

THE NATIONAL PARK SERVICE'S FUNDING NEEDS

HEARING
BEFORE THE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON NATIONAL PARKS
OF THE
COMMITTEE ON
ENERGY AND NATURAL RESOURCES
UNITED STATES SENATE
ONE HUNDRED NINTH CONGRESS
FIRST SESSION
TO
REVIEW THE NATIONAL PARK SERVICE'S FUNDING NEEDS FOR
ADMINISTRATION AND MANAGEMENT OF THE NATIONAL PARK SYSTEM

MAY 10, 2005



Printed for the use of the
Committee on Energy and Natural Resources

U.S. GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE

22-740 PDF

WASHINGTON : 2005

For sale by the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office
Internet: bookstore.gpo.gov Phone: toll free (866) 512-1800; DC area (202) 512-1800
Fax: (202) 512-2250 Mail: Stop SSOP, Washington, DC 20402-0001

COMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND NATURAL RESOURCES

PETE V. DOMENICI, *New Mexico, Chairman*

LARRY E. CRAIG, Idaho	JEFF BINGAMAN, New Mexico
CRAIG THOMAS, Wyoming	DANIEL K. AKAKA, Hawaii
LAMAR ALEXANDER, Tennessee	BYRON L. DORGAN, North Dakota
LISA MURKOWSKI, Alaska	RON WYDEN, Oregon
RICHARD M. BURR, North Carolina,	TIM JOHNSON, South Dakota
MEL MARTINEZ, Florida	MARY L. LANDRIEU, Louisiana
JAMES M. TALENT, Missouri	DIANNE FEINSTEIN, California
CONRAD BURNS, Montana	MARIA CANTWELL, Washington
GEORGE ALLEN, Virginia	JON S. CORZINE, New Jersey
GORDON SMITH, Oregon	KEN SALAZAR, Colorado
JIM BUNNING, Kentucky	

ALEX FLINT, *Staff Director*

JUDITH K. PENSABENE, *Chief Counsel*

ROBERT M. SIMON, *Democratic Staff Director*

SAM E. FOWLER, *Democratic Chief Counsel*

SUBCOMMITTEE ON NATIONAL PARKS

CRAIG THOMAS, *Wyoming, Chairman*

LAMAR ALEXANDER, *Tennessee, Vice Chairman*

GEORGE ALLEN, Virginia	DANIEL K. AKAKA, Hawaii
RICHARD M. BURR, North Carolina	RON WYDEN, Oregon
MEL MARTINEZ, Florida	MARY L. LANDRIEU, Louisiana
GORDON SMITH, Oregon	JON S. CORZINE, New Jersey
	KEN SALAZAR, Colorado

PETE V. DOMENICI and JEFF BINGAMAN are Ex Officio Members of the Subcommittee

THOMAS LILLIE, *Professional Staff Member*

DAVID BROOKS, *Democratic Senior Counsel*

CONTENTS

STATEMENTS

	Page
Akaka, Hon. Daniel K., U.S. Senator from Hawaii	2
Arnberger, Robert, on behalf of the Coalition of National Park Services Retirees, Tucson, AZ	29
Mainella, Fran P., Director, National Park Service; accompanied by Steve Martin, Deputy Director, National Park Service, and Bruce Sheaffer, Comptroller, National Park Service, Department of the Interior	4
Moore, Greg, Executive Director, Golden Gate National Parks Conservancy, San Francisco, CA	20
Salazar, Hon. Ken, U.S. Senator from Colorado	4
Thomas, Hon. Craig, U.S. Senator from Wyoming	1
Werst, Lee, President, Association of National Park Rangers, Orem, UT	24

APPENDIXES

APPENDIX I

Responses to additional questions	39
---	----

APPENDIX II

Additional material submitted for the record	53
--	----

THE NATIONAL PARK SERVICE'S FUNDING NEEDS

TUESDAY, MAY 10, 2005

U.S. SENATE,
SUBCOMMITTEE ON NATIONAL PARKS,
COMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND NATURAL RESOURCES,
Washington, DC.

The subcommittee met, pursuant to notice, at 2:38 p.m., in room SD-366, Dirksen Senate Office Building, Hon. Craig Thomas presiding.

OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. CRAIG THOMAS, U.S. SENATOR FROM WYOMING

Senator THOMAS. We had a little confusion today in terms of—had a little cancellation in the meeting and then brought it back together. So in any event, we are here and I am sure some more of our folks will be here a little bit later.

At any rate, good afternoon. I want to welcome Director Fran Mainella, from the National Park Service, and other witnesses to the subcommittee hearing today.

Our purpose for this hearing is to receive testimony on the National Park Service funding needs for administration and management of the National Park System. And, of course, this is an appropriate time to talk about that in that the appropriations are being made now.

This hearing came about at the request of several of my colleagues on the subcommittee who are not here yet. Despite budget hearings, members made it clear they would like to hear more about the National Park Service budget and have an opportunity to ask questions.

During these fiscally restrictive times, many Federal budgets have been facing, of course, tough budgetary constraints. The National Park Service is no exception.

A number of factors have added to the budgetary challenge, such as additional security requirements placed on the parks since 2001, keeping pace with the mandatory cost of living adjustments, backlogged maintenance projects, and increased utility costs. These and other demands, of course, have all taken a toll on the effectiveness of the budget and—and making it more difficult sometimes.

The National Park Service consists of 388 units, with 23,546 employees, with a budget of \$2.6 billion in 2004. That equates to more funds per employee per acre and per visitor than any time in the history of the National Park Service.

The National Park Service has requested a total discretionary budget authority of \$2.249 billion for 2006, a small reduction from the other one, a net increase of \$50 million, however, compared to last year's appropriation.

This includes \$1.7 billion for operations. The administration has implemented an inventory and data system for the maintenance of the park infrastructure. The system allows managers to prioritize maintenance requirements and track progress toward addressing the maintenance backlog. They have also implemented organizational changes with a goal of improving efficiency, reducing overhead, lowering operating costs at the administrative level.

We are here today to learn more about these changes and the potential savings and the potential needs in the future. Again, I would like to thank the witnesses for being here and look forward to your testimony. Welcome.

Senator, do you have a statement?

**STATEMENT OF HON. DANIEL K. AKAKA, U.S. SENATOR
FROM HAWAII**

Senator AKAKA. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I am happy to be here to join you, and thank you for scheduling this hearing to review the funding needs for the National Park Service.

An article in The New York Times stated, and I quote, "America's national parks expect record crowds this summer amid a widening debate over complaints that a lack of money is causing a growing and permanent deterioration of the parks." The article notes that although the administration proposed a 2-percent cut in the Park Service's budget, administration officials stated that—and I quote, "While efforts to limit the Federal deficit have limited spending and required some projects to be deferred, they contend that park services have not been shortchanged."

The article I quoted from was printed on May 1, 1988, just over 17 years ago. More than anything, it highlights the ongoing funding problem that the National Park Service and most other Federal land management agencies have been facing for several years now.

This year the President is proposing to cut the National Park Service appropriation by about 2 percent, with most of the cut reflected in the proposal to zero out funding for the land and water conservation fund State grant program.

The administration is continuing to propose modest increases in the primary operating account for the Park Service but even those increases will not keep up with inflation and other mandatory costs, such as annual cost of living adjustments and security needs.

Mr. Chairman, I was pleased to join you in a letter this week to the Appropriations Committee seeking an increase of \$100 million in the Park Service's operating account above the President's request.

We are all aware of the difficulty in trying to overcome the deferred maintenance backlog. In addition, there are other unmet funding needs that, in my opinion, are even more critical, including resource protection, visitor interpretation and educational programs, and unfilled staff positions.

As we said in our letter to the Appropriations Committee, the proposed budget leaves no room for new programmatic needs at

any of the 388 units of the National Park System, nor is it likely to cover the entirety of the cost of living salary adjustments.

As a result, this budget will not sufficiently meet the operating needs of the parks for the coming year. I hope that a hearing such as this will help to draw attention to some of the more pressing issues for the Park Service. This is an important first step for ensuring that in another 18 years, we are not discussing these same problems.

I would like to quickly highlight a few additional concerns I have about the budget. Since September 2001, the Park Service has had heightened Homeland Security responsibilities. I am told that these additional security costs, which now total almost \$40 million each year, are not reimbursed by the Department of Homeland Security and are having a significant impact on other Park Service funding needs.

I am also concerned about the level of funding for park roads in the surface transportation authorization bill currently under consideration in the Senate. Both the House and Senate versions of that bill provide funding for park roads far below the amount proposed by the administration.

Since the road money constitutes a significant portion of the proposed funding to address the maintenance backlog, more resources will be required to ensure that parks have the necessary infrastructure to meet the demands placed on them by visitors.

And, Mr. Chairman, I have run through my statement here only to come to this point where I would want to extend my warm welcome and aloha—

Ms. MAINELLA. Aloha.

Senator AKAKA [continuing]. To Fran Mainella, the director of the National Park Service, as well as to our other distinguished witnesses who will testify this afternoon.

Fran, it is good to see you here again. And there are so many good memories that we started with when you first came on, and I cherish that. I look forward to continuing to work with you.

Unfortunately, I have a scheduling conflict, Mr. Chairman, this afternoon and will not be able to stay for the full hearing. But I will submit my questions for the record.

But, Fran, I want to wish you well.

Ms. MAINELLA. Thank you, sir.

Senator AKAKA. You look so good.

Ms. MAINELLA. Thank you. And you are such a supporter of parks. We really appreciate it.

Senator AKAKA. Yes. And thank you for what you have been doing. What I said, too, tells you that we have challenges ahead that we will have to deal with. And together we will do the best we can on this in helping the parks and the people of our country.

Senator THOMAS. Thank you, sir.

I guess I do not know how to welcome you. We do not say aloha much in Wyoming.

Ms. MAINELLA. Aloha.

Senator THOMAS. Howdy, maybe.

Ms. MAINELLA. Howdy.

Senator THOMAS. Senator Salazar.

**STATEMENT OF HON. KEN SALAZAR, U.S. SENATOR
FROM COLORADO**

Senator SALAZAR. Thank you, Chairman Thomas and Senator Akaka. I just want to congratulate you. I have followed your history over a long time.

Ms. MAINELLA. Thank you, Senator.

Senator SALAZAR. I have had the opportunity of working with you on parks issues in my State, in Colorado, and around the country.

Ms. MAINELLA. Yes, sir.

Senator SALAZAR. And I am delighted that you are at the helm.

Ms. MAINELLA. Thank you, sir. Thank you.

Senator SALAZAR. Thank you.

Ms. MAINELLA. You have done wonderful in Colorado. Thank you.

Senator THOMAS. Well, Madam Director, your statement will be in full in the record.

Ms. MAINELLA. Yes, sir.

Senator THOMAS. And if you would like to go ahead, please.

**STATEMENT OF FRAN P. MAINELLA, DIRECTOR, NATIONAL
PARK SERVICE, DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR; ACCOMPANIED BY STEVE MARTIN, DEPUTY DIRECTOR, NATIONAL
PARK SERVICE, AND BRUCE SHEAFFER, COMPTROLLER, NATIONAL
PARK SERVICE**

Ms. MAINELLA. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, again. And thank you, members of the subcommittee, for holding this hearing, and particularly because you are focusing on funding needs and for the management of the National Park Service.

But I do want to thank you right off the bat for the support that you have given through not only your efforts from authorizing areas, but also in support of the budget, particularly the 2005 budget that went through that the President and you, as Congress, have supported.

You gave us the largest operational increase in the history of the National Park Service in the 2005 budget, and I just want to thank you for that effort.

And also you have continued to help us sustain ourselves at a 96 percent satisfaction level, and this is what the visitors are telling us about our parks.

Also, I think it also is reflective of our visitor satisfaction in the sense that our visitation last year went up 4 percent, which is substantial. And that is 277 million visitors visiting annually in our national parks.

Another area I think that is very important is our volunteers. We have had volunteers in the national parks since their very beginning. And we were very proud that we had an increase of 14 percent last year in our volunteerism. So we now have 140,000 of those volunteers out there. Senator, you saw some just recently in one of our parks when you were able to be out there to visit.

Also, our national parks provide annual economic benefits to this Nation of \$11 billion annually and creation of 226,000 jobs.

The President has encouraged us to continue to work for better care of the resources, but also to make sure our visitors have a wonderful experience.

One of the things that we have been working on in this past year has been, as mentioned earlier, operations, sustaining operations.

That is the cost of what it takes to put those rangers out there to greet visitors, to clean those restrooms, to make sure that the parks are open, and for day-to-day operational needs of the Park Service. And again, the 2005 budget stepped us forward substantially.

