borrow strategies from each other. The Midwest has developed a refreshing outreach program for the region through an innovative social media presence. By coupling the use of cross-generational, pop-culture references with highly unique, custom graphics, this inventive content has dramatically increased the number of followers to the region's accounts. The main regional Facebook account saw a 600% increase in likes over the past year and a half, with nearly 40% of followers falling in the 18–34 age range. Instagram garners almost 20,000 followers, and, in keeping with national trends, is the region's fastest-growing social media platform among younger fans of the national parks. Some of the most popular posts can circulate with something of a viral speed and encourage broader interaction.

A Visual Information Specialist was hired on a temporary assignment in the fall of 2015 to help develop materials for the National Park Service Centennial. The great success of the social media program will live long past the Centennial as audiences continue to follow and engage with the Midwest National Parks online. Subsequently, the regional Visual Information Specialist has become a permanent position, allowing continued attention to this important interpretive tool.



The bison is a combination of images and shapes, including a sunset from Theodore Roosevelt National Park.

This social media presence does not take itself too seriously. Its use of humor and pop culture allusions to educate about or promote nearby parks and programs has been the best way to connect to people who may not have considered visiting Midwestern parks. After connecting over social media, followers may be more likely to plan a visit to some of the region's 61 parks across 13 states. One goal of this social media strategy is to turn what some refer to as the "fly-over states" into "fly-to" states.

The NPS Midwest Region features not only notable sites like the oldest Federal Reserve (Hot Springs National Park) and America's first National River (Buffalo River) but also a wide range of biodiversity from moose in Michigan to alligators in Arkansas. Frequently successful park awareness comes down to exposure: many of the key sites across the region benefit simply from being put on the map, especially when the map resembles those from the opening pages of a *Lord of the Rings* novel.

With increasing buzz and popularity, the Midwest Region is gearing up for the solar eclipse in August 2017, when seven of the region's parks will be in the path of totality—where visitors can experience the full darkness of the eclipse. More creative, public domain art from the Midwest Region will help inform the public about events like this, and likely continue to draw and engage new people to the parks. To join the fun, check out the Midwest Region's Instagram [@midwest\\_nps](#), Facebook [@MidwestNationalParks](#), or Twitter [@MidwestNPS](#).

Branching Out is a youth engagement program that offers sequenced career development and educational opportunities in the field of landscape management through workshops, internships, and hands-on experiences at National Parks. As participants progress through the program, they gain knowledge and field applicable skills in resource management and park stewardship. The program provides summer work options and school year experiences for youth and has been running for over a decade.



Branching Out youth participant Lorre Mitchell building skills in tree care as part of the summer position.

In 2016, Branching Out piloted its field team and school year program components in partnership with the Stephen T. Mather High School for Building Arts and Craftsmanship. Mather High School in New York City is the only NPS sponsored Career and Technical Education high school in the country and is named after the first Director of the National Park Service. It addresses the ever-increasing need for professionals to care for historic structures and landscapes, while pairing it with the NYC Department of Education's resources leads to unique learning opportunities for students.

At Mather students get hands-on learning that demonstrates the real-world applications of what is being taught in the classroom. Students are allowed to pursue the dreams they want, whether it be college, an apprenticeship, or immediately entering the workforce. The Department of Education (DOE) provides the teachers and the academic standards and the National Park Service provides expert guidance and projects to hone students' knowledge and skills. 2017 marks the first graduating class that began as first-years since Mather opened in fall 2013.

By partnering with the Mather High School, Branching Out gleans more diverse educational resources from the DOE, as well as access to a pool of applicants with relevant classroom and field experience. Branching Out successfully activates One NPS by connecting these two NPS programs focused on landscape preservation and management.

In its pilot run in 2016, Branching Out hired seven field team members and four school year ambassadors. For summer 2017 Branching Out is scaling the New York City program up to ten youth participants to match the parent program in Boston in size. Selected students undertake field experiences that introduce employment and educational pathways in the field of landscape management, and gain exposure to NPS and associated sites.

