

National Park Service Strategic Plan

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*Vision*



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## Our Symbiotic Roles

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*Indisputably, preservation comes first in law. Indisputably, it comes first in logic — without preservation, the rest is utterly pointless.*

Robert Utley

Throughout the many pages of law governing the National Park Service, Congress provides one consistent direction: we are charged with preserving those natural, cultural, and recreational places and resources held dear to Americans, places that shape our national identity. These are America's *heritage resources* — the parks, historic districts, and other special places worthy of preservation for public benefit. They range from the local marsh to the vast expanses of the Greater Yellowstone ecosystem, from the town's pioneer homestead to Independence Hall, and from the neighborhood playground to Golden Gate National Recreation Area.

In carrying out its mission, the National Park Service plays three key and complementary roles: first as a *steward* responsible for managing America's national parks and their resources; second as a *guide* and *teacher*, helping people experience, value, and respect the meaning of our shared national heritage; and third as an *advocate* for and *partner* in achieving a quality of life enhanced by natural and cultural resources and recreational open space. These roles are derived from the agency's 1916 organic act and decades of subsequent legislation.

The National Park Service's three roles too often are seen as competing and sometimes conflicting charges. In fact, they are symbiotic. As exemplary stewards we preserve a representative core of the nation's most significant heritage resources. As guide and teacher we foster a national culture protective of heritage values. And as caring advocates and partners we help extend the benefits of a rich natural and cultural heritage more widely throughout society, helping conserve the biological and cultural diversity critical to the maintenance of healthy resource systems. As the parks become increasingly threatened by a steady degradation of the planet, the problems we face today as stewards tell us we must become better educators and advocates. The public must assume greater responsibility for the preservation and management of its heritage.

Asking — and helping — all Americans to assume a greater responsibility for preserving our shared heritage recognizes that no single agency, no level of government, can accomplish this work alone. Preserving our heritage will require the best efforts of the National Park Service, the other federal agencies, state and local governments, our partners in the private sector, and individual citizens throughout the country and the world.

A fourth role of the National Park Service supports the other three. As an *organization* we provide the leadership, the employees, the relationships with our partners, and the management structure and systems needed to carry out all aspects of our mission. In this role we need to concentrate our organizational resources where they will maximize the public benefit.

There is considerable discussion today about government being more responsive to its customers. This is a valuable

concept. However, when we in the National Park Service speak of 'our customers' we include not only park visitors, our partners in preservation and recreation at the national, state, and community levels, and the larger American public, but also future generations and the myriad plants and animals, cultural landscapes, structures, and artifacts, scenic vistas, and even the night skies — all the tangible and intangible manifestations of our heritage that we and our partners seek to preserve.

## Our Changing Circumstances

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The world has changed and the public expects the National Park Service to change accordingly. Our commitment to preserve heritage resources through stewardship of the national park system and through partnerships and assistance to others remains unwavering. But changing circumstances require new actions and methods. We need to broaden our horizons and to reexamine our various roles in light of our new understanding of environmental and social relationships and new opportunities to work cooperatively with others.

As America's growing population and advancing technology consume more of the nation's resources, many units of the national park system that only a few decades ago were protected by their isolation are now threatened by water and air pollution, fragmentation and loss of wildlife habitat, and the intrusion of buildings and heavily traveled highways. We can no longer protect the national parks\* and their resources without becoming deeply involved in regional, national, and even international land use and environmental quality issues.

Growing numbers of visitors with diverse cultural backgrounds and expectations are using parks differently. The effects of use, sometimes subtle, accumulate, requiring more intensive and sophisticated management of visitor use as well as resources.

We face other changes as well. As the American public develops a more inclusive sense of history and a deeper understanding of the connections among all living things, people are redefining what they value about their heritage. They are placing a higher priority on ecological and cultural integrity for geographic regions. The increasing body of legislation on environmental protection, coordinated land use, urban parks, historic preservation, and heritage areas, passed over the last quarter century, reflects a growing awareness of the importance of these values and an expectation that federal agencies like the National Park Service will help advance this broadening environmental ethic. Together these mandates address the very things that support life on earth — breathable air, drinkable water, resilient and sustainable populations of plants and animals — along with those things that reflect and shape human civilization — archeological sites, historic structures and artifacts, cultural landscapes, and the traditions passed through generations.