And the 2006 budget, what it has meant for us is an increase of about \$51 million additionally again in the operations, and it covers the salaries, benefits, and fixed costs of all the employees of the National Park Service. That has been one of our challenges in the past. We have not always had that. And by the President stepping forward, and we ask you to help support that effort, you will be able to help make sure that our staff are out there able to provide the opportunities for resource protection and also visitor enjoyment.

And as you are probably aware, the majority of our funding goes directly to the parks. And we are very proud of that. We have a very small amount that ever goes—that covers the Washington or regional offices.

Also, this budget continues to help us improve on the condition of our assets. For example, it is—with this budget request, assuming that the transportation funding of \$320 million for roads in national parks are met, we will then be able to achieve the \$4.9 billion that the President indicated he would like to see us spend to address the maintenance issues.

As you all know, maintenance is dynamic. It is always underway. There are always issues that are out there for us, so it is a continued effort for us. But we are making a huge step forward with this budget.

Also, in the 2004 budget we are continuing to—through the 2004 budget, we have been able to achieve over 4,000 facility improvements, including trails, roads, et cetera. But through 2005, and now as in our request for 2006, we are continuing to further enhance that by requesting \$1.1 billion to help us on all that maintenance improvements.

Through the maintenance history of what we have been able to do through 2005—excuse me, through 2004, has been to, for the first time ever, know where all the facilities are that we have in our national parks. When I came on as director in 2001, we did not know that.

We also did not know what condition they were in. And we now have that information, and we are able to make better management decisions of where do we place our money and how do we move forward.

And what I am probably the most proud about in the maintenance is we have tripled since 2001 the amount we are spending to do what is called cyclic maintenance, which is the preventive maintenance so we hope we will not be in the positions of having a large backlog in the future.

Another area, though, that we continue to work on is making sure that we are doing all the management improvements at home that we can do so within our National Park Service.

One of the areas that we have been working on, of course, is one I know very close to this committee's heart, which is the concession backlog. We are working and will have achieved at the end of this calendar year 477 of the 600 contracts will have been addressed. We still have another 100 ahead of us, but we will be working on that over the next year. But we are moving forward.

Other things that we have done, we have created a park scorecard, where we actually score our parks, not only in need—what their needs are—but what are they doing in terms of using the tools that we provided, the management facility assessments, but also what are they doing to leverage dollars. We want to reward parks that are being creative and innovative.

We are also working on our core operations analysis so that we actually know and it will help our funds group. And I think you will hear from some of those folks in a little while, to better understand what is core to the operations of the park in order to—the basic interpretation in all of the things that we do, resource protection, but what is also necessary for us to maybe make it an even greater experience. And our funds groups can help us with that.

The third area we have worked on is partnership projects, being able to do more in partnership and making sure that those are done in a way that is friendly to the resource and friendly to the partners, as well as to the park. And we had to put some high level systems in place to better help us manage them.

What we look forward to in the future is we are going to continue to be able to work well and serve these resources and make sure that we are doing the business of the national parks in a way that you can all be proud.

I know my time has come to an end. So in closing I just would like to say that even with record funding and responsible stewardship, challenges always remain.

But you can see what we are trying to do. We are trying to work smarter and work more efficiently in meeting those challenges. With your help, the budget that you helped us with in 2005 and with hopefully your concurrence with the present budget of 2006, we will continue to move forward.

I have great employees, great volunteers, great partners. They are there to help us, assist in all that we do.

And we are moving forward toward our vision for 2016, which is our 100th anniversary, so we are beginning to prepare ourselves for that.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I also have Steve Martin, my new deputy, with me and also Bruce Sheaffer to help in answering any questions, if they may join me?

Senator THOMAS. Fine. Well, thank you very much.

Ms. MAINELLA. Thank you.

Senator THOMAS. We appreciate your being here.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Mainella follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF FRAN P. MAINELLA, DIRECTOR, NATIONAL PARK SERVICE,
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Mr. Chairman, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today at this oversight hearing on the National Park Service's funding needs for administration and management of the National Park System. This system consists of 388 national parks and other designated units, covering 88 million acres of land throughout the United States and its territories, and conserving a broad and diverse array of natural and cultural resources. Last year, visitation increased at national park units to 277 million.

The fundamental approach that President Bush has taken toward the administration of the National Park System has been to promote better care of the resources under our stewardship while slowing the growth of responsibilities of the National Park Service so that the demand for funds does not grow faster than the available monies. In taking this approach, the Administration has focused on reducing the deferred maintenance backlog in our parks, assuring sufficient operating funds for parks, and instituting a range of management improvements to enable the National Park Service to do more with available resources.

OVERVIEW OF FUNDING

The priorities of the Administration for the National Park Service are expressed in the FY 2006 budget request, which totals about \$2.2 billion in Department of the Interior appropriations and \$320 million in Department of Transportation appropriations. More than 70 percent of that funding is devoted to managing the National Park System, not including the cost of undertaking major construction or rehabilitation projects or acquiring land. For FY 2005, Congress provided a net increase of about \$64 million for the operation of the National Park System, which resulted in an average increase to park base budgets this year of approximately 6 percent. The FY 2006 budget request would build on last year's substantial growth by increasing operations funding by \$50.5 million above the FY 2005 enacted level, allowing for, among other things, increases for pay, benefits, and other fixed costs.

One of the major challenges the National Park Service has faced in recent years has been the need for more security. After the September 11 attacks, the National Park Service began focusing more law enforcement and security resources on icon parks, parks along the U.S. border, and NPS units that include infrastructure such as dams and reservoirs. Since 2001, the overall operational base level of funding for NPS law enforcement and security has increased 25 percent. Additional sums are being spent to improve the physical security of the parks that are considered more vulnerable to terrorist activity.

The operation of the National Park System is enhanced substantially through non-appropriated funds and non-governmental services. In FY 2006, we anticipate receiving about \$160 million in revenue from recreation fees, National Park Pass fees, and transportation fees, and about \$38 million from concessions fees. The NPS also receives a great deal of financial and in-kind support from cooperating associations, friends' groups, and other partnership entities. Many parks benefit tremendously from the work done by volunteers, which increased by 14 percent in 2004, when we saw 140,000 Americans serving as volunteers in our parks.

MAINTENANCE BACKLOG

The FY 2006 budget request meets the President's goal of investing \$4.9 billion over five years to address the deferred maintenance backlog in our parks. The FY 2006 amount toward this goal is \$1.1 billion. It includes \$717 million for facility maintenance and construction in NPS appropriations, \$320 million for park roads within the Department of Transportation's Federal Lands Highway Program, and an estimated \$108 million in funding dedicated to maintenance from recreational fees. Park roads funding, which would bring 80 percent of park roads into good or excellent condition, depends upon full funding of the President's request and enactment of the Administration's proposed reauthorization of the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21).

Through 2004, with the funding requested by the Administration and provided by Congress, NPS has undertaken over 4,000 infrastructure and facility improvement projects nationwide. As a result, visitors are seeing improved trails, more accessible campgrounds, rehabilitated visitor centers, better roads, stabilized historic structures, and reduced environmental threats through improved drinking water and sewage processing systems. An increased focus on cyclic maintenance will help ensure that recent improvements will be adequately maintained.

In addition to promoting more funding for maintenance, the Administration has also focused on the management of facilities. The NPS has developed a comprehensive asset management strategy that has enabled the NPS, for the first time in its history, to inventory its assets and measure the condition of its facilities. During the past three years, NPS has produced a comprehensive asset inventory and established a NPS-wide baseline for facility conditions. We now have preliminary condition assessments for all 388 units, and we anticipate having comprehensive condition assessments for all of them by the end of 2006. This management tool will enable NPS to establish performance goals using a Facility Condition Index and target funds to the highest priority needs.

OTHER MANAGEMENT IMPROVEMENTS

The high priority that the Administration has placed on improving management of the National Park System is helping us meet the needs we face in administering this system. In addition to improving facility management, as described above, we have been implementing other changes that will have a huge, long-term positive impact on our ability to continue to provide good customer service to our visitors.

One area in which we have made improvement is in our concessions program. Passage of the Concessions Management Improvement Act of 1998, which introduced more competition into the concessions contracting process, generated a dramatic change in the way in which the concessions program is conducted.

Five years ago, the NPS concessions program was in poor shape. The program had been criticized in numerous reports by the Department's Inspector General, the Government Accountability Office, and outside auditors, and it faced a huge backlog of expired or soon-to-be-expired contracts. For the first time in NPS history, the NPS needed to award almost all of the approximately 600 concession contracts.

In response, we conducted a top-to-bottom review and engaged PricewaterhouseCoopers to bring best practices to our efforts and develop protocols for contracting and contract oversight. We began to professionalize our workforce by hiring staff with graduate business degrees and developing training courses for NPS personnel. Since 2001, with the assistance of four top business consultants, we have awarded 322 contracts and expect to award another 125 by the end of this year, bringing the total to 447. This will reduce our backlog to approximately 100 contracts.

The change has not been easy for concessioners or for NPS personnel, and there are still issues that remain unresolved, but we now have a much more business-like program. We are beginning to see a real improvement in visitor services and a better return to the Federal government from concession franchise fees as well as improved maintenance of facilities often required in concession contracts.

The NPS has also improved the way we manage partnership construction projects. For the last several years, we faced a growing problem of well-meaning organizations that wanted to partner with us on building new facilities in parks, usually visitor centers that would ultimately require a larger Federal contribution not only for the project's construction, but also for the cost of maintaining the new facility. Over the last year, the NPS has undertaken a complete inventory of all partnership construction projects of more than \$1 million and implemented a comprehensive project review process that will ensure that projects are mission-essential and achievable. As elements of this process, the NPS has instituted service-wide training, a project tracking system, and an accountability system that will be incorporated into the performance plans of regional directors and superintendents.

The NPS has identified projects valued at \$5 million or more at all stages of planning, the level that requires Congressional concurrence. The NPS will move ahead on projects only after the NPS leadership has determined that: (1) the proposed projects address NPS priorities and are consistent with park general management plans, (2) partners have the capability to raise promised funding, (3) any expected capital contributions from the NPS have been prioritized in the five-year capital plan, and (4) ongoing operation and maintenance costs are known and can be sustained over time. Additionally, the NPS has initiated a standard policy of including language in all agreements with partners that specifically prohibits the solicitation of funding from Congress outside of the budget process.

The NPS is also working toward innovation and reform in the way it manages natural and cultural resources. The NPS Natural Resource Challenge (NRC) continues to make progress towards its goal of developing a scientific base of knowledge about park resources. The NRC is an initiative that has expanded existing inventory programs and developed efficient ways to monitor the vital signs of natural systems, enlisted others in the scientific community to help, and expanded natural resource conservation activities in parks. The FY 2006 budget proposal includes a \$1 million

net increase for the NRC, and includes sufficient funding for the monitoring of park vital signs and water quality in all 32 multi-park networks for the first time. This monitoring provides park managers with key information on the status and trends in park ecosystem health, defines normal limits of variation in measurable features, provides early warning of situations that require management intervention, suggests remedial treatments and frames research hypotheses, and in some cases determines compliance with laws and regulations.

In an attempt to move toward greater levels of budget and performance accountability, the NPS continues to expand the use of the Program Assessment Rating Tool (PART) activity-based costing, and preliminary planning efforts associated with competitive reviews. PART evaluations and recommendations continue to inform both budget formulation and program management decisions.

We have been working to improve our budget formulation process, particularly related to park specifics, by making it more transparent. We have initiated two new processes to meet this requirement. First, we have developed a park scorecard. The scorecard is an indicator of park financial, operational, and managerial health used to aid in the identification and evaluation of base budget increases for park units. It provides an overarching snapshot of each park's current situation by offering a way to analyze individual park needs and to compare these needs with those of other parks.

Second, we have developed a core operations analysis process that integrates management tools to improve park efficiency. The process is designed to assist park management in making fully informed decisions on staffing and funding alternatives that tie to core mission goals. This will ensure that: funds are spent in support of a park's purpose; funds are spent in an efficient manner; a park's request for funding is credible; and there are adequate funds and staff to conserve and protect the resources for which parks are responsible. The Intermountain Region has been successfully using these analyses and we are already taking steps to implement the process throughout the NPS.

The NPS maintains its support for the President's Management Agenda and has funding in the FY 2006 budget for improving information technology (IT), financial accountability, and other management reforms. The budget proposal includes funds totaling \$6 million for fee program data analysis improvements, a dozen assorted IT initiatives, including security upgrades and the implementation of an enterprise server network, and reform of the Federal Land Acquisition administrative function. The FY 2006 budget also proposes a series of management actions, including rental space consolidation and fleet management reforms that will bring over \$4 million in savings to the government.