The diverse cohort of students and staff in the NPS Branching Out Program 2016.





The exterior of the center, with large windows to welcome those strolling past.

Through the partnership of NPS, the Western National Parks Association, California State Parks, the USDA Forest Service, and the City of Los Angeles, the Gateway to Nature educates and informs an estimated two million residents of Los Angeles per year about NPS and Forest Service programs and parks, forests and public lands in the greater Los Angeles area. Gateway to Nature explores the way in which nature is open to interpretation, inviting imagination and creativity. It challenges traditional notions of outdoor exploration by highlighting unique ways people in Los Angeles engage with nature and aims to encourage new modes of park participation.

Newly opened in late 2016, the Gateway to Nature visitor and interpretive center sits on the El Pueblo de Los Angeles Historical Monument site, which already draws 400,000 elementary school students every year. El Pueblo is located in one of the nation's most densely populated, diverse, and historic neighborhoods. It is also strategically located for developing public lands engagement, located one half mile from the Los Angeles River and a half mile from Los Angeles State Historic Park.

RIGHT: A glimpse inside the center and the experiences and resources it offers to Los Angeles residents.



Major partners of the effort have designated space in the facility for educational and promotional materials, but all partners jointly represent a broader brand of connecting to nature.

Programming is the crux of the Gateway to Nature. Partner organizations connect their resources and calendars of events to the Gateway creating a central activity hub where community members can sign up for classes, recreational opportunities, or volunteering with any of the partner organizations. Channel Islands National Park, Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area, Outward Bound Adventures, and Discovery Agents all contribute to the resources and events of the center. It provides a home for traditional programming in nontraditional urban settings, volunteer and service-learning projects, and as a launch point for excursions to lands within Santa Monica Mountains.

As the Gateway to Nature continues to root itself in the surrounding diverse community, Western National Parks Association will continue to staff the facilities and develop a retail strategy that allows the Gateway to Nature to support itself financially. From the beginning, the consolidated access coupled with the breadth of opportunities successfully draws people to the urban site, and connects local community members to the great outdoors. For more information head to [wnpa.org/gateway-to-nature](http://wnpa.org/gateway-to-nature)

When considering outdoor recreation opportunities in Baltimore, kayaking is not an activity that immediately comes to mind: public rental opportunities are limited and purchasing personal equipment can be expensive. Preparing for its third year, the Kids in Kayaks program at Baltimore National Heritage Area is a coordinated effort designed around getting kids exercising in a new way, familiarizing and demystifying water recreation activities, and promoting a unique way of learning Baltimore history.

Each fall, 500 Baltimore public school students spend a full day in the Baltimore National Heritage Area. Half of the students begin at a nearby park site exploring Baltimore's maritime history and the Patapsco River's natural resources. The other half begins by learning and honing kayaking hard skills followed by exploring the natural resources on the Patapsco. Halfway through the day, the two groups rotate and connect the two experiences. In the spring,

the same students return for more history education and another opportunity to kayak on the Patapsco. This structure is key to the program. It provides kids with an opportunity to pursue a personal accomplishment the first time around, and enhances the following opportunity in the spring by harnessing kids' newfound confidence. Evaluations show that after the trip in the fall, 92% of participating students would go kayaking again, speaking to the program's ability to challenge students to overcome their fear of water and eagerness to try a new experience and learn a new skill.

The program followed from talks between the Heritage Area and Baltimore City Parks and Recreation. As the program manifested, the two organizations rounded out the program partners, including Baltimore City Public Schools, Chesapeake Conservancy, the National Park Foundation, Maryland Historical Society, The Maryland Zoo in Baltimore, the Star-Spangled Banner Flag House, and three additional NPS units: Fort McHenry National Monument and Historic Shrine, the Captain John Smith Chesapeake National Historic Trail, and the Star-Spangled Banner National Historic Trail. Baltimore Parks and Recreation provides the recreational equipment and NPS and the City

Eighth-graders from Collington Square Elementary paddling on the Patapsco River, June 2016.