The American public is also changing its expectations about the roles of government. People are demanding more participation in public decision-making and more responsive service. At the same time they are placing a high national priority on debt reduction. They expect the National Park Service to serve more visitors and to resolve increasingly complex management issues without increasing the cost of government. In a democratic system, these expectations

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\*The term *national parks* will be used to refer to all units of the national park system.

force changes in the priorities and methods of the National Park Service. As a consequence, we are and will be carrying out our responsibilities under very restricted budgets and with decreased numbers of employees.

Most people practicing and studying management agree that the best way for governments to accomplish complex missions with limited resources is by "steering" more and "rowing" less. Steering organizations set direction, marshal resources, assign responsibility, facilitate production, and

evaluate performance, but they do not try to accomplish all the work themselves. This does not mean that the work itself, the rowing, is not critically important. It is. However, it may be in the public interest to turn some of the rowing over to others or to ask them for help pulling the oars. This management concept is consistent with and reinforces the idea that each of our roles can be strengthened by working cooperatively with others inside and outside the National Park Service.

## The Most Important Things We Can Do

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Establish a scientific/scholarly basis for resource management decisions

Strengthen protection of park resources

Achieve sustainability in all park operations and development

Help people forge emotional, intellectual, and recreational ties with their natural and cultural heritage

Lead in a national initiative to strengthen the recognition and perpetuation of heritage resources and their public benefits

Become a more responsive, efficient, and accountable organization

Pursue maximum public benefit through contracts, cooperative agreements, contributions, and other alternative approaches to support park operations

## Establish a scientific/scholarly basis for resource management decisions

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*The most significant obstacle to operating a proactive program is the void of useable baseline data.*

Diane Sontag

Over the past 30 years more than a dozen major reviews by the National Park Service and by independent experts have concluded that park management must be guided by more scientific and scholarly knowledge. The most current and thorough of these reviews, the National Research Council's *Science and the National Parks*, reemphasizes that the problems faced by the parks today (the threats to long-term ecosystem viability caused by the myriad stresses of the 20th century) are too many and too complex to solve without the help of science. A follow-up study conducted by the National Park Service endorses those findings and recognizes the recent establishment of the National Biological Survey.

A parallel study, *Humanities and the National Parks*, also identifies research as a critical part of the National Park Service's mission and calls for greater NPS professionalization in the humanities. Both the *Science and the Parks* and the *Humanities and the Parks* reports emphasize the importance of understanding park resources in their full ecological and cultural contexts and call for extensive coordination and interaction with colleges, universities, professional organizations, and other scientific and scholarly institutions for sharing personnel, resources, and knowledge for mutual benefit.

A scientific and scholarly basis for decision making will require a base inventory of park resources and an understanding of the processes that sustain them and the threats that endanger them. Currently, fewer than 20 percent of the approximately

250 parks containing significant natural resources have complete resource inventories. In 1993 the Park Service published a guideline identifying 12 categories of natural-resource inventory requirements for park management and planning and a park-by-park schedule for meeting them over the next eight years. Prototype long-term ecological monitoring programs were recently established at four parks: Denali, Channel Islands, Shenandoah, and Great Smoky Mountains. The prototype monitoring effort gathers long-term data to evaluate resource conditions over time, allowing managers to deal effectively with a variety of threats, some of which may not appear for many years.

Systems are also being developed to inventory and monitor historic and archeological structures and sites, museum collections, cultural landscapes, and ethnographic resources. To date 16,000 of the estimated 20,000-25,000 historic and archeological structures have been inventoried, and much of the current information is inaccurate or incomplete. At the end of 1990 less than 2% of park lands had been systematically surveyed for archeological resources and about 82% of park lands had not received any level of survey at all. The *Humanities and the Parks* study recommends that comprehensive archeological and historical research, as mandated by section 110 of the National Historic Preservation Act, be a prerequisite to general park planning. It also cites research as a central responsibility of the National Park Service.