In addition, we have achieved savings in our travel costs by taking steps to ensure that all domestic and international travel by NPS employees is an efficient and effective use of resources. Since 2002, we have reduced travel costs by 25 percent.

In summary, the improvements we are making in administering and managing the National Park System are enabling us to be much more effective and efficient stewards of the magnificent parks and other resources that we are responsible for managing. That concludes my statement, and I will be happy to answer any questions you or other members of the subcommittee may have.

Senator THOMAS. I suppose there is never sufficient money. Where would you say are the most difficult problems? Where are the areas in which limitations on money have the most impact in your operations?

Ms. MAINELLA. Well, I think that we have found—of course, you know, we want to make sure that we are taking the dollars that we have and using them as effectively and efficiently. And through our scorecard, we have been rating that—and I will ask Mr. Sheaffer to possibly elaborate, because he created the idea of the scorecard—is to focus on, again, how well are serving the resource and the visitor, how well are we using all the tools that are currently available to us, and how well are we leveraging dollars. Those are kind of the areas that we are focusing on at this point in time. Is that what you are looking for?

Senator THOMAS. Well, yes. I am just sort of saying where do you think you are unable to do—are there things you are not able to do on this budget?

Ms. MAINELLA. I think the challenges have been just that—I guess the bottom line is I feel they are meeting all of the aspects that the President has asked us to do, that you have asked us to do through this budget.

I think the area there that we want to continue to have help with is the road money, the road repairs. That one is reflective again of \$320 million in the roads budget for the Federal highways bill, depending on how that proceeds. And I know you are looking at that bill as we speak.

And anything below the \$320 million will make it difficult for us to achieve the goals.

Also, of course, one of the other areas is that we do have Homeland Security and other areas that are—you know, that can be challenging for us as any of those areas increase in cost.

Senator THOMAS. Do you have highway money in your budget, or is there some money in the highway budget for parks? Is there—

Ms. MAINELLA. There is. The request in the President's budget is for \$320 million. We currently receive \$165 million annually. And the budget, as you are probably aware, road—parks like in Yellowstone and others, I mean roads are such a critical area. And the \$320 million is our request.

Senator THOMAS. Generally, what is the total value of fee demo, the fee program plus the contributions that are made for improvements and so on?

Ms. MAINELLA. I am going to start at the fees. That is about \$160 million a year, which has been so valuable. We thank you for the leadership that this committee has provided with those fees. And then also with partnerships, I think, that comes in at about \$70 million—Bruce—I believe is my memory. So those are areas that come from fees and from partnership.

Senator THOMAS. What did you say? \$130 million?

Ms. MAINELLA. \$160 million from fees.

Senator THOMAS. I see.

Ms. MAINELLA. And \$70 million coming from our partners.

Senator THOMAS. I see, so—

Ms. MAINELLA. So we do get a lot of outside help.

Senator THOMAS. That is pretty substantial. Yes. That is good. 388 parks?

Ms. MAINELLA. Yes, sir.

Senator THOMAS. And then you have other things, like heritage areas and this and that.

Ms. MAINELLA. Yes, we do.

Senator THOMAS. In terms of your budgets and so on, how much do you think about your capacity to expand?

Ms. MAINELLA. Well, I think that right now our focus is on trying to take care of the things we do have.

Heritage areas have been an area, though, that we have found have been good partnership areas for us where they do not have to become part of the National Park System, as far as becoming a unit of the National Park Service and are meeting some of the needs of resource protection if they are a national effort.

I think, as you know, Mr. Chairman, we are all working to look at a greater criteria through some legislation in the heritage areas to better see that the heritage areas come in solely as an area that

recognizes the national significance of those areas, without having to be coming in to the Park Service.

Senator THOMAS. Well, I am sure none of us wants to say we should stop having parks. On the other hand, there needs to be some criteria for them to meet.

Ms. MAINELLA. Yes.

Senator THOMAS. I believe you have organized, have you not, a business council that gives some advice, or observation and assistance in terms of managing, particularly in the concessions?

Ms. MAINELLA. Yes. We have created a concession advisory board that works with us very closely. And they have helped us in coming up with recommendations to better improve our management of concessions. And we are very pleased with those. I know that Steve Martin, our deputy, has recently testified on that effort and could elaborate further, if you would like.

Senator THOMAS. Yes. That would be fine.

Mr. MARTIN. Yes. I think that the advisory board is a really important extension of the Park Service in the fact that we are able to bring on and have consultation, close consultation with key members of the concession and business community on how we should manage the park programs.

And we have gotten a series of recommendations from them, actually, very recently on some of the more controversial or areas that need further work, either on our policies, our regulations, or others. And we are going through those now and feel that we are going to be able to work on those, make some changes and perhaps change some of our policies and how we manage things.

But we have just recently gotten those, and we should have in the next few months some additional information on things like possessory interest and surrender interest and some of the other controversial components of the bill.

Senator THOMAS. That is good, I think, to bring into your staff, which basically has professionalism in other areas, this business sense.

Mr. MARTIN. Yes. And we are also, on that same line just real quickly, doing more to enhance our abilities by bringing business people into the park service.

And we have a number of programs. Some of those Bruce is working on, some that we are working on in the field to increase our capacity of business professionals to help us manage not only concessions, but our finances and human resources as well.

Senator THOMAS. Great. I see. Good.

Senator SALAZAR.

Senator SALAZAR. Thank you, Chairman Thomas.

Director Mainella, I have three questions for you.

Ms. MAINELLA. Yes, sir.

Senator SALAZAR. And I will give you all three of them to give you an opportunity to respond to all three of them in one.

With respect to the law enforcement and security needs of the park system, I know the world has changed post-9/11, lots of money has gone into protecting the Washington Monument, Lincoln Monument, et cetera. A comment on where you are in terms of security needs within the National Park System in this post-9/11 world, if you would, No. 1.

No. 2, I know that the National Parks Retiree Association has made a recommendation on the creation of a blue ribbon commission to look at national parks in the 21st century. Would such a commission be something that would be helpful if it was mandated, hopefully with your cooperation, out of this Congress, looking ahead at the 21st century?

And, third, comment on the National Park System's efforts with respect to ethnic, racial and gender diversity within your employment. I know you have a long history of being a champion of those things in Florida. I would like your perspective on that issue within the National Park System. So those three issues.

Ms. MAINELLA. Thank you. On security, one of the areas, of course, is that has certainly increased. About 25 percent of our budget now—or at least we have had an increase of about 25 percent in our law enforcement responsibilities since 9/11. And that has been something that we have taken on. And I just want to make sure everyone knows we feel our parks are very safe, and we are—we have made great efforts in all the protection. Our great law enforcement people, including our U.S. Park Police, have done an excellent job. But, again, it has added an additional financial responsibility to our budget.

The second area dealing with—let me see. What was my second question?

Mr. SHEAFFER. 21st century.

Ms. MAINELLA. 21st century, thank you.

Dealing with a blue ribbon commission coming on, that is something—we have a National Park Advisory Board now that serves as an advisory entity to me and assists in looking at those kinds of issues.

Now, whether we would like to elaborate further on that, I think that is—you know, we are a partnership-oriented entity, and always like that input and involvement. I think we have to just be clear of what we want to challenge them with, because now the National Park Advisory Board has been helping me with looking at benefits of health—how parks play in the health and well being, to looking at philanthropy, to looking at many other areas. And so we do have that entity already that exists, and maybe we could even spin off a subsection from that.

The third area is part of my goals, which is the 21st century relevancy of the National Park System. When I came in, I was very concerned that we were probably not as diverse as we needed to be. And we certainly have not achieved all those goals yet, but we have come a huge way in being relevant in the 21st century.

If you look at my leadership team today, you will find that the makeup is made—I have three African-American leadership people. I have one Hispanic, the first Hispanic ever to serve in a leadership position on the National Park Service; myself, as the first woman to be National Park Service director, again, a very diverse entity in leadership. So I am kind of not just talking the talk, I am walking the walk.

And we are working to try to aggressively increase our involvement through the Junior Ranger Program and through other efforts to get out to young people to get them involved in the national parks through not only coming to visit a park, but also through

what may be called the “Web Ranger Program,” which will reach out to communities, young people all the way through their teens, to be involved in our national parks.

Mrs. Bush has agreed, through the National Park Foundation, to be a chair of raising over \$10 million for that effort.

Senator SALAZAR. Thank you, Director. And on that third point, if there is anything that I can do to be helpful, do not hesitate to call my office.

We had a youth resources program that you might remember in Colorado.

Ms. MAINELLA. I do remember that and you—

Senator SALAZAR. And Laurie Matthews was also involved, too.

Ms. MAINELLA. Laurie Matthews, and she is a very good friend and has been someone that has been a great leader for us.

Senator SALAZAR. Well, let me know how I can help on that point.

Back on the law enforcement point in the post-9/11 world, I hear you telling us that there has been a significant additional increase just in terms of resources to deal with the real world that we live in right now.

Ms. MAINELLA. Yes, sir.

Senator SALAZAR. Have the decisions to deal with the security needs in our park system and to implement the resources to make sure that we have safe and secure places affected what we are doing in other places within the National Park System? Have we had to siphon off money, if you will, from maintenance and other kinds of things to make sure that we are dealing with the issue of security?

Ms. MAINELLA. The money that comes to—that we are using right now—and I will ask Bruce if there is any elaboration on that—the money that we are currently using to pay for those programs are directly out of the normal park and—National Park Service funding. So we have made priority decisions. And we do feel that the safety of the visitor and the resource is high, so we have made those value decisions. So it has, you know, come from our coffers to make those payments.

Senator SALAZAR. Okay. Thank you.

Ms. MAINELLA. Thank you.

Senator THOMAS. Okay. Thank you.

Senator ALEXANDER.

Senator ALEXANDER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Director Mainella, it is good to see you.

I wanted to thank you for your visit to the Great Smoky Mountain National Park, even in the midst of a big rainstorm. The volunteers there appreciated it.

They were disappointed that the President almost got there, but could not come. But we were glad to get him close to it, and his remarks were appreciated.

Ms. MAINELLA. Yes, sir.

Senator ALEXANDER. I also want to congratulate you for—and the President, for getting into the budget, as I understand it, much of the salary increase, so that we do not run into this provision that we have heard several times before, when we appropriate an increase in funds, and the park—the Smokies or the Yellowstone

never really see it for maintenance because it has to go for salary increases. So I hope, Mr. Chairman, that we can be supportive of that.

And I have three questions—I think Senator Salazar set a good example—and let me try to state them succinctly, and then I will sit back and you may wish to just give me a response in writing, if you want to.

Ms. MAINELLA. Thank you, sir.

Senator ALEXANDER. I do not really need the answers now, but they are important to me.

Question No. 1, it has to do with the Big South Fork Scenic and Recreation area, which is—it was created in 1974 in Kentucky and Tennessee, but it is managed by you.

Ms. MAINELLA. Yes, sir.

Senator ALEXANDER. 900,000 visitors. And my question is: Is there a way that we might, say, over the next year, take a look at how that recreation area and the Great Smoky Mountain Park might complement one another? They are not far away. And the Smokies is managed as a wilderness area, which we like.

Ms. MAINELLA. Yes.

Senator ALEXANDER. But in the Big South Fork, there are 125,000 acres where some hunting is allowed. There are 250 miles of trails that can be used by horses. That is an important economy development there. So my question about that is, No. 1, could your department, say, in a year or sometime convenient for you, give me or this subcommittee, if the chairman would like to have it, a briefing on how the two can be related in your management?

And, second, would you take a look at whether a fee demonstration program at the Big South Fork would be worthwhile? Because their new management plan shows a number of ideas for involving other counties nearby with visitor centers. Some of that money could be used to staff them. And since the Cherokee National Forest has had such a good experience with the fee demonstration program, this might be a possibility. So that—

Ms. MAINELLA. I would be very honored to look into that for you. And, again, our parks tend to want to work together and partner. And our new superintendent at the Smokies, Dale Ditmanson, I know would like to look at how we might work with South Fork.

Senator ALEXANDER. Well, if we could have some—

Ms. MAINELLA. We will do a more in depth for you.

Senator ALEXANDER [continuing]. The committee or me and—

Ms. MAINELLA. Right. We will do an in-depth briefing for you.

Senator ALEXANDER [continuing]. Do some sort of feedback sometime later, I would appreciate that.

Ms. MAINELLA. We will do that, sir. Thank you.

Senator ALEXANDER. The second area has to do with cell towers. In September 2004, there was an attempt to put three of these big new cell towers in the Great Smokies along the scenic route. And Congressman Duncan and I wrote to you and asked that it not be done, and it was not done. And I thank you for that.

