Natural Resources and National Parks: A Decade of Accomplishments and Our Complex Challenges Ahead

One hundred years ago, America faced the prospect of dramatic changes to our natural heritage because of the Industrial Revolution and the rush to develop natural resources. America met this challenge by establishing parks, wildlife refuges, and other protected areas to protect the health and welfare of all citizens. Our forebears also established a new generation of directors to manage federal lands for the protection of imperiled resources.

Today, we face a similar challenge. Climate change, loss of biodiversity, and water quality degradation because of widespread human industrial and agricultural use of river basins require action, and action requires organization. Confronted by a rapidly changing agenda, the National Park Service must provide leadership for addressing high-priority parks now.

In the coming decade, we will develop guiding principles and advance stewardship and science to meet the complex challenges we face in protecting the national heritage of America for the 21st century. With the completion of the National Park Service Centennial in 2016, the National Park Service will usher in a new era of stewardship and stewardship with an environmental ethic and a strong commitment to science. These values enhance our stewardship responsibilities.

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This Action Plan expands the basis of the Natural Resource Challenge. This is the first step in a Plan that will help park managers respond to climate change, manage invasive species, and conserve cultural heritage.

The Natural Resource Challenge has improved the capacity of many programs to provide regional, network, and Servicewide leadership for climate change activities in small parks, invasive species, and cultural heritage. Funding increases approved by Congress from the 2001 Budget Act provide additional funding for climate change, invasive species, and cultural heritage. Congres...