Outdoor Recreation Programmer Molly Gallant of the Baltimore Parks Department leads a kayaking lesson with eighth-graders before the paddle.

of Baltimore provide the bulk of grant funding for the program through the Heritage Area. Most remaining partners provide educational programming, supplementary teaching resources, and volunteer interpreters at land sites.

Beyond promoting Baltimore maritime history and providing free access to unique outdoor recreation activities, Kids in Kayaks shows the next generation how to enjoy the resources in their own hometown, and strives to encourage an ethic of stewardship for that resource. Students report visceral impressions of the abundance of litter along the banks, particularly after positive exposure and experience kayaking. Last year, students were surprised and affected by the pollution so greatly that they volunteered to produce a video about its effects. Due to its outstanding pilot run in 2015, and successful second year, the program returns for the 2017-2018 school season and continues to empower Baltimore middle schoolers as environmental stewards through its innovative kayaking education program. To see more about this program and the many other opportunities at the Baltimore National Heritage Area, check out [explorebaltimore.org](http://explorebaltimore.org)



These eighth-graders were excited and ready to get out on the water, which wasn't the case for every student. Many were apprehensive at first, but everyone ended up having fun and learning a lot about kayaking.

# Glass Street Connector Trail

The Glass Street Connector Trail is a quarter-mile trail and a revitalization project connecting Glass Street, a predominantly low-income and minority community in Chattanooga, TN, to Sherman Reservation, a historic parcel of the Chattanooga National Military Park that was underutilized and unsafe for park visitors. Sherman Reservation is the largest of seven NPS reservations commemorating military action along Missionary Ridge. The site highlights important civil war campaigns, features period cannons, and explores the rich and complicated history of African American heritage associated with the area.

The quarter-mile Glass Street Connector Trail was a collaborative effort including Chickamauga and Chattanooga National Military Park, the NPS Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance Program (RTCA), the NPS Challenge Cost Share Program, the National Park Foundation (NPF), the Glass House Collective, Southeast Conservation Corp (SECC), Trust for Public Land, the Sierra Club, and Techme Community Consultants.

Community mural completed in 2014. Artists solicited community input to develop the theme of faith, hope, love and empowerment.

The trail leading up to this site from Glass Street was not easily accessible nor maintained, requiring foot traffic to traverse a hilly, curving stretch of road with no sidewalk to find the trailhead. Receiving funds from the Sierra Club, NPF, the American Hiking Society, and the Challenge Cost Share Program, in spring 2016 SECC members cleared and constructed the new trail. The trailhead is located at a smaller intersection, and mirrors the route civil war soldiers would have taken during the Battle of Missionary Ridge. The trail was finished in the fall of 2016 in time for the centennial celebration. Neighborhood turnout indicated community members' support for the revitalization, and the celebration offered guided hikes along the new trail and atop Missionary Ridge. This program connected community members to the cultural and historical resources to those unaware of an NPS site at the top of the ridge.

The new trail led Glass House Collective staff member Nikki Lewis to reinstate an annual Juneteenth Celebration of the emancipation of slaves throughout the former Confederacy.



Centennial Celebration and Glass Street Block Party  
September 2016.



Unlike many projects that pull in RTCA, the Glass Street Connector Trail features RTCA as part of the project design team rather than in the role of convener. RTCA was able to leverage its communication and knowledge of other community assistance programs to connect the project to the Challenge Cost Share Program, thus familiarizing Park staff with the functions and staff of both RTCA and the Challenge

Cost Share. In response, Chattanooga National Military Park was able to provide interpretative resources along the trail, flexible and quick event planning, and connections to the local government. To see more about Chickamauga and Chattanooga National Military Park head to [nps.gov/chch](https://nps.gov/chch) To learn more about RTCA, go to [nps.gov/orgs/rzca](https://nps.gov/orgs/rzca)

The Mississippi National River and Recreation Area is a 72-mile corridor that runs through the Minneapolis-Saint Paul metropolitan area. In 2012, the NPS, land managers and partners decided to increase river access, leading to the development of an alternative transportation system for the park that is owned and operated by partners. The alternatives include light rail, metro bus, high speed rail and the Nice Ride Minnesota Bike Share system.