## *Desired Conditions*

*Park managers have complete and current resource inventories including information about related resources outside park boundaries. Data available from other agencies and organizations are incorporated into NPS data bases, and NPS data are shared with others. Data bases use spatial coordinates to allow for integration of natural and cultural data for geographic areas. Natural resource data include species distribution, vegetation maps, topographic maps, soils and geology maps, water resource inventories and water chemistry data, air quality analyses, and meteorological data. All museum objects are cataloged. The List of Classified Structures is complete and accurate, and archeological surveys are complete. A cultural landscapes data base provides information about the location, historical development, and current management of cultural landscapes. Resources are monitored for changes in their condition and the factors affecting them.*

*A current, comprehensive research program conducted to prevailing scientific and scholarly standards provides the National Park Service with the ability to identify and understand park resources and how they are affected by local, regional, and global influences. The NPS staff includes highly professional and nationally recognized scientists and scholars who maintain extensive professional partnerships with their counterparts in other scientific, academic, and cultural institutions. These mutually beneficial relationships ensure that quality research forms the basis for NPS preservation, planning, and educational programs and that this knowledge is broadly shared with the public.*

*Park managers understand scientific and academic information, use it in local decision making, and bring it to regional and national forums addressing topics that involve park values.*

## Strengthen protection of park resources

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*It is only a slight exaggeration that if we do not reverse the degradation of park resources, whether from theft, poaching, overuse, or external threats, the only resource managers the National Park Service is going to need are geologists because the only resources left to manage will be the rocks!*

Richard T. Gale

Failure to perpetuate park values unimpaired for the next generation would constitute a fundamental breach of the public trust and undermine the National Park Service's credibility. We know that park resources are being degraded by toxins contained in agricultural runoff, by fragmentation of native habitat, and by encroachment of development into historic scenes. We also know that increasing visitor use is degrading park resources. But little data exist to document what we are losing or how fast we are losing it, and we are often understaffed and inadequately equipped to stop the loss.

Air quality, which became the subject of an intense national debate and protection program in the early 1970s, is the most comprehensively monitored park value to date and can serve as an example of where we are now. Visibility data gathered over the past 20 years show that unimpaired

vistas had all but disappeared from most parks. At Grand Canyon, where visibility ranges from 240 miles on the few clear days to 20 miles when pollution is worst, some impairment occurs 90 percent of the time. At Great Smoky Mountains the visibility is now 20 miles or less most of the time.

Illegal uses remain major threats to the parks. At Petrified Forest, for example, an estimated 12 tons of petrified wood is stolen each year, mostly in small, easily carried pieces taken by visitors. Some previously outstanding petrified wood areas have been picked clean. In other examples, invaluable historic artifacts have been stolen from museum cases, and Anasazi pots are routinely stolen from parks and other protected federal lands for the lucrative antiquities trade.

## *Desired Conditions*

*The national parks are managed by highly qualified professionals as integrated systems of natural and cultural resources. Areas that can still reasonably and legitimately be managed as wilderness are protected as increasingly rare and valued repositories of our biological and geological heritage. Areas reflective of past and present civilizations are protected as increasingly rare and valued repositories of our cultural heritage. Parks are managed to sustain biological and cultural diversity. Biological diversity is achieved by protecting natural habitats—not just the spectacular species but also the interdependent, less obvious species and systems. Cultural diversity is achieved by recognizing the contributions of all Americans—not just the unique accomplishments and events, but also the everyday occurrences which altogether comprise our national experience.*

*Park resources are protected from overuse by visitors and from pot-hunting, poaching, trespass grazing, vandalism, theft, and other illegal activities. Consumptive uses authorized in law are managed in accordance with congressionally prescribed standards. Park managers share assistance with other agencies and organizations in protecting park-related resources outside park boundaries.*

*Regulations and other protective mechanisms such as cooperative agreements are used at the national, regional, and local levels to minimize damage to park resources by air and water pollution, dewatering, habitat fragmentation, urban encroachment, and other intrusions on natural ecosystems and cultural landscapes. Resource-management awareness is part of everyone's job and is communicated to the public both directly, through interpretive programs and chance encounters between park employees and visitors, and indirectly, by demonstrating good stewardship in all aspects of park operations.*