We now have, based on my research, about 128,000 of these cell towers that have suddenly sprung up in the country. We all like our Blackberries and cell phones, but they are, to put it generously, junk piles in the sky. And they ought not to be, in my opinion, in

front of Old Faithful and in the Great Smokies and in the Grand Canyon. And anything the Park Service could do to discourage that or to create an alternative to that, I would appreciate it.

And I was just—my second question is: Would you be willing to give me a letter about what the department policy is on cell towers in national parks and other highly scenic areas?

Ms. MAINELLA. I would be glad to do so, sir. Thank you. And I will follow up on that for you.

Senator ALEXANDER. And my last question has to do with what I call a conservation royalty. When in States like Wyoming we drill on Federal land for oil, there is such a thing as a State royalty and the State of Wyoming gets 50 cents out of every dollar, which I support and am—

[Laughter.]

Senator THOMAS. You are supposed to.

[Laughter.]

Senator ALEXANDER. Right. But on several different occasions, I have suggested, along with Senator Landrieu and Senator Murkowski—several of us are interested in this—the idea of a conservation royalty, which would take some of the revenues from drilling for gas or oil—for example, offshore gas or oil—and use it to fully fund conservation projects around the country. The idea being that if we have a burden, an environmental burden, we can create environmental benefit.

This was recommended by President Reagan's Commission on Americans Outdoors, of which I was chairman 20 years ago—

Ms. MAINELLA. I remember that.

Senator ALEXANDER [continuing]. And know very well. And we had it. We had it in the American Outdoors Act that Senator Landrieu and I have recommended. It was in the ANWR legislation. I am going to keep trying to stick the concept in lots of different places, and I would like to know what the administration's attitude about that might be.

Ms. MAINELLA. Thank you so much. And, again, we will respond back to you on that. Thank you.

Senator ALEXANDER. Thank you.

Senator THOMAS. Thank you very much, sir. Just a couple more fairly quick questions here.

What would you say is the—you have talked and the President has talked about a backlog and I think had agreed to try and fix it over a period of 4 years or whatever—what percentage of that backlog do you think still exists?

Ms. MAINELLA. We have, again, tried to look at our backlog and—because it is again a dynamic entity, and we have made so much success. In fact, again, with this budget, it will be \$4.9 billion we will have spent on this on the backlog.

What we are trying to do now is understand what our full needs out there are, and we are doing these—the complete comprehensive reviews to better understand that. But we have really made huge success in being able to move forward. But, again, the area that I mentioned earlier where we had the most challenges is roads.

And that is the area that we are using what is called an FCI, a facility condition index. And we are doing quite well in scoring on that for our facilities where we are having the most—where we

are not having as much success is on our roads. And if that road bill passes and we are able to get increased funding, preferably up to the \$320 million, that will allow us to be able to make a huge increase in our success rate with our roads.

And I do not know, Steve, if you have any other follow-up on that from facilities. I know in each park you might even give an example of something might—that you have done out West.

Mr. MARTIN. Well, we have been doing a lot in a lot of different areas. Certainly, you know, the work that you have done in support on the fee moneys over the last number of years really helped significantly in that regard.

And I think the other component of what we are doing with this analysis of the buildings is what it takes to maintain them over the long haul. And I—and really for the first time in these last 3 or 4 years, we have made great strides. And that is the life cycle cost. And it is one where the initiatives of, you know, meeting the President's commitments are really important. But then we also, over time, are going to need to continue to look at how—you know, what is the best way to continue to maintain these buildings. And many of them are historical structures and take—you know, you are familiar with the Yellowstone lodges and others that take a significant amount of work.

And so that is sort of the next piece of this that we are continuing to analyze: once we get them fixed up, then how do we keep them fixed up, and what are the costs, and changing our practices and changing our training in the field to become better and more effective at how we do that as well.

Senator THOMAS. Yes. Good.

Mr. MARTIN. But I agree with what Fran has said that right now the focus is on the roads, and that is sort of one of the next pieces that is really important to us.

Senator THOMAS. Many of the things that occur in parks also are in forests and State lands and surrounding areas and so on. What do you—do you try to get agencies to come together, for instance, on things like buffalo or something to where there seems like there is a resistance among agencies to work together to come to a solution. How do you deal with that?

Ms. MAINELLA. One of the things that has helped us—and I personally believe that when the President brought me on as director, part of the reason was because of the partnership efforts we had done and had demonstrated in Florida. And what we have been able to do here on a national level is we actually had a conference recently called—this is about a year and a half ago—called joint ventures. And it brought together all the several land managers.

Now, lots of times our Federal land managers work well together on the ground out in the field, but in Washington it was not quite as successful. So now we got together again there—in fact, we signed a pledge, a commitment that we, as Federal land managers, as the Corps, ourselves, Fish and Wildlife, and all the different land managers, we agreed to work together and cooperate in efforts. And we meet basically about three to four times a year, a non-crisis time, and talk about issues of how we work better together.

And we have found that since then that has happened, we are doing better on that. It is not perfect yet, but we have come so much further, and we call it the seamless network of parks or public lands. And we think we are getting there.

Senator THOMAS. That is good. You mentioned that on the ground sometimes it works together a little different here.

Steve, I might ask you since you have just come from being a regional. It seems when you have this big of an operation, then you have policy decisions made here and so on to ensure that those are implemented in 388 different places. How do you—do you feel like the regional people are involved enough to oversee that and cause it to happen?

Mr. MARTIN. I think we are definitely getting there. And that has been one of the charges that Fran has had to the regional directors, is to begin to, in our working teams, make sure that Parks understand the current policy directions and how we work together.

And I really think that there is quite a shift taking place. And it is not something that has been said, and I think it has been going on for certainly the last 10 years in—with a lot of focus. But in working together with other agencies, but then also trying to understand the bigger picture of how we are going to manage Parks.

It used to be in the parks, I think we had a lot of independence in how we managed those units. And maybe for that year, that was probably really good and—but I think we are now at a point where being part of this bigger network, working with the States, working with the counties, working with the other agencies, is absolutely critical to delivering services to the visitors and also being good at stewardship responsibility.

And I think more and more—so we just got a great example with some of the work that is being done on some of the management planning in the greater Yellowstone area in working with the State and any number of agencies.

Senator THOMAS. Yes.

Mr. MARTIN. And I think that that is becoming more of the everyday way of doing business as opposed to the exception.

Senator THOMAS. Yes. Well, that is good. And I think you are a good one to do that. You had a good relationship in the Tetons with the gateway communities and the others.

One very quick question and quick answer, if you can, Fran.

Ms. MAINELLA. I hear you.

Senator THOMAS. What are you doing—how are you doing on the competitive sourcing where you have maintenance jobs or other kinds of jobs that are not professional? Are you using the competitive idea, A-76?

Ms. MAINELLA. What we are looking at under the competitive sourcing is a revised A-76 circular that allows us to do what is called preliminary planning efforts where we go into parks and we analyze and look at the staff and have them work together to look at how we can be the most efficient and effective possible.

Sometimes it comes out that the way they are organized is the best way as it is today. If it is—if not, they often come up with suggestions. And we have a consultant that works with them, a private sector consultant to have them look at that.

Then it comes to me for review. And I decide whether it actually goes out for a competitive sourcing true bidding process. At this point, for example, just recently we just announced that there are three areas that are being looked at, but it is all preliminary planning efforts. It is not putting them out to bid, and so I want to be clear about that, first of all. Thank you.

Senator THOMAS. Okay. Do you have any further questions, Senator?

Senator ALEXANDER. Is there time for me to ask a couple?

Senator THOMAS. Yes, sir.

Senator ALEXANDER. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I will keep them to the point.

One, what is—in the Great Smokies, as you and I have discussed many times before, we have this terrific use, 10 million visitors a year, three times as many as Yellowstone—that does not make it better.

[Laughter.]

Senator ALEXANDER. I never should have done that.

[Laughter.]

Senator ALEXANDER. I wanted to make a point. Yellowstone gets \$6.8 million a year from fees to help maintain it, and it has 3 million or so visitors.

The Smokies has 10 million visitors and gets \$1.3 million in fees. And the reason is of our own doing—I mean it is the only park, as I understand, that was ever given to the National Park Service, and by the people of North Carolina and Tennessee. And part of the deal was no entrance fee—

Ms. MAINELLA. Right.

Senator ALEXANDER [continuing]. At least on the Tennessee side.

Ms. MAINELLA. Right.

Senator ALEXANDER. Now, are there other—but you do collect—the fees you collect now come from such things as what? Where does the \$1.3 million in fees come from?

Ms. MAINELLA. Right now, it is camping and we are retaining—we have been able to retain that. I think that you have helped us be able to allow that to take place.

Mr. MARTIN. Camping fees.

Ms. MAINELLA. Camping fees, right.

Mr. MARTIN. Mostly.

Senator ALEXANDER. Well, there—the fee demonstration program has been a big success here. And I congratulate Senator Thomas and others who had put it in long before I got here and saw it through some—it has had some problems. But on the other hand, it has had some pretty significant successes.

I mentioned the Cherokee Forest, right next to the Smokies, which I think gets \$2 million a year. And they do not know what they would do without the money—

Ms. MAINELLA. Right.

Senator ALEXANDER [continuing]. Because of all of the demands on them. So I wanted to—I really look forward to working with you as you go through your management plans and as you consider what to do, not so much on reversing the decision for an entrance fee, because I think that would take so long and would be so complicated that it might not be worth doing. But as we look at the

services and other activities in the park, if there is a way to supplement fees that are still reasonable and that can be used 100 percent in the Smokies, I think there would be widespread understanding of that in our area.

And I will hope you will consider that as part of your plans.

Ms. MAINELLA. I will be glad to look at that. In fact, the superintendent had—and I had discussed when I was just out at the Smokies about is there any way, because at this point with the fees legislation that you have put through, 80 percent normally stays at the parks, with the fees like at Yellowstone or Grand Tetons. And right now we do not have that opportunity.

Senator ALEXANDER. Yes.

Ms. MAINELLA. We are able—through your help, we were able to keep 100 percent of the camping fees at the Smokies, but that has been our only use fee.

But I think we need to look at other opportunities that would still meet the expectations of the residents of Tennessee and North Carolina, but also help the park continue to move forward.

Senator ALEXANDER. And just two other quick points. I hope you also weigh in in administration discussions about clean air. The Smokies, of course, have—and other national parks have clean air problems, but the work we have done with the Environmental Protection Association shows that if the President's Clear Skies Proposal on sulfur will reduce from 3 million tons per year permitted from power plants to 2.5 million tons a year, that it would improve the quality of the air 10 to 15 percent.

In fact, no area of the country would benefit more from that than would the Great Smokies/Knoxville area. And that is a reasonable strengthening of the President's proposal. The President's proposal is a good framework. I just thought it does not go as far as it could, especially in the sulfur area.

And so I would—I know that when those matters are discussed that lots—that the national parks have a role in talking about that. And I hope you will speak up, because if there is just one word I hope you would remember, it is sulfur. The President deserves great credit for what he is doing with diesel fuel and diesel engines to take effect next year. That would help parks all over the country and the Smokies.

And the other thing is I hope you will persuade the IRS that it can support the legislation Senator Salazar and I and others introduced, which would allow taxpayers to have a check-off for the National Park System. And if somebody would ask, "Well, why single out the national parks?" I think the answer is, "Because the great American outdoors is unique to this country. It is what makes us American as much as anything else."

It would be the same thing—Egypt has its pyramids, Italy has its art, England has its history, we have the great American outdoors—and that check-off would help greatly.

Ms. MAINELLA. Thank you for your support.

Senator ALEXANDER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for the time.

Senator THOMAS. Okay. Thank you very much. Thank you all. Thank you for what you do. I know it is a difficult task, but I also know that your folks are very committed, and I know that you are too. So, thank you.

Ms. MAINELLA. Thank you so much. Thank you, Senators.

Senator THOMAS. We look forward to working together.

Okay. Our second panel will be Mr. Greg Moore, executive director, Golden Gate National Parks Conservancy, San Francisco; Mr. Lee Werst, president, Association of National Park Rangers, Orem, Utah; and Mr. Robert Arnberger, Coalition of National Park Services Retirees, Tucson, Arizona.

Okay. Welcome, gentlemen. Glad to have you here.

As before, your complete statements will be put in the record. And if you will kind of go by the 5-minute rule here, why we would appreciate it.

Why do we not start with you, Mr. Moore?

STATEMENT OF GREG MOORE, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, GOLDEN GATE NATIONAL PARKS CONSERVANCY, SAN FRANCISCO, CA

Mr. MOORE. Thank you very much. Thank you, Mr. Chairman and Mr. Vice Chairman, for the invitation to testify today about the roles of philanthropy and volunteerism in our national parks.

I am Greg Moore, the executive director of the Golden Gate National Parks Conservancy. We are a nonprofit organization supporting the National Park Service's mission at the Golden Gate National Recreation Area in the San Francisco Bay area.

