



Celebrating Our Centennial: 100 Years of Caring for Our National Parks

America's National Park Service (NPS) will observe its 100th birthday on August 25, 2016, exactly a century after President Woodrow Wilson signed the act that created it as a new federal agency within the Department of the Interior. Its mission was defined, in part, "to conserve the scenery and the natural and historic objects and the wildlife therein and to provide for the enjoyment of the same in such a manner and by such means as will leave them unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations."

When first formed, some 40 national parks and monuments were assembled under the management of the NPS. Now 100 years later, we celebrate the creation of this dedicated service which has managed America's incredible wealth of scenic, historic, geologic, cultural and recreational resources ever since, becoming a model for similar efforts worldwide. A multitude of special centennial events are being planned to attract all Americans into these parklands and historic sites, in order to familiarize them personally with and build their pride in these diverse treasures, of which we are all part owners.

What can be expected:

- Each individual NPS unit is developing a schedule of special activities and events to observe the centennial.
- To help get the word out about all the great places there are to

discover, the NPS has developed "Find Your Park," designed to connect and create the next generation of park visitors, supporters, and advocates on a national level.

- The Every Kid in a Park initiative will allow all fourthgrade students and their families to visit national parks and all other nationally protected lands for free.
- Congress has allocated \$10 million in matching funds for a "Centennial Challenge Program" for public-private partnerships marking the NPS Centennial.
- The National Endowment for the Arts is working with the NPS on an "Imagine Your Parks" funding collaboration to encourage greater public engagement with and appreciation of art in relation to the work and mission of our national park system.
- Brand USA and MacGillivray Freeman Films are producing a

film for giant screen theaters that celebrates the country's national parks and other federally-managed lands in time for the centennial year.

- Travel-industry foundation Tourism Cares has launched a "Centennial Tour Operator Program" designed to engage commercial operators in giving back and encouraging their guests to support the parks.

It is important to recognize that these and other initiatives are not just about a one-day, or even a one-year birthday celebration, but about the development of an even greater emphasis on and commitment to conservation, preservation and stewardship of our national wonders and heritage for the next century and beyond. There is most definitely a place for you personally to participate in assuring the success of these efforts.