## Achieve sustainability in all park operations and development

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*When we use the term 'sustainability', we need to ask ourselves, "what it is we are trying to sustain?" What it comes down to is the need to sustain the ecosystems of which we are a part.*

Kathy Jope & Joe Dunstan

*Meeting this goal will require a major evolution in the way we analyze and value our actions. It will require a willingness to do our business differently; to learn and to incorporate continuously new knowledge that affects our daily operations; to make the effects on the environment a critical consideration in decisions about everything we do.*

John Reynolds

Operating and using the parks while leaving them unimpaired for enjoyment by future generations will require immediate action to establish and meet stringent standards of sustainability in all park practices. The principle of leaving parks unimpaired for future generations (the ethic of the NPS organic act) fits within the fundamental ethic of sustainability, which is to meet the needs of today without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs. Sustainability is a broad ethical construct that should guide not only how we do business within our boundaries but also how we interact with others beyond our boundaries. To ensure that park programs and operations are truly sustainable, we need to analyze the effects of our actions on entire ecosystems, cultural contexts, and the planet as a whole.

The 75th Anniversary Symposium working group on visitor use and enjoyment noted that although we do not have a

reliable knowledge base about the extent of impacts caused by park use and development, we know that some areas of some parks are overcrowded and some resources (both natural and cultural) are being harmed by use and overuse. They also noted that education, conservation, public transportation, recycling, and state-of-the-art technologies could provide significant relief to overburdened ecosystems.

The National Park Service subsequently launched a major initiative to improve the sustainability of park operations and development. In 1993 it published the *Guiding Principles of Sustainable Design*, which will serve as a starting point for analyzing sustainability in all NPS management practices. Taking care of the operational and development needs of the national park system are major programs. They are also opportunities for learning about and applying environmentally sensitive practices and demonstrating this knowledge to the public.

## *Desired Conditions*

*Park-related activities and development, whether inside or outside park boundaries, are sustainable parts of the ecosystem and cultural context, working with natural processes and enhancing cultural values.*

*Park managers understand evolving visitor patterns and how visitor use affects parks and adjacent areas. Credible, timely information and innovative planning methods provide the tools they need to make increasingly difficult decisions about which kinds and levels of use are appropriate and sustainable. Rigorous monitoring evaluates the effectiveness of decisions.*

*Development alternatives are analyzed to determine need and environmental costs. Adaptive reuse of historic structures often reduces the need for energy- and material-consuming new construction. Park facilities and infrastructure are energy-efficient and well-maintained. Park development is economically as well as ecologically sustainable. Major investments in construction or rehabilitation are preceded by a determination that long-term maintenance of the facility is a priority use of park funds.*

*Park support facilities, including visitor lodging, employee housing, and offices, are consolidated and located outside parks where feasible. Park managers actively participate with local and regional planning and development agencies to share responsibility for visitor and tourist needs. Public transportation systems provide energy-efficient, nonpolluting alternatives for visitors traveling to parks.*

*The parks use management practices (such as integrated pest management) that work with ecosystem processes, conserve water and energy, and avoid pollution. On-site power generation is accomplished with renewable energy, and public vehicles are energy efficient. The parks are demonstration areas and catalysts for reuse and recycling of a variety of materials.*

## Help people forge emotional, intellectual, and recreational ties with their natural and cultural heritage

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*Through a combined, coordinated, and integrated approach of public educational outreach and interpretation, we have a far better chance of connecting, projecting, and instilling the values of our shared heritage.*

Lincoln Fairchild

*If we cannot reach and gain the support of the public, particularly elementary level students, we will have no public support in the future.*

Robert Andrew

So long as they reflect our society's enduring values and remain accessible and meaningful to our diverse population, the national parks are excellent settings for experiencing the emotional bonds, intellectual understanding, and recreational renewal that can greatly enrich our quality of life. Such personal experiences in parks can help people gain a sense of place and a stronger sense of history and national identity, and encourage them to take greater responsibility for protecting their heritage and passing it on to future generations. To this end, the National Park Service must continue to provide high quality visitor experiences. The agency that pioneered campfire talks needs to find new ways of reaching more visitors and

leaving them with a profound impression of the intrinsic value of parks to their lives. Our ability to provide quality experiences while protecting park resources will depend on knowing more about our visitors and their interaction with parks.