Since our inception in 1981, the Parks Conservancy has provided about \$80 million of support to park projects and programs.

But the Conservancy is just one of over 100 similar nonprofit organizations nationally, known as cooperating associations and friends groups, working to support the mission of the National Park Service.

In total we provide over \$100 million yearly in philanthropic aid and help support the 140,000 volunteers who are donating 5 million hours annually to the national parks at an estimated value of almost \$86 million.

Philanthropy has been deeply connected to our national parks from their very beginning. Few things inspire Americans like the immense natural and physical beauty and historical poignancy of our parks.

And more Americans are becoming aware that the care of our national parks not only requires the efforts of the National Park Service, but our direct support and involvement as well.

Organizations like our Parks Conservancy work very closely with the National Park Service to understand its priorities and to create a strategic course working in unison.

The Conservancy helps the Service recognize which of its priorities are likely to have donor appeal, and we work together to ensure that donor-supported projects and programs are operationally and financially sustainable.

Throughout the park system, friends groups, and cooperating associations have been at work delivering programs, projects, and volunteers that add lasting value to our national parks, whether at Golden Gate, at Yellowstone, at the Rocky Mountain National Park, or at the Great Smoky Mountains National Park. These philanthropic results have depended upon National Park Service lead-

ership, commitment, professionalism, and active staff presence in the parks.

Americans do not see their philanthropic support as a substitute for the role of the National Park Service or as a replacement for the funding provided through their tax dollars.

Philanthropic donors do not have the interest, the expertise, or the capacity to substitute for vital Federal responsibilities.

Increasingly, donors are making their contributions contingent on the assurance that park operating budgets are adequate to preserve and care for the gifts, the improvements that result from their donations.

And generous contributors want to be ensured that Federal funds are not removed or diminished as a result of donor dollars being available. To do so would be a major disincentive to philanthropic giving and a lethal blow to its future in the National Park System.

David Rockefeller, Junior, philanthropist and former vice chair of the National Park Foundation, has stressed the important distinction between Federal and philanthropic roles in our national parks. Our philanthropic mission, he said, is "not to build roads or employee housing units, nor to build or maintain infrastructure, but to create strong connections between visitor and place." He called this distinction the "Bright Line" between Federal responsibility and private opportunity.

To conclude, philanthropy and volunteerism are and will continue to be essential and positive forces in achieving the mission of the National Park Service. Over the past decade, these forces have grown dramatically in scale and impact, and will continue to grow if Americans are asked to share in the vision for our parks, are given respect for their views and involvement, are provided with clear and expeditious ways to contribute, know that their contributions will be effectively stewarded by the National Park Service, and are treated with sincere appreciation as they donate time and resources.

The National Park Service policy and legislative authorities should embrace and enhance philanthropy and volunteerism. Federal funding and policy could better motivate philanthropy to our parks through greater use and flexibility with challenge grants, more efficient methods to combine Federal and philanthropic dollars toward a desired outcome, quicker systems to review and approve philanthropic gifts and campaigns, more openness to donor recognition, and a general culture of gratitude and respect to those generous enough to give to our parks.

Our continued momentum will be greatest when leveraged from a firm foundation of Federal funding, National Park Service professionalism, and effective non-profit partners well aligned to the Park Service mission.

Upon that foundation, we can and will achieve the margin of excellence so essential for our national parks, which collectively represent the very best of America's scenic, natural, and historic treasures.

Thank you so much for the opportunity to testify, and I would be happy to answer any questions you might have.

Senator THOMAS. Okay. Thank you very much, sir.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Moore follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF GREG MOORE, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, GOLDEN GATE
NATIONAL PARKS CONSERVANCY, SAN FRANCISCO, CA

Mr. Chairman and honorable committee members, thank you for the invitation to testify today about the roles of philanthropy and volunteerism in our national parks. I'm Greg Moore, Executive Director of the Golden Gate National Parks Conservancy, a nonprofit membership organization that works to preserve the Golden Gate National Recreation Area, to enhance the experiences of park visitors, and to engage community members in conserving the parks for the future. The Parks Conservancy was established in 1981, and since then it has provided the National Park Service with nearly \$80 million in support for park projects and programs.

The Parks Conservancy is one of over 100 nonprofit organizations nationally, working as cooperating associations and friends groups, to support the mission of the National Park Service. These organizations, along with the National Park Foundation, engage community members and the private sector in philanthropy and volunteerism and help protect, enhance and interpret park resources. Many have been active for decades. Recently, the Yosemite Association celebrated its 80th anniversary and the Rocky Mountain Nature Association has been serving this national park since 1931.

In total, these organizations provide over \$100 million annually in philanthropic aid to the National Park Service and strive to make lasting positive impacts on park resources and on the park visitor experience. Today, I will address four key questions:

- What motivates philanthropy and volunteerism in our national parks?
- How do federal funding and the work of the National Park Service enhance philanthropy and volunteerism?
- What specifically, do the American people consider the federal responsibility to our national parks?
- What can the future bring in terms of philanthropy and volunteerism?

WHAT MOTIVATES PHILANTHROPY AND VOLUNTEERISM IN OUR NATIONAL PARKS?

The American ethic of charity and volunteerism has made a remarkable impact on our national parks. In addition to more than \$100 million in annual philanthropic support, last year 140,000 volunteers donated 5 million hours to the national parks at a value of \$85.9 million¹. What motivates this level of commitment?

Few things inspire Americans like the immense natural and physical beauty and the historical poignancy of national parks. We understand that national parks require not only the care and investment of the National Park Service, but our direct support and involvement as well. Americans entrust the National Park Service to lead the protection and stewardship of these cherished places and, in effect, to be the ultimate caretaker of our nation's heritage. We expect and respond to this leadership. Throughout the National Park system, whether at Golden Gate, Yosemite, the USS *Arizona* Memorial, Yellowstone, or Rocky Mountain National Park, philanthropic projects have been inspired by visionary Park Service leadership, implemented by effective and eloquent nonprofit partners, and funded by generous donors.

Organizations like the Golden Gate National Parks Conservancy open direct and active channels through which Americans can contribute their time and charitable gifts to augment the critical work of the National Park Service. In the San Francisco Bay Area, community members share a very strong connection to the Golden Gate National Recreation Area and recently contributed \$34 million for the restoration of Crissy Field, a former army airfield in the Presidio on the shore of San Francisco Bay. A lead gift of \$18 million by the Evelyn and Walter Haas, Jr. Fund, followed by a major public campaign of the Parks Conservancy, rallied the community behind this project. Over 2,000 gifts and 3,200 volunteers transformed this national park site. Today, these donors and volunteers retain their commitment and generosity to our parks.

To make projects like Crissy Field meaningful to the community that supports them requires not only executing these park transformations, but an ongoing commitment to preserve over time what has been transformed and restored together. Federal operating funds can be leveraged with volunteer support in this long-term stewardship. As one example, each year close to 16,000 people donate over 350,000 hours of volunteer time to preserve park habitat, lead interpretive tours and support education programs for children throughout the Golden Gate National Recreation Area. This type of support is motivated throughout the National Park system by

¹National Park Service, Volunteers-In-Parks

welcoming volunteers as part of the “park team,” giving them fulfilling work and expressing active appreciation.

HOW DO FEDERAL FUNDING AND THE WORK OF THE NATIONAL PARK SERVICE ENHANCE PHILANTHROPY AND VOLUNTEERISM?

Effective partnerships depend deeply on the National Park Service tradition, commitment, professionalism, knowledge, and active staff presence in our parks. These capacities are essential to philanthropy working in a dynamic and effective way. There are federal responsibilities, resources, and talents that philanthropy would never want to replace, and realistically, philanthropy does not have the capacity to serve as a substitute. In fact, philanthropy depends upon these National Park Service attributes and resources to serve as its foundation for its positive impact in the parks.

Americans do not see their philanthropic support as a substitute for the role of the National Park Service. Donors and volunteers are keenly aware of the Park Service role and follow its lead in addressing park needs and enhancements. But increasingly donors are also making their contributions contingent on the assurance that park budgets will be there to preserve and care for the positive park improvements resulting from their donations. In fact, removing or diminishing federal funds when donor dollars are available would be a fundamental disincentive to giving and a serious, perhaps lethal blow to the future of national park philanthropy.

A proactive and sustaining approach involves a deep partnership of the Park Service, donors and nonprofit support groups. Organizations like the Golden Gate National Parks Conservancy work very closely with the National Park Service to understand its priorities and to chart our strategic course in unison. The Conservancy also helps the Park Service understand which of its priorities are likely to have donor appeal, and we work together to ensure that donor-supported projects and programs are operationally and financially sustainable.

WHAT DO DONORS AND VOLUNTEERS CONSIDER THE FEDERAL RESPONSIBILITY TO OUR NATIONAL PARKS?

Speaking at a recent conference on partnerships for public lands, David Rockefeller Jr., philanthropist and former vice chair of the National Park Foundation, stressed the important distinction between federal and philanthropic roles in our national parks. Our mission, he said, is “not to build roads or employee housing units, nor to build or maintain infrastructure, but to create strong connections between visitor and place.” He called this distinction the “Bright Line” between federal responsibility and private opportunity.

The healthiest public-private partnerships result from a shared vision and an appropriate balance of investment. Donors want to be actively engaged in creating the vision for our national parks, while respecting key federal responsibilities. What is seen as the federal responsibility? Donors tend to see this clearly. The philanthropic sector expects a fundamental foundation for donors to build upon—a foundation comprised of adequate “park base” operational support, basic park infrastructure, visitor safety, essential resource management, key amenities, upkeep of National Park facilities, expertise in interpretation, and Park Service staff in direct contact with visitors.

Current realities pose some challenges to this view. Many park operational budgets are stretched thin and even essential park infrastructure improvements need to be phased in over many years. Basic services can be heavily strained. But these are not functions that can or should be funded through nonprofit support groups and philanthropy. In the words of my colleague, Ken Olson, who leads Friends of Acadia, “friends groups are here to provide the margin of excellence, not the margin of survival.” This margin of excellence comes through the over \$100 million in annual giving and over 140,000 volunteers across our National Park system. It rests upon an essential foundation: the Park Service annual budget of over \$2 billion and an NPS workforce of over 20,000 permanent and seasonal employees.

WHAT WILL THE FUTURE BRING IN TERMS OF PHILANTHROPY AND VOLUNTEERISM?

Philanthropy and volunteerism are, and will continue to be, essential forces in achieving the mission of the National Park Service. These forces will grow in scale and impact if Americans are asked to share in the vision for our national parks, given respect for their views and involvement, provided with clear and expeditious ways to contribute, and treated with sincere appreciation as they donate time and resources.

National Park Service policy and legislative authorities should embrace and enhance philanthropy and volunteerism—and facilitate their flourishing on behalf of

our parks. Federal funding and policy could significantly motivate philanthropy to our parks through greater use and flexibility with challenge grants, more efficient methods to combine federal and philanthropic dollars toward a desired outcome, quicker systems to review and approve philanthropic campaigns and gifts, more openness to donor recognition, and a general culture of gratitude and respect to those generous enough to give to our parks..

Our continued momentum will be the greatest when leveraged from a firm foundation of federal funding and national park professionalism. This foundation can be strengthened by recognizing philanthropic partners (the National Park Foundation, friends groups, and cooperating associations) as strategic and valued allies in the vision for our national parks and working with them in an open, facilitating and collaborative manner. Upon that foundation, generous Americans and the philanthropic sector can and will achieve the margin of excellence—a margin so essential to our national parks, which preserve the best of our country's natural, scenic and cultural heritage.

Senator THOMAS. Mr. Werst.

**STATEMENT OF LEE WERST, PRESIDENT, ASSOCIATION OF
NATIONAL PARK RANGERS, OREM, UT**

Mr. WERST. Mr. Chairman, thank you for inviting the Association of National Park Rangers to share with you our thoughts on the funding needs for the National Park Service.

My name is Lee Werst. I am president of ANPR and a current National Park Service employee. I am appearing before you today on behalf of the Association, and am doing so on my own time and at my own expense. And as such, my statement should in no way be construed as representing the National Park Service, the Department of the Interior, or any organization other than ANPR.

Last November, we wrote a letter to the congressional budget conferees for the fiscal year 2005 budget complimenting them on the generally favorable budget prospects for the National Park Service.

The 2005 budget, as enacted, combined the interests of the conferees and the administration in its budget request, resulting in a 2-percent increase in total discretionary spending. Mr. Chairman, we would like to thank Congress for its continuing work and support of the National Park Service.

And in our testimony today, we would also like to help identify what we believe are continuing shortfalls in the field due to increasing personnel and other costs that need to be addressed for the long-term.