In 2014, National Park planners discovered a project in the City of Ramsey—north of the Twin Cities and within the Recreation Area—featuring a kayak lending service on a small lake for simple outdoor recreation. To expand this idea from recreation to transportation, planners developed, tested, and secured funding for a pilot program along the river in Minneapolis. Through funding from the NPS Federal Lands Transportation Program (Cat III) the NPS and partners were able to set up the pilot on a 3.9 mile stretch of river and, in 2016, opened the first Paddle Share in a national park. The project required agreements and facilitation among several parks, 27 local units of government, regional park management agencies, and non-



profit organizations. Key funding for operations and maintenance, which cannot be covered with federal funds, was provided by REI, the National Park Foundation, and Mississippi Park Connection, the park’s non-profit philanthropic partner.

The program is so successful that it has expanded for the 2017 season (June 2–October 31) to two additional stretches of river and is expected to generate enough revenue to cover operation and maintenance costs. There is no additional cost to the park, which was key to receiving federal funds. Additional critical partners include Minneapolis Parks and Recreation Board, Minneapolis Watershed Management Organization, Nice Ride Minnesota, the City of Saint Paul, and the US Department of Transportation Volpe Transportation Center.

THIS PAGE: The self-serve Paddle Share stations, like the one pictured at North Mississippi Regional Park, were designed to function similarly to the Nice Ride Minnesota partnered bike share stations. The familiarity between the rental processes makes program deployment more successful.



Friends enjoy the Mississippi River with Mississippi River Paddle Share.

The program is the first of its kind, and integrates kayak sharing into the suite of alternative transportation services available for Twin Cities residents, connecting primarily with the Nice Ride Bike Sharing system, also funded, in part, by NPS. For a small fee, community members can rent kayaks from self-serve stations in similar fashion to Nice Ride bike rental. Twelve mobile stations are set near existing water access; station mobility allows for ease of installation and for storing off-site in winter. Stations span three stretches of river in Minneapolis, Saint Paul, and the Three Rivers Park District north of the Twin Cities. Stations must serve a predominantly urban population, be close to one or more alternate forms of transportation, and align to provide a connected bike/paddle/transit experience.

For a set time, users can take kayaks out along the Mississippi River water trail and return them to a designated downstream station. Program

coordinators created [rivertripplanner.org](http://rivertripplanner.org) as a complementary live trip planning site for all modes of transportation serving the river. Paddle Share is proving to be very successful. It is generating the revenue required for operations and maintenance, scaling up from four sites to twelve, and packaging alternative transportation routes uniquely and effectively to increase river access. As the project's large collaborative grows, it will continue to serve visitors interested in reducing their carbon footprint by providing them with an innovative transportation solution that supports healthier lifestyles and protection of park resources, and creates awareness of the Mississippi River as a transportation and recreational resource. Remember to check out [rivertripplanner.org](http://rivertripplanner.org), and for updates on Mississippi River National River and Recreation Area head to [nps.gov/miss](http://nps.gov/miss)



# ELK Urban Ranger Program

Currently in its fifth year, the Urban Ranger Program is a summer employment program that hires underrepresented youth as “Urban Rangers” and connects them to careers in the STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math) and natural resources fields through local programming, mentoring, and professional development. The Urban Rangers also connect underrepresented communities in Denver to fun, safe, educational outdoor recreation and education opportunities that begin in their backyards and expand to the Colorado backcountry.

The program began with funds leveraged by NPS, which partnered with Environment Learning for Kids (ELK), a non-profit organization with decades of community buy-in and trust. ELK has an extensive history of educational programming in the community prior to the Urban Ranger program, which lends ELK credibility both in hiring and outreach. This arrangement is crucial to the success and sustainability of the program. In addition to the resources leveraged by the NPS, ELK expanded the partnership which now includes Denver Parks and Recreation (DPR), Colorado Parks and Wildlife, and the Denver Botanic Gardens as well.