We must also reach beyond park boundaries in helping people connect with the values celebrated in all parks, natural areas, prehistoric and historic sites and districts, and other special places. The stronger our message and the more widely and effectively we can convey it, the broader and deeper will be the support for the conservation of heritage resources, including the national park system.

## *Desired Conditions*

*Visitors find ample opportunities to enjoy the national parks in their own diverse ways. All avenues for getting in touch with the natural world and with people's cultural heritage are encouraged so long as they are not illegal, inappropriate, or harmful to resources. The use of park resources for purposes important to people's cultural traditions and for resource-based recreation is accommodated to the greatest extent possible.*

*A wide cross-section of the U.S. population and many foreign visitors come to the parks. Their visits are supported by improved transportation systems, accessible facilities and programs, and efficient visitor services. People planning to visit parks receive advance information that helps them organize their trips around their desired experiences. NPS professionals systematically analyze public expectations and visitors' satisfaction with their park experiences.*

*Visitors learn about the significance of each park through high quality interpretive programs. Compelling stories convey the essence and diversity of natural ecosystems and of cultural experiences and achievements, including minority history. These stories help people gain important insights into who they are as members of local, regional, national, and global communities. Parks are places of intellectual growth—where visitors can gain clearer understandings of nature and culture, the ecological and social values of parks, the interrelationships of natural and cultural systems, and resource management strategies. Information used in interpretive and educational programs meets the highest standards of scholarly research.*

*Citizens can learn about their heritage without a park visit, through school programs, books, films, computer networks, traveling exhibits, television programs, and other media. Special emphasis is placed on serving children, who learn lessons that help them understand their heritage and enhance the quality of their lives, and who hopefully become life-long supporters of heritage resource conservation. NPS employees work with communities and schools to develop goals for teaching about heritage resources, and they assist teachers in using parks and other special places as classrooms.*

## Lead in a national initiative to strengthen the recognition and perpetuation of heritage resources and their public benefits

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*NPS can play a leadership role in preserving natural, scenic, recreational, and cultural resources without owning these resources.*

Brent Glass

*What good would it do society (or all the other plant and animal species in the world) if we were able to protect one or two percent of the nation's natural areas, when the other 98 or 99 percent of the nation's natural values declined?*

John Byrne

*The Indigenous American sees western science and ideology as having strong capabilities for failure. How else can you explain the disappearance of vast ecosystems from the face of the earth?*

Herbert Anungazuk

As the interaction and interdependence among people and resources becomes tighter and tighter, decisions about preserving heritage resources and providing for their enjoyment will inevitably be folded into larger decisions about whole ecosystems, cultural themes and contexts, geographic landscapes, and socioeconomic regions. In the words of Secretary Babbitt, "The day of meeting our obligations to the land by creating another national park is gone. Ecosystems can't survive behind bars."

Congress has long recognized the value of a broad base of historic, natural, and outdoor recreation resources to society's well being, and the National Park Service has long administered programs for the preservation of significant

resources and delivery of services outside as well as inside the national park system. These programs have received varying priority over the years. Now as we face tighter budgets and staffing limitations and reconsider the roles and methods of government, we need to reevaluate the direction of these programs.

In this time of transition, the best approach to the National Park Service's role as advocate and partner is to reorganize our work and thinking around broader systems, emphasizing how various resources are interconnected and how we can work together with those responsible for other resources and values.

## Desired Conditions

*Nationally significant sites that represent the nation's diverse natural and cultural heritage and are suitable for the highest level of preservation are managed by the National Park Service as part of the national park system. Nationally significant sites in other ownership are managed as national historic and natural landmarks, national wildlife refuges, national rivers, national recreational trails, or units of the national wilderness preservation system. The national parks are managed as parts of broader ecological and cultural systems. Working cooperatively, park managers and their regional counterparts find ways to preserve ecological and cultural values and to assist people in enjoying the scientific, educational, inspirational, and recreational benefits of protected natural and cultural resources and recreational open space, while meeting human needs for social development and appropriate economic growth. The economic and other impacts of parks, resource conservation, and tourism are considered in management decisions.*