The fiscal year 2006 budget, as submitted by the administration, provides an overall decrease of 2.8 percent in total discretionary appropriations from fiscal year 2005. On the surface, there are some apparent pluses, which we support, despite the overall decrease. For example, the budget category of visitor services is at a 10-year high as a percentage of total National Park Service discretionary spending.

That being said, it still remains that the overall discretionary appropriation has declined in real terms since the last substantive increase in fiscal year 2001. Discretionary spending in fiscal year 2001 was nearly \$2.3 billion. The fiscal year 2006 budget request is \$2.249 billion, for a dollar decrease of nearly 2 percent.

When adjusted for inflation, that amounts to almost a 9-percent decrease over those 5 years.

In the past 15 years, ANPR has tried to share stories from the parks about conditions that might reflect on proposed legislation or policy, and I would like to again share some of these with you.

At Sequoia-Kings Canyon National Park in California, great strides have been made to eradicate illegal cultivation of marijuana “plantations” within the park boundaries. Project funding to target eradication and interdiction efforts has helped the park to destroy much of these crops.

However, to fully control and completely eliminate this damaging activity, you must look beyond just project funding to prevent the initial planting and cultivation which will take ongoing investigation and apprehension of perpetrators.

To adequately undertake this mission, the park estimates a need for an additional 4.8 FTE for the long-term and a \$448,000 budget increase.

Other parks—in other parks, the impacts of budget shortfalls can be illustrated by looking at the findings from published business plans prepared and audited for the National Park Service.

As one example, at Shenandoah National Park, the business plan for fiscal year 2003 showed a need of \$19.6 million to fully fund operations, but had available only \$12.8 million from all funding sources, an operating shortfall of \$6.8 million. One of the impacts of that is that although Shenandoah has one of the worst air pollution problems of any park in the country, its air resources specialist position has now been vacant for nearly 2 years because of insufficient funding.

Another example is that the park offered nearly 800 fewer ranger-led interpretive programs in fiscal year 2004, when it offered 1,032—less than it did in fiscal year 2002, when it offered 1,824.

Other examples, such as this, are included in our written testimony.

Mr. Chairman, we would also like to comment on some funding successes that we believe are taking place. One of those, of course, is the fee demonstration program, which was replaced in 2005 by the Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act, which has a 10-year sunset.

This has been a very successful program, and it is an example of how Congress has really helped to support park resources and helps to support our operations.

As one Western park superintendent recently voiced, “Fee demo is excellent!” And we agree with that, and we thank Congress and the administration in continuing this important and critical program. But we also urge permanent legislation prior to the 10-year sunset of the new current program in order to continue infrastructure support, increased resources protection, and visitor use programs.

One of the more promising ideas which we have seen recently is the proposed National Park Centennial Act. We are encouraged by this effort to bring the National Park Service to a sustainable level by 2016, and we would be pleased to provide further testimony, if desired, at any future hearings on this bipartisan legislation.

In summary, Mr. Chairman, we continue to be optimistic, yet cautious, about the next 10 years, as there is great potential for the 2006 and future budgets to result, if not careful, in overall deterio-

ration in field-level staffing in parks and important program activities.

However, we look forward to supporting National Park Service management in its efforts to effectively implement the budget as finally enacted, and joining with them and with Congress in identifying the long-term needs and short-falls facing the Service in the next 10 years, particularly at the field park level.

Thank you again, Mr. Chairman, for inviting the Association of National Park Rangers to testify here today. And I will be glad to answer any questions you may have, or assure that the Association provides you further information on any issue that I cannot answer to your satisfaction.

Senator THOMAS. Thank you very much.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Werst follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF LEE WERST, PRESIDENT, ASSOCIATION OF
NATIONAL PARK RANGERS

Mr. Chairman, members of the Subcommittee, thank you for inviting the Association of National Park Rangers (ANPR) to share with you our thoughts on the funding needs for the National Park Service.

My name is Lee Werst. I am President of ANPR, and a current National Park Service employee. I am appearing before you today on behalf of the Association, and am doing so on my own time and at my own expense. As such, my statement should in no way be construed as representing the National Park Service, the Department of the Interior, or any NGO other than ANPR.

The Association of National Park Rangers, formed in 1977, is a professional organization comprised of dedicated National Park Service employees from all regions, salary grades and specialties. ANPR is neither a union nor a bargaining unit, but rather is a volunteer association formed to advance the ranger profession and support the perpetuation of the National Park System and the National Park Service.

FUNDING NEEDS

Last November, we wrote a letter to the Congressional budget conferees for the fiscal year 2005 budget complimenting them on the generally favorable budget prospects for the National Park Service. We wrote:

On behalf of the approximately 1,000 members of the Association of National Park Rangers (ANPR), we thank you for your leadership in the development of the fiscal year 2005 Interior appropriations bill . . . Over the years, inflation, cost-of-living increases, natural disasters, and more recently, homeland security have eroded park budgets to the point that we must either "lapse" vacant positions or trim park services. In many cases, parks have had to do both. . . . We hope that, within present fiscal constraints, you will give the highest priority to National Park Service funding, with special attention to the park operations account.

Thank you for your ongoing commitment to our National Park Service and System

The 2005 budget as enacted combined the interests of the conferees and the administration in its budget request, resulting in a 2% increase in total discretionary spending. Mr. Chairman, we would like to thank Congress for its continuing work and support of the National Park Service with its funding needs in these fiscally difficult times. In our testimony today, we would also like to help identify what we believe are continuing shortfalls in the field due to increasing personnel and other costs that need to be addressed for the long-term.

FISCAL YEAR 2006 ADMINISTRATION BUDGET

The fiscal year 2006 budget as submitted by the Administration provides an overall decrease of 2.8% in total discretionary appropriations from fiscal year 2005. On the surface, there are some apparent pluses, which we support, despite the overall decrease. For example, the budget category of *visitor services*—which includes interpretation & education, ranger law enforcement (excluding the United States Park Police), visitor use management, health and safety, and concessions—is at a 10-year

high as a percentage of total NPS discretionary spending (14.1% in 1997, to 15.4% in FY06 budget request).

In addition:

- Ranger law enforcement funding and protection is at a 10-year high as% of total Visitor Services (33.5% in 1997, to 35.5% in 2006 request); and
- Interpretation and education is at a 10-year high as% of total discretionary spending (6.9% in 1997, to 7.9% in 2006 request), although as a% of total Visitor Services is basically flat over 10-years.

That being said, it still remains that the overall discretionary appropriation has declined in real terms since the last substantive increase in FY 2001. Discretionary spending in FY 2001 was nearly \$2.3 billion. The FY 2006 budget request is \$2.249 billion, for a dollar decrease of nearly 2%. Adjusted for inflation, this amounts to nearly 9% decrease in the past 5 years. When you add the annual adjustments in federal salaries, overall discretionary funding in real terms is noticeably diminished.

We are not preaching “the sky is falling” in the 2006 budget. Rather, we wish to assist policy makers and appropriators in understanding the long-term concerns of field rangers and other employees beyond a one-year budget picture.

PARK STORIES

In testimony over the past 15 years before this and other Congressional committees, ANPR has tried to share stories from the parks about conditions that might reflect on proposed legislation or policy. I would like to again share some of these with you.

For instance, at Sequoia-Kings Canyon National Park in California, great strides have been made to eradicate illegal cultivation of marijuana “plantations” within the park boundaries. Project funding to target eradication and interdiction efforts has helped the park, along with many cooperating agencies, to destroy much of these crops. The park greatly appreciates, and has successfully applied, the project funding it has received.

However, to fully control and completely eliminate this damaging activity, we must look beyond just project funding. The park has redirected as much internal funding as possible to continue this effort. Further redirection of funds would require the closure of some facilities or the neglect of park visitors or resources. The ranger staff is currently spread very thin, thus putting full prevention efforts beyond the ability of the current budget to accomplish. To prevent the initial planting and cultivation of this clandestine activity will take on-going investigation and apprehension of perpetrators, as well as other technical measures. To adequately undertake this mission, the park estimates a need for an additional 4.8 FTE for the long-term and a \$448,000 budget increase.

The impact of this illegal activity, which takes place in many of our parks, is not only to the society at large, but also to sensitive and valuable park resources. The growers provide water for cultivation to these fields by damming park streams, laying thousands of feet of plastic irrigation pipes, and indiscriminately using fertilizer and other chemicals. This causes runoff and pollution of streams and other public resources. This disturbance of natural plants and soil opens the way for the introduction of invasive exotic plant species, thereby requiring further time and resources for their removal. Permanent funds are needed to deter the damage to park resources for the long-term.

BUSINESS PLAN EXAMPLES

In other parks, the impacts of budget shortfalls can be illustrated by looking at the findings from published business plans prepared and audited for the National Park Service by MBAs for numerous parks across the system. Here are some of the findings for three parks:

At Gettysburg National Military Park, the business plan identified an operations and routine maintenance annual shortfall of nearly \$3.6 million in the FY 2001 budget, compared to an actual budget of just over \$6.1 million in that same fiscal year—a 37% shortfall. Since that time, the park’s financial situation has not improved. Although the park saw an overall increase in operations funding to \$6.45 million in FY 2005, there was an estimated decline in actual purchasing power over that period of \$734,900. In order to live within this shortfall, park managers have reduced staff from 141 permanent and seasonal full time equivalent positions in FY 2002 to 122 FTEs in FY 2005.

For Shenandoah National Park, the business plan for FY 2003 showed a need of \$19.6 million to fully fund operations, but had available only \$12.8 million from all funding sources, an operating shortfall of \$6.8 million. Although the park’s inflation-

adjusted base budget increased 14% between 1992 and today, personnel costs increased by 21.3% in the same period. The impacts?—Although Shenandoah has one of the worst air pollution problems of any park in the country, it's air resources specialist position has now been vacant for nearly two years because of insufficient funding. Another example: The park offered nearly 800 fewer ranger-led interpretive programs in FY 2004 (1,032) than it did in FY 2002 (1,824).

At Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area, the park's business plan analysis for FY 2002 identified \$15.9 million in needed annual operations funding and 238.4 positions needed in a full time equivalent workforce (FTE). However, the park had an \$8.9 million total budget and only 134.6 FTE. Of that sum, nearly \$8.5 million was obligated to personnel costs, leaving only about half a million for all other needs, including utilities, supplies, vehicle costs and materials.

Mr. Chairman, these are just a few examples from the field. We also would like to make a few brief comments about overall NPS funding needs and funding successes.

EMPLOYEE BENEFIT COSTS

The inflation of salary and personnel costs can quickly lead to parks needing to make significant reductions in visitor services and resource protection to absorb these costs. We want to emphasize our on-going concern that these costs be fully covered in each successive budget.

One example of these increases is the fact that as more employees retire under the Civil Service Retirement System (CSRS), the percentage of remaining employees under the Federal Employees Retirement System (FERS) will continue to grow, eventually to 100%. While saving overall federal dollars in future retirement annuities, the year-to-year cost to the NPS in covering FERS benefits as opposed to CSRS, which is the less-expensive system to fund up-front, will only grow. For example, in 2001, nearly 68% of all federal employees were working with FERS benefits. The percentage of direct salary compensation that an agency is required to pay for these benefits grew from 28% of salary in 1990 to 35% in 2005.

This is not an argument about FERS. It simply illustrates that over the next ten years nearly all NPS employees will require greater up-front benefit compensation under FERS, which averages 30% of base salary versus 14% under CSRS. This, combined with the fact that overall personnel costs often exceed 90% in many parks, will require an even greater budgetary support.

FEE DEMO

The previous fee demo program, which was replaced in 2005 by the Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act (with a 10-year sunset), has succeeded in providing substantial financial support to many parks for infrastructure needs, maintenance backlog, and visitor uses. This has been a very successful program of park and resources support provided over the past many years by Congress. As one western park superintendent recently voiced, "Fee demo is excellent!" We agree, and thank Congress and the administration in continuing this important and critical program. We urge permanent legislation prior to the 10-year sunset to continue infrastructure support, increased resources protection, and visitor use programs.

NATIONAL PARK CENTENNIAL ACT

One of the more promising ideas we have seen to address the NPS long-term backlog needs, and provide substantial needed funding for the natural and cultural resources challenges, is the proposed National Park Centennial Act (introduced in the Senate by Senator McCain as S. 886 on April 21 and in the House by Congressman Souder as H.R. 1124 on March 2). Mr. Chairman, while we understand this is not a hearing on this bill, we are encouraged by this effort to bring the NPS to a sustainable level by 2016, the 100th anniversary of the establishment of the NPS in 1916. While it may not provide the ability to restore permanent staff levels lost by attrition, setting a goal for the decade makes sense. It is analogous to the very successful "Mission 66" initiated in the 1950s that looked forward over a ten-year period to identify park deficiencies, and to help bring the NPS housing, visitor centers, and other facilities up to modern standards of visitor services by the 50th anniversary of the NPS in 1966. We would be pleased to provide further testimony if desired at any future hearing on this bi-partisan legislation.