The Urban Ranger program targets underrepresented youth at an early age, in hopes of instilling knowledge of and interest in STEM and natural resources careers. Each summer, 10-12 high school and college students are offered summer jobs as Urban Rangers in the Denver metro area. They assist at NPS outreach events; running fishing clinics with DPR; teaching macro-invertebrate lessons at school programs; and leading camping trips for families and younger students. They also visit a wide variety of organizations to learn about potential career opportunities, complete service projects, and



Urban Rangers engage youth in a fun dance to teach proper casting for recreational fishing.

get hands-on experience in projects like trail building and invasive plant removal.

The Urban Rangers connect over 3,500 people, both youth and families, to outdoor activities each summer season. At the beginning of these events the Urban Rangers ask their students what they know about NPS—many children in the Denver metro area are not familiar with the organization. They then learn about the mission of the NPS, how that mission of preservation and protection differs from other land management agencies, and how they can engage with the NPS in the future.

Program staff members remark how powerful it is to see high school students successfully engaging thousands of their younger peers and getting them excited about the outdoors. The success of the Urban Ranger Program guides many participants into careers in natural resources, but even those who pursue other fields reflect on their ongoing passion for stewardship and community engagement. To see more about the Urban Rangers and other creative programs facilitated by ELK go to [elkkids.org](http://elkkids.org)

# Pullman National Monument

BELOW: The back side of the Administration Clock Tower Building as it stands in mid-2017.

The Pullman Historic District in Chicago, IL has a tight-knit, diverse community and vibrant history long-preserved since its creation in 1880s by the Pullman Company. This history includes manufacturing railroad passenger cars and house workers and their families; galvanizing of residents in the 1960s to preserve the community from demolition; and supporting the proclamation of the district as an NPS site in 2015. The area showcases notable landmarks like the Pullman Administration and Factory Complex, the Hotel Florence, the Greenstone Church and others, in addition to the many well-preserved privately owned residences—unique in their architecture and significant urban landscape design. The site features stories that speak to the diverse populations that live in the district now, like those of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters—the first African American Union to form an agreement with a U.S. company, in 1937, and a group influential role in the Civil Rights movement in the 1960s. Designated by presidential proclamation in 2015, Pullman National Monument is the first National Park unit inside Chicago city limits, and is the Park Service’s opportunity to support and extend a variety of existing community efforts at Pullman.

This National Monument faces a unique situation in that nearly 90% of the buildings within its 203-acre boundary are intact, and most of them are privately owned residential or commercial spaces. Pullman is a living, working, and growing community. Community groups like the Pullman Civic Organization have a strong presence in the community and provide a variety of initiatives and education supporting collective stewardship. This tasks NPS to navigate and learn how to best leverage and apply their resources with the larger existing interpretive and preservation

community, while also completing the foundational strategic work required to start-up a fully functional NPS unit.

The presidential proclamation charges the National Monument to tell the story of Pullman, but there are several other sites, museums and visitor centers that already provide a detailed and community-sourced narrative of the area’s history. Through conversations with its key partners at the site—the Illinois Historic Preservation Agency, the City of Chicago: Chicago Landmarks, and the A. Phillip Randolph Pullman Museum—and the larger community, the National Monument is connecting to the story by leveraging its widespread recognition: its arrowhead and flat hat. In partnership with the Chicago Neighborhood Initiative and with funding from the National Parks Foundation, NPS is renovating the first level of the iconic Administration Clock tower Building to house the Monument’s Visitor Center. Upon completion in 2019, NPS interpreters will offer an introduction to the site’s narrative, but will then connect visitors to the other cultural resources available in the community. NPS will serve as a connection, a central axle spoking out to and further supporting existing cultural and interpretive resources. To stay updated with the progress and events at Pullman see [nps.gov/pull](https://nps.gov/pull)



# Seattle Every Kid in a Park Collaborative

The Every Kid in a Park (EKiP) initiative provides free entry to national parks and other federal lands for every fourth grader with the goal of getting kids and their families to explore their national treasures. Recognizing the opportunities for positive impacts and engagement beyond, the Seattle EKiP Collaborative is a unique collection of partners leveraging resources to create an outdoor youth recreation pipeline to kids starting with fourth-graders with opportunities for all grade-levels.

the collective applied to the National Park Foundation to become a “Focus City” through the awarding of a broad grant earmarked primarily for transportation projects. To align public lands, interested partners, and fourth-graders that might benefit from a larger infusion of funding to go beyond providing transportation to national parks, Seattle used the funding to support a full-time Seattle EKiP Collaborative Coordinator position.