*Other significant river corridors, trail corridors, landscapes, and properties listed on the National Register of Historic Places are managed by other public agencies and through partnerships to preserve and enhance their ecological, cultural, and recreational values, in many cases while accommodating compatible private residential, commercial, and industrial uses. Sometimes the various units of the national park system form a prominent core from which NPS employees reach out to participate in cooperative regional decision making. In other instances the National Park Service assists in interagency or public/private-sector planning efforts to help define and perpetuate heritage values and sustainable lifestyles across broad geographic regions. The cooperative planning and management of natural resources focuses on ecosystem-based management. Cultural resources are addressed in terms of themes and contexts. Recreational resources are addressed in terms of large landscapes, greenways, and cooperative delivery of recreational opportunities. Some areas or landscapes with multiple resource values are planned and managed cooperatively as heritage partnership areas.*

*The NPS historic preservation, outdoor recreation, and natural conservation assistance programs advance the preservation and development of resources and geographic areas of high national priority by bringing together the diverse strengths of park management, governmental assistance and authority at the federal, state and local levels, and private-sector contributions. The assistance programs also strengthen cooperative conservation initiatives throughout the nation by supporting public and private agencies that have demonstrated a strong commitment to conserving and preserving significant natural, cultural, and recreational resources and on serving the recreation needs of communities throughout the nation. Such initiatives strengthen the nation's conservation ethic, serve all segments of the population close-to-home, and integrate with other public and private initiatives aimed at improving the quality of life for all Americans.*

*The National Park Service represents the United States in international forums addressing the preservation of heritage values throughout the world. It participates in cooperative efforts to protect ecosystems that cross its international boundaries, and it brings its considerable resources to joint ventures among the nations of the world to share information, expertise, and technology in the preservation of their shared heritage.*

## Become a more responsive, efficient, and accountable organization

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*One of the biggest weaknesses (we have)...is the lack of coherence, clarity, and accountability in the management of the NPS.*

Bill Halainen

*Each administrative technician in each small field area must know roughly 21 different computer systems. Each of these overlaps others.*

George Turnbull

Hierarchical, regulation-shackled, faceless organizations can no longer successfully deal with the rapid changes occurring around them. Authority and accountability must be delegated to the front lines, where decisions are made daily to sustain complex networks of interrelationships among people and resources.

The National Performance Review adopts decentralization of decision-making power as the government's standard operating procedure. It commits all federal agencies to cutting red tape and to streamlining operations through delegation and consolidation wherever possible.

The National Park Service needs to develop leaders adept at implementing the principles of the National Performance Review and other mandates. Their chief tasks will be to provide employees with a strong sense of mission, access to timely, accurate information, and abundant opportunities to work cooperatively with each other and with numerous partners in achieving a set of agreed-upon goals.

Under this system the quality of NPS operations and programs will depend on a highly professional, diverse, and dedicated work force skilled in all aspects of our future roles. Retaining such a work force will require a strong commitment by the National Park Service to provide a quality work environment supportive of all aspects of an employee's life within the particular circumstances NPS employment requires.

The National Park Service needs to periodically assess its organizational structure to ensure it is aligned with changing needs and priorities. During the next several years we expect major changes in the way we do business as the National Park Service streamlines and moves toward more collaborative management. These changes will also entail shifts in the organization's culture, as employees adapt to increasing responsibility, greater cooperation with others, and results-oriented accountability.

### *Desired Conditions*

*The National Park Service is guided and bonded by strong national leadership. Each employee understands and supports the agency's mission and organization and his or her role as part of the whole. Leadership decisions are based on how well they serve a shared vision and for their implications for policy, legislation, budget, human resources, and park and program operations. Each unit plans strategically for carrying out its part of the agency mission.*