CONCLUSION

In summary, Mr. Chairman, we continue to be optimistic, yet cautious about the next ten years or so, as there is the great potential for the 2006 and future budgets

to result, if not careful, in over-all deterioration in field-level staffing in parks and important program activities. However, we look forward to supporting NPS management in its efforts to effectively implement the budget as finally enacted, and joining with them and with Congress in identifying the long-term needs and short-falls facing the Service in the next 10 years, particularly at the field park level.

Thank you again, Mr. Chairman, for inviting the Association of National Park Rangers to testify here today. I will be glad to answer any questions you may have, or assure that the Association provides you further information on any issue that I cannot answer to your satisfaction.

Senator THOMAS. Mr. Arnberger.

**STATEMENT OF ROBERT ARNBERGER, ON BEHALF OF THE
COALITION OF NATIONAL PARK SERVICES RETIREES, TUC-
SON, AZ**

Mr. ARNBERGER. I am Robert Arnberger, recently retired from the National Park Service in August 2003 after a 34-year career working in ten different parks and managing one regional office.

My last two assignments before my retirement were as the superintendent at Grand Canyon National Park and as Alaska regional director.

Today, I represent the 395-member Coalition of National Park Service Retirees, former employees who have joined together in a non-partisan group to bring their views and expertise to the table in the national endeavor to protect our National Park System, some 12,000 years worth of cumulative experience.

Despite the fact that the Congress has established strong standards of care for the units of the National Park System, financial and political support from successive Congresses and Democratic and Republican administrations have almost never provided the necessary resources that the National Park Service requires to fully carry out its mission.

Why do the headlines seem never to change? The deferred maintenance backlog continues to grow even as we try to reduce it. Reduction of services is real and happening, and Federal assets are deteriorating.

This Nation's growing deficit, the war on terror, and diminishing Federal budgets would suggest that our efforts to properly care for our parks will never catch up to the needs.

The Coalition recognizes and greatly values some of the gains over the years to the National Park Service budget, but the needs have far outstripped the gains. Professional reports that document the need for more law enforcement rangers languish without effective action.

There are fewer educational programs, fewer resource protection patrols, reduced visitor center hours, reduced maintenance, and reduced seasonal employees.

I recently talked to two park superintendents who indicated that 92 percent and 97 percent of their budgets were fixed costs. Each year it costs more to run our parks, and those increases have never really been covered.

A program division chief in a large Eastern national park relates, "Every year, the operational budgets are hit by assessments, from Congress and the administration. In fiscal year 2004 we incurred an across-the-board reduction; our salary increase is not fully funded; a further .646 percent Department of the Interior reduction; a

.59 percent reduction called for in the Omnibus Bill; a uniform assessment; an assessment for computer software licensing; and a 2 percent assessment from our regional office to help them help us.”

The National Park Service is caught in a self-perpetuating downward spiral that devalues the very purposes why these places have been set aside in a park system of global pre-eminence. The rush to privatize and outsource devalues the importance of the “people’s parks” and their professional staffs, and has wasted valuable time and money to evaluate what park management responsibilities can compete with the private sector.

Budget attrition forces greater reliance by parks on additional private sources such as increasing numbers of volunteers, interns, foundations, donations, and friends groups being counted upon to carry out the basic functions of managing a national park, rather than providing a “margin of excellence” as they used to do.

While we celebrate and congratulate the spirit of volunteerism, friends groups, and foundations, the inability of the Federal Government to carry out its core responsibilities has blurred the bright funding line that must exist between the responsibilities of the Government and those of an assisting partner.

Even with all that generosity of volunteerism and philanthropy, the system is still falling behind.

In summary, rather than focus only on failures and fault—there is plenty of it to be spread around—let us instead celebrate the American optimism found in our National Park System with a fresh, bold, and renewed commitment to better care for our national legacy. The solutions to solving the problems are not exclusively based in budget health and increased funds, but also in developing a renewed bipartisan political commitment to solving long-term problems with something more than short-term solutions.

There is an annual shortfall of approximately \$600 million required to meet operational needs in the National Park Service. A planned and phased reoccurring budget increase will restore service vital to operational capacity.

The budget hemorrhage must be halted, because today’s deficits are tomorrow’s backlog, and we doom ourselves to the continued repetition of headlines that accentuate our failures rather than celebrate our successes.

We recommend convening a non-partisan National Parks Centennial Commission dedicated to restoring the values of our National Park System by evaluating the mission and roles of a national system of parks for the 21st century, and deriving from that true budget and true personnel needs and the appropriate governance models that are required.

Create a bold, multi-year plan focused upon the future of our National Park System, returning it to greatness by the centennial anniversary of the National Park Service in 2016.

We retirees stand ready to continue to work, as we did in our careers, and carry that on into our retirements. We are still involved and we still care, and we are still here to give assistance where we can. Thank you, sir.

Senator THOMAS. Good. Okay. Well, thank you. Thank you very much for being here.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Arnberger follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF ROBERT ARNBERGER, ON BEHALF OF THE COALITION OF
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE RETIREES

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for the opportunity to appear before this subcommittee which is examining the management and operational capacity of the National Park Service. I am Robert Arnberger, recently retired from the National Park Service in August, 2003. Before my retirement I dedicated 34 years to the protection of our national park system working my way up the ladder from seasonal park ranger, to park historian and interpreter, to protection ranger, Chief Ranger, to Superintendent and finally to Regional Director. My last assignment as a Superintendent was at Grand Canyon National Park managing one of our nation's greatest "crown jewels" from 1994-2000. My last assignment, from which I retired, was the Alaska Regional Director in charge of over 54 million acres of our nation's wildest land. I spent virtually my entire career in the field familiar with all aspects of operations that are required to carry out the National Park mission.

Today, I represent The Coalition of National Park Service Retirees, former employees who have joined together in a non-partisan group to bring their views and expertise to the table in the national endeavor to protect our National Park System. Many of the Coalition's 390 members were senior leaders who received awards for outstanding stewardship of America's top natural and cultural resources and represent more than 12,000 years of cumulative experience in managing our nation's park system.

I congratulate you on the focus and scope of today's hearing. America's national park system needs more champions like yourself, and others, because without champions the system of parks as we have known them will become an unfortunate footnote of our nation's history, rather than a glowing example for the nation's future. Despite the fact that the Congress has established strong standards of care for the units of the national park system, financial and political support from successive congresses and Democratic and Republican Administrations have almost never provided the necessary resources so that the National Park Service can indeed ". . . conserve [the resources] and provide for the enjoyment of the same in such manner and by such means as will leave them unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations." One former senior manager of the Park Service in the Coalition summed up the situation this way: "The headlines are always the same". The deferred maintenance backlog continues to grow and today's park operational deficits become tomorrow's backlog. Looking in the crystal ball of the near future considering this nation's growing deficit, the war on terror, and diminishing federal budgets suggests that our efforts to properly care for our national heritage found in the parks will never catch up to the needs. The national park system does not suffer alone in trying to carry out the grand democratic ideals of our nation's way of life under increasingly difficult circumstances. Just balancing the federal budget is daunting, much less coping with the myriad other problems of leading and managing our democracy. Since champions of the park idea are found throughout our Congress and our society we believe that there is still an opportunity to continue the legacy of American parks and assure their rightful place in our American culture.

The Coalition recognizes some of the gains over the years to the National Park Service budget but the needs have far outstripped the gains and there is still much to do. The headlines repeat themselves about deferred maintenance needs and operational shortfalls at parks all across the country. Professional and objective reports that document the need for more law enforcement rangers languish without effective action. Budget deficits have created severe staff shortages at all levels which have reduced abilities of parks to provide for the enjoyment of park visitors, to protect them during their visits, assure the roads, restrooms, sewer and water systems meet standards, basic science and historic preservation requirements are carried out. A year ago the Coalition released the findings of a new national survey based in part on information from 12 representative U.S. national parks. The Coalition report found the following: budgets were down at eight of the 12 parks; employee levels were reduced at all of the parks; six of the 12 parks already had or would cut visitor center hours; all six of the surveyed historic parks would allow key resources to further deteriorate without needed maintenance; nine of the 12 parks had made cuts that would result in reduced experience for visitors; and, most surprisingly, some parks were even cutting vital law enforcement positions needed to protect visitors and natural and cultural resources—even though NPS policy specifies "no net loss" in these positions. In summary, the Coalition's research, speaking directly with park managers, found that many parks were leaving permanent jobs unfilled, reducing the hiring of needed seasonal employees, shortening visitor seasons, curtailing visitor center hours, eliminating interpretive programs, and cutting back on re-

source protection patrols. Frankly, they have no other options. Last year the Administration called these “service-level reductions” to lighten the blow of what they really are—they are cuts, pure and simple.

Field operations have been cut to the bone and there is no room for continued cuts. Indeed, maintaining the status quo for “deferred opportunities in the future” is not sufficient either because the status quo is already below the standard required to carry out core mission responsibilities. I talked to one field superintendent two weeks ago who indicated 92% of his budget was in fixed costs. Each year it costs more to run our parks and those increases are never really covered. A senior division chief in one of our largest eastern parks reflects what really happens: “*year after year Congress authorizes mandatory pay increases to federal employees without fully funding them. In FY 04, we received a 4.1% pay increase with less than a 1% park budget increase. As managers, we groan when we see proposed salary increases because we know it will diminish our ability to fulfill our mission—and at the same time we are happy for our staff who work so hard*”. Additionally, a factor sometimes forgotten relates to the conversion of the federal retirement system from Civil Service to FERS. This same division chief relates, “*With the federal match of retirement accounts, overhead for employees has skyrocketed from about 11% to close to 50% in some cases and as Civil Service employees retire replaced by FERS employees the salary overhead for parks increase. It seems as if the budget increases we do get do not accommodate this easily predictable demographic trend*.” The parks do not face these issues alone. The Washington Office and Regional Offices face similar problems. I managed a Regional Office and can accurately say that these offices provide desperately needed technical and staff assistance to all the parks. Yet, the operational budgets that get to the parks are impacted by the lack of funding at all levels and this division chief relates, “*every year the operational budgets are hit by assessments—from Congress and the Administration. In FY 04 we incurred an across-the-board reduction; a further .646% Department of the Interior reduction; a .59% reduction called for in the Omnibus Bill; a uniform assessment; an assessment for computer software licensing; and a 2% assessment from our Regional Office to help them help us*”.

The National Park Service is caught in a self-perpetuating downward spiral that devalues the very purposes why these places have been determined to be the most significant sites of our nation’s natural and cultural heritage and set aside in a national park system of global pre-eminence. The rush to “privatize and outsource” to commercial interests devalues the importance of the “people’s parks” and has wasted valuable time and money to evaluate what park management responsibilities can compete with the private sector. This has not only devalued the importance of these national landscapes and historic shrines as just another “commercial enterprise” but has sent a similar message to stressed, under-funded and underappreciated professional staffs who do jobs no one else in this country can do. The reduced buying-power of budgets that actually reach the parks creates staff attrition and inability to carry out the National Park Service core mission. This attrition forces greater reliance by parks on additional private sources such as increasing numbers of volunteers, interns, foundations, donations and friends groups being counted upon to carry out the basic functions of managing a national park, rather than providing a “margin of excellence” as they used to do. While we celebrate and congratulate the spirit of volunteerism, friends groups, and foundations, the inability of the federal government to carry out its core responsibilities has blurred the bright funding line that must exist between those responsibilities of the government and those of an assisting partner. This places a heavy burden upon the philanthropic organizations seeking funds for parks who must answer queries about why the government is unable to adequately fund our parks and questioning the true commitment of this nation to adequately provide for its national park system. And the sad truth is that all of those outside sources combined are actually not filling the gap in the basic functions. Even with all that generosity of volunteerism and philanthropy, the system is still falling behind.

Rather than focus on failures and fault—though there is much fault to spread around in both political parties and numerous Administrations—the Coalition believes we should celebrate the success of the national park system to present day—and there is much success to be shared amongst us all. Successive generations of Americans, speaking through their elected representatives, have decided that these places are special and merit the most special protection in perpetuity. Let us celebrate this American optimism found in our national park system with a bold and renewed commitment to better care for our national legacy. The solutions to solving the problems are not exclusively based in budget health and increased funds, but also in developing a renewed bipartisan political commitment to solving long term problems with something more than short-term solutions. We are in this “for the

duration” and we must develop better long-term support systems that are consistent in growing the park system forward responding to this need.