Collaborative Coordinator poses with two excited Junior Rangers at Safeco Fields.

Following the 2015 launch of EKiP, an idea surfaced in Seattle of partnering with youth-serving groups to package a complete “menu” of outdoor opportunities for kids of all ages. The resulting ad hoc group consisted of the National Park Service, the U.S. Forest Service, IslandWood, NatureBridge, and the Washington Trails Association. Once assembled,

The Collaborative Coordinator strengthens the collective by identifying programmatic gaps, recruiting additional partners and diversifying the youth outdoor recreation “menu.” The Coordinator’s work ranges from capacity building to focused product development. For example, after facilitating discussion of strategies to reach underrepresented communities, the Coordinator has facilitated the development and distribution of the EKiP brochure into seventeen languages, a shared web portal, and authored and inspired stories for traditional and non-traditional media. The Coordinator also organizes monthly meetings where the collaborative develops strategies to extend the EKiP initiative, suggests new organizations to include and suggests community events at which

to make a coordinated appearance. These community events, like PrideFest, DragonFest, and Every Kid in a Park Day with the Seattle Mariners, in tandem with multilingual literature are strategic means for the collaborative to reach underserved and underrepresented populations.

Because of this Coordinator position, linkage and alignment of partners’ goals is efficient,



Excited fourth-graders show off their free admissions passes.

outreach and recruitment of partners is broad, and monthly meetings are effective. Although concerns have surfaced about the fate of the collaborative after the grant-funded position ends, the goal is to build innovative partnerships that will be embedded and valuable enough to offset the diminished efficiency after losing a dedicated convener. Foundational efforts made by the Coordinator and the collaborative

suggests the collaborative will succeed after the Coordinator leaves.

Along with EKIP opportunities for fourth-graders, the collaborative showcases free outdoor events for third-graders through the YMCA, complimentary ski passes for fifth-graders through the U.S. Forest Service, and multi-night experiences for sixth-graders to Islandwood or NatureBridge. Additional collaborators include Seattle YMCA Bold and Gold, Washington State Audubon and Seattle Parks and Recreation, which expand the collaborative beyond national park boundaries by promoting the exploration of all parks—federal, state, or local. The collaborative is also continuing outreach to health care providers and public libraries, and as the network draws in willing partners, opportunities for Seattle youth to engage with their public lands will continue to become more accessible and prevalent. For more information go to [ekipseattle.org](http://ekipseattle.org)



Members of the collaborative march together and build community recognition and buy-in via attending major community events like Seattle Pride shown here.



Hiking along the Midland School Ranch Trail network at the edge of Los Padres National Forest.

Inspired by Parks Victoria’s Healthy Parks Healthy People program, this initiative convenes eight community partners in Santa Barbara, CA, to strengthen the connection between the use of local-public parks and trails and individual healthcare on a countywide basis.

Conceived by staff at Santa Barbara County Trails Council, the Healthy People Healthy Trails (HPHT) program connects healthcare providers Cottage Health, Sansum, and CenCal Health to outdoor recreation groups of the US Forest Service, Santa Barbara County Trails Council, and the City of Santa Barbara Parks and Recreation Department. With technical assistance from the Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance Program (RTCA) in 2014, the partners began work to launch a pilot prescription trails program. Notably, these organizations did not sign a formal cooperative agreement and launched the program with no funding. Because the collective was building the team as they were launching the pilot, the work ingrained a stronger collaborative mindset among the partners—a testament to the strength of the collaborative effort with this project.