*A diverse, professional work force continuously adapts to the agency's changing needs, including current needs for greater scientific and technical expertise, enhanced skills in working with others, and greater facility in communicating with a diverse population. Career-long learning opportunities encourage employees to remain professionally and technically current and to adapt to changing work needs. The work environment supports innovation, experimentation, and calculated risk taking and reinforces teamwork. Employees with leadership potential are actively recruited and trained through planned developmental experiences that prepare them to lead both as managers and as specialists. All employees are treated equitably and appropriately. The work environment is safe and healthy. Managers are supportive of employees' personal and family lives and considerate of many employees' concerns about adequate housing, child and elderly care, isolation, minority issues, and dual career opportunities. Salaries are competitive and include adjustments for high-cost areas.*

*Wherever appropriate, authority is delegated from Washington to the parks, programs, and partners. Managers place less emphasis on regulation and more on defining and measuring desired results. Administrative systems support field offices and do not burden them with duplicative or cumbersome requirements. In turn, park and program operations are conducted effectively and efficiently with tracking and full accountability by NPS employees and managers that their activities are preserving resources and creating value for the public. The organization rewards employees who demonstrate that they have created value through this system. Expenditures reflect servicewide priorities, and major accomplishments are communicated to Congress and the public.*

Pursue maximum public benefit through contracts, cooperative agreements, contributions, and other alternative approaches to support park operations

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*Partnerships are not necessarily easy: they require thick skins, forgiveness, clear communications, trust, shared visions, and back-up systems in case of failure. From a management point of view, they may seem much messier and difficult than traditional clear-cut, boundary-driven land management. But when they succeed, the sense of public ownership, inclusion, cost-effectiveness, and community empowerment are well worth it.*

Steve Elkinton

In today's environment of deficit reduction and flat federal budgets the National Park Service can produce greater public value by leveraging limited federal dollars with contributions from other sectors of society. Partnerships, user fees, concession contracts, matching funds, endowments, and use of volunteers are all examples of how the National Park Service works with others to accomplish more than it could accomplish alone. This is not the only reason the National Park Service seeks to work cooperatively with others. Protection of the national parks often requires consensus-building and coordinated action on a regional scale. The National Park Service also plays a major advocacy and technical assistance role in the protection of

heritage resources nationwide. Independent of those considerations, however, the National Park Service can help produce additional benefits for the public by marshalling others' resources to augment its own. This does not mean neglecting the government's responsibilities to protect public resources and provide for their enjoyment; but the Park Service does not necessarily have to do all the work, only see that the work gets done. From this point of view we need to take a more objective look at all our operations, reviewing what only we can do, what others can help us do, and what others can do for us with proper direction and oversight.

## *Desired Conditions*

*The National Park Service is a good and valuable partner, able and willing to share authority and benefits as well as responsibilities and costs. The agency cooperates with other federal and state land-managing agencies to accomplish work and exchanges professional and technical assistance with professional and scholarly institutions. It cooperates with federal and local jobs programs, including public service and work-release programs, to help accomplish work in parks while meeting needs for job training and public service opportunities. It is attuned to opportunities to acquire surplus or confiscated equipment from other agencies. It contracts with concessioners to provide quality visitor services and a fair return to the government in exchange for an opportunity for reasonable profit to the concessioner. It enters into agreements with cooperating associations to distribute quality educational materials to park visitors for fair market value. It marshals and appropriately recognizes the efforts of volunteers and interns to augment work done by NPS employees.*

*Every park has active friends groups that understand and support the park's purpose, goals, and actions. Federal funds are used to leverage other monies through challenge cost-share grants. The National Park Service works with partners to develop packages attractive for donations. It acquires more authority to participate in fund-raising and develops a greater expertise in that area.*

*Visitors and other park users pay a fair share of the cost of serving them, in line with other costs for travel and recreation and with safeguards to ensure that no one is denied access to a national park because of an inability to pay. Revenues gained from user fees are returned to the parks to help sustain park operations.*



As the nation's principal conservation agency, the Department of the Interior has responsibility for most of our nationally owned public lands and natural resources. This includes fostering sound use of our land and water resources; protecting our fish, wildlife, and biological diversity; preserving the environmental and cultural values of our national parks and historical places; and providing for the enjoyment of life through outdoor recreation. The department assesses our energy and mineral resources and works to ensure that their development is in the best interests of all our people by encouraging stewardship and citizen participation in their care. The department also has a major responsibility for American Indian reservation communities and for people who live in island territories under U.S. administration.

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