HPHT has effective and diverse partners at the table. Cottage Health, CenCal Health, and Sansum Clinics offer the hospital, insurance provider, and outpatient clinic perspectives, respectively, on obesity and other health topics and goals of the project. The health organizations have overlapping networks, and together have substantial weight in the Southern California medical community to implement and support various aspects of the program. RTCA provided organizational capacity building and assisted the Santa Barbara County Trails Council

in creating various trail maps. Additionally the City of Santa Barbara Parks and Recreation Department provided translation of the maps and medical fact sheets into Spanish for the large Latinx populations in and around Santa Barbara.

HPHT received such tremendous response from communities in the county that Santa Barbara County Trails Council were obligated to scale down from initial expectations in order to effectively demonstrate program success. As the program continues, it hopes to expand its geography in order to better reach low-income, rural, Latinx communities.

RTCA finalized its work with the team in 2017. However, the NPS is still listed as a supporter on the project, and due to the informal nature of the partnership, RTCA or other community assistance programs of NPS could be folded back into the program. Effective NPS leveraging and convening of the right partners is very evident with this program. For resources and more information on this evolving program go to [healthypeoplehealthytrails.org](http://healthypeoplehealthytrails.org)



## For More Information

This publication was anteceded by both the *Urban Agenda* and the *Call to Action*. Action items from both publications elicited much of the work of the Urban Fellows/Model Cities and the work highlighted by *Urban Lights*.

- The *NPS Urban Agenda* is available online at [nps.gov/urban](https://nps.gov/urban)
- *A Call to Action: Preparing for a Second Century of Stewardship and Engagement* is available online at [nps.gov/calltoaction](https://nps.gov/calltoaction)

Additionally *Urban Lights* is part of a more comprehensive suite of tools that expand on the Urban Agenda with case studies and concrete tools that constitute a new way of working within the Park Service.

- The *Building a Culture of Collaboration Handbook* provides a deeper look into the work of the Urban Fellows and provides specific tools for more meaningful and effective urban engagement. It is available online at [nps.gov/urban](https://nps.gov/urban)
- The *Directory of NPS Community Assistance Programs* provides information for each of the community assistance programs NPS provides to its parks and partners, and is available online at [nps.gov/getinvolved/community-assistance.htm](https://nps.gov/getinvolved/community-assistance.htm)

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This publication is a product of the National Park Service Urban Matters Community. Since 2012, this evolving community of practice has engaged a variety of NPS staff and partners in a conversation on the National Park Service in urban environments. The Urban Matters Community features a team of urban park practitioners devoted to highlighting illustrative stories of the Urban Agenda principles in action both within and outside of the National Park Service.

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## Principles of The Urban Agenda

### BE RELEVANT TO ALL AMERICANS

Within 30 years over half the nation will consist of people of color, yet this trend is not yet proportionally represented in the NPS workforce, its visitors, nor the themes interpreted across its public lands. Urban Lights illustrates how NPS is creating a more culturally competent workforce and adapting traditional park models to better meet the needs of diverse urban communities its sites border and encompass.

### ACTIVATE "ONE NPS"

The Urban Agenda calls for the unprecedented alignment of NPS by connecting the work in its 400+ parks and 50+ Community Assistance Programs via a unified conservation, education, recreation, and economic strategy. Urban Lights highlights how cross-departmental understanding of NPS assets for staff at all levels grants NPS a more powerful portfolio to collaborate effectively and provide national leadership in heritage, conservation, and restoration.

### NURTURE A CULTURE OF COLLABORATION

NPS cannot go it alone in urban areas and must commit to fostering strong working relationships among a sizable array of private and public partner organizations. Urban Lights emphasizes how building new partnerships on shared operational goals and embracing work outside of national park boundaries leads to programs that further enhance the quality of life of urbanized Americans through shared stewardship, accessible healthy recreation, and economic development.

For more information on the ongoing work of the Urban Agenda, visit [nps.gov/urban](https://nps.gov/urban)