The Coalition of National Park Service Retirees has offered suggestions about how we might end this downward spiral, based upon a report released in September 2004 titled, “*A Call To Action: Saving Our National Park System*”, a copy of which we provide to the Committee to be submitted to the formal hearing record.

- There is an annual shortfall of approximately \$600 million required to meet operational needs in the National Park Service. A recurring budget increase will restore Service ranger protection and education programs, fill lapsed positions throughout the Service, provide facility managers with funds required to care for federal assets, and continue the recent programmatic gains in science and resources management. The budget hemorrhage must be halted because “today’s deficits are tomorrow’s backlog”.
- It is time to invigorate a national dialog to explore the issue of governance of our national park system to determine how our government can best carry out its role, on behalf of the people, to preserve our system of national parks and to pass them on unimpaired to future generations. It is time to end the repetition of headlines about park deficits, deferred maintenance, and reduced visitor services. We recommend convening a non-partisan National Parks Blue Ribbon Commission dedicated to restoring the values of our national park system by evaluating the mission and roles of a national system of parks for the 21st century, and deriving from that the true budget and personnel needs and the appropriate governance organizational models. The Commission would report to Congress, the President and the American public. Let this effort create a bold, multi-year “*Keeping the Promises*” plan focused upon the future of our park system within the broader national and international context of environmental management, the retirement of deferred projects, and the restoration of operational budgets returning our park system to greatness by the Centennial Anniversary of the National Park Service in 2016.

Working with all the champions of our national park system, the Coalition of National Park Service Retirees stands ready to continue the work we carried out as respected career professionals on into our retired life—to assure our parks are preserved and enjoyed by our citizens leaving a legacy to be proud of for the generations yet to come.

Senator THOMAS. Mr. Moore, as you look at the role of volunteers and the role of philanthropic groups, are there any changes that you think would make the program work better or that would be beneficial for what you are seeking to do?

Mr. MOORE. Well, as we have seen, the Americans gravitate very naturally to the national parks in terms of their giving and generosity of time. And the changes, I think, that could help that giving more along would be, for example, the ability to more effectively combine donor dollars with Federal dollars for fund raising campaigns, possibly better recognition of donors in parks, and just kind of swifter systems of approval of fund raising activities.

Senator THOMAS. Do you think that people who visit the parks, do they know what the volunteers have done? I remember, for instance, a company that put in the boardwalk around Old Faithful, and they put little signs up, not huge signs, but little signs, so people did know and appreciate that. Is that the case with the volunteer?

Mr. MOORE. Yes. I think so. At our park, for example, we have 16,000 volunteers, almost an entire small town of volunteers helping the park. And they are recognized both directly by the National Park Service staff and at times through events and through on-site recognition of their work.

Although I think it is at times hard for the American public, who see our parks as beautiful as they are and with the wonderful appearances that they give, to understand that there is a need and a call for action for them and an opportunity for them to contribute

back. But the word is getting out, obviously when you look at the volunteer numbers.

Senator THOMAS. Yes. I think so. And the Junior Ranger program is designed to be able to get people to understand what parks are about and so on.

Mr. Werst, what—as you operate now, what would you say is the No. 1 issue facing park rangers?

Mr. WERST. Well, the staffing, I believe. The way things are going right now with our budgets, as you have heard here before, mandatory pay raises and things like that, it is just starting to really eat away. And you can actually see that attrition taking place in the staffing, which means you do not have a ranger—enough rangers there to do all the programs they might have done 5 years before. Perhaps there is not a law enforcement ranger available to do a patrol in a certain area that maybe 5, 10 years ago, there was—things like that.

And I really see that as probably being our most challenging aspect right now.

Senator THOMAS. Have you served where border patrol and so on was important, like Organ Pipes or whatever?

Mr. WERST. I have not been down near one of the borders, no, sir. I have been at Carlsbad Caverns National Park. That would be the closest I have come to an international border, but I have not experienced the same types of things that the folks at Organ Pipe have.

Senator THOMAS. Yes. That is pretty tough stuff. They spend almost all of their time and energy looking—trying to take care of illegal immigrants and drugs coming across. Of course, they are right on the border, and that makes it a hard thing.

Obviously, most everyone does not have enough money. Are there things from an organizational structural management standpoint that you think could be changed that would pick up some of the slack?

Mr. WERST. Could I get back to you, sir? I would have to think about that for a little bit and—

Senator THOMAS. Yes. But you do not sense mismanagement as being a major function then?

Mr. WERST. I do not believe so, sir, no. You know, I believe that the National Park Service management is honestly trying to manage things as well as they possibly can, and we try to help them as best as we can. So I really do not think that mismanagement is really a major factor.

Senator THOMAS. Yes. And it is tough.

Mr. Arnberger, I would certainly—as I said, there is never enough money. I think, as a matter of fact, over the last 4 or 5 years, there has been a pretty substantial increase in park budgets. Now, this year is at least proposed to be down. We do not know where it will be when it is over, but is there, again—let me ask you kind of the same question, do you think there are major things that could be done to more efficiently operate or changes that could be made structurally that would make it work better?

Mr. ARNBERGER. First of all, I would reply that there is always efficiencies that can be sought for and looked for.

Senator THOMAS. That is right.

Mr. ARNBERGER. And anybody that says that something is purely—is 100 percent efficient is lying to you, as you know. So there is always places to find efficiencies.

So the real question is effectiveness. And I think that it is pretty clear to our group that for several decades, the National Park Service has been operating at much less than what it needs. Witness the very fact that we have a deferred maintenance budget, and witness the fact that we have operational challenges. Those things come over a long period of time, and not solving them on a regular and recurring basis has led us to where we are at.

I guess, you know, there is always places where you can make some changes and so forth, but I think I would prefer to—and I give you this analogy not in humor, but the Park Service—you know, treading water is a real practical short-term strategy for staying afloat. But ultimately, in the long term—the long term consequence and practical eventuality is drowning.

And the story is not doom and gloom. And the story is not one of beautiful sunsets as well. But we are in this place of treading water. And it is our belief that it is time to strike out, to do something different, and to see if we can retire those vexing headlines that have been facing us for years after years with something else.

Senator THOMAS. You mentioned competitive sourcing. Understanding that that is not designed to take the place of rangers and interpreters and professionals, but rather to do some of the maintenance work, some of the cleaning work, some of those kinds of non-professional duties, do you not think it makes sense to provide some opportunities to have a little competition and see if there are not other ways to do things?

Mr. ARNBERGER. The National Park Service has had a long history of success in contracting. We have long contracted lots of our science in different ways with universities. We have contracted with concessionaires who provide certain visitor services.

Let me best answer your question with a fact—and you know this because of your familiarity with the Service and with Yellowstone—that up to 30 percent sometimes of an individual's job can be in other duties, on a variety of duties.

So one day I am sitting in my office there at Grand Canyon, and the fire alarm bell rings. And that was normal. And I thought I would let my staff handle it. Come to find out, it was one of our historic structures that was on fire. I roll to it in order to give what a senior manager can give, which is not much but standing there—

Senator THOMAS. Sure.

Mr. ARNBERGER [continuing]. And being of some help. The person that was on the truck running the pump was my information technology chief. The person that was holding the hose and the handle of the hose going in the front door was the chief of interpretation on the South Rim, a district. He was followed by a maintenance man that was going in, and all had been trained. And the incident commander on the incident was a park ranger.

And when I stood there and I watched what was going on, all of those people had to dedicate time and energies to stay qualified so that they did not kill themselves in trying to save these assets.

That story sometimes gets lost in the discussion about outsourcing and competition. And I think that in that particular discussion, sometimes we focus too much on efficiency and less on value and benefit. And certainly that is a case where value and benefit was returned by having all of those multi-disciplines there.

Senator THOMAS. Sure. Yes. I do not think there is any question. I just, as a matter of fact, yesterday had a forest service employee in who was pointing out that he does this, and then where there is a fire, he switches over and does that.

Mr. ARNBERGER. That is right.

Senator THOMAS. But we are not talking about that kind of thing. We are talking about such things as delivery of goods, you know. At any rate, you mentioned this commission, the commission—or who—

Mr. ARNBERGER. I mentioned the commission, yes.

Senator THOMAS. Just generally, how would you see that structured? How would it be composed? Who would it be and so on?

Mr. ARNBERGER. I see it structured by a non-partisan national stature group, perhaps several former presidents or whomever that, in fact, could take an unbiased and non-partisan look at where the national parks fit into the 21st century and how it fits in the overall context of our—managing our environment, not with just public lands, but how, in fact, we manage these most special places and to look at that and look at it in the light of the future. And then also support—delve into and separate fact from fancy about: What are the true needs in personnel?

Senator THOMAS. Yes.

Mr. ARNBERGER. What are the true needs in terms of funding, especially in the context of moving ahead?

Senator THOMAS. Yes.

Mr. ARNBERGER. And we have had several wonderful examples of this country stepping forward to do such things like that, such as the CCC and such as the Mission 66 project that, in fact, took us to another level.

And we believe that there is—it is time to do that. I have a slight difference with the director on that. The advisory board is a wonderful board. It has served its function and it serves its function. But the advisory board—I think it was 2003 or 2001, somewhere right in there—came out with a truly visionary plan.

Senator THOMAS. Yes.

Mr. ARNBERGER. It was basically parks for the 21st century. That plan sits on a shelf right now.

Senator THOMAS. Yes. I tend to agree with you. And part of it, as I mentioned to someone else, is this idea of where do we go in the future and what is the criteria for additional parks as opposed to State parks and opposed to local parks and so on, because everything that we want to preserve is not going to be in the scope of the national park, I do not believe.

Mr. ARNBERGER. That is right.

Senator THOMAS. Finally, Mr. Werst, have you run across—I think I heard this from several—because of the COLA on wages, they have had to leave some vacancies in the staff in order to make up that? Have you had that experience?

Mr. WERST. Yes, I have. Throughout my entire career, going back to 1988 when I started as a seasonal ranger at Gettysburg and that was—that first year as a seasonal, I started to hear stories of how many staff we had at one time and just a constant eating away of the money available just for paying salaries, just started to get fewer and fewer people as a result. And it has just continued on up until the present day.

Senator THOMAS. Yes. Well, it is part of the problem.

Well, gentlemen, we thank you for being here, thank you for what you do. And all of us are dedicated to making sure that parks succeed in the future. And I hope we can work with you on that, so thank you very much. We appreciate it.

[Whereupon, at 3:56 p.m., the hearing was adjourned.]

APPENDIXES

APPENDIX I

Responses to Additional Questions

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR,
OFFICE OF LEGISLATIVE AND CONGRESSIONAL AFFAIRS,
Washington, DC, June 21, 2005.

Hon. CRAIG THOMAS,
Chairman, Subcommittee on National Parks, Committee on Energy and Natural Resources, U.S. Senate, Washington, DC.

DEAR MR. CHAIRMAN: Enclosed are responses to the follow-up questions from the oversight hearing on the National Park Service's funding needs for administration and management of the National Park System held by the Subcommittee on National Parks on May 10, 2005. These responses have been prepared by the National Park Service.

Thank you for giving us the opportunity to respond to you on these matters. Sincerely,

JANE M. LYDER,
Legislative Counsel.

[Enclosure.]

QUESTIONS FROM SENATOR THOMAS

Question 1. What percentage of the National Park Service budget is devoted to administration such as the Washington and Regional Offices?

Answer. About 9 percent of the total National Park Service (NPS) operations budget about \$150 million out of \$1.8 billion—is spent on the Washington office and the seven regional offices. Much of the work done in these offices is of direct benefit to the parks, and in fact many regional office staff spend large portions of their time working in parks. Responsibilities that are handled in Washington and the regional offices consist largely of administrative work, such as payroll and benefits, which is more cost-effective to conduct centrally than in individual parks.

Question 2. How much has the National Park Service spent on travel each year during the past 5 years? How much of that was used for travel by personnel in the Washington DC and Regional offices? How much was spent on overseas travel and travel to foreign countries?

Answer. Total NPS travel costs were as follows:

[In millions of dollars]

Table with 1 row and 6 columns: NPS Travel Costs, 42.6, 45.5, 51.5, 44.2, 36.4

Travel costs of Washington, DC and Regional office personnel were as follows:

[In millions of dollars]

Table with 2 rows and 6 columns: WASO, Regions, 10.9, 11.3, 11.4, 11.8, 14.2, 13.4, 13.6, 12.1, 11.3, 9.4

International travel costs for NPS employees were as follows:

[In millions of dollars]

Int. Travel	n/a	641,000	652,000	330,000	119,000
-------------------	-----------	---------	---------	---------	---------

Note: Figures for FY01 and FY02 provided by GAO

Total NPS travel costs were reduced by 29 percent from FY 2002 to FY 2004. International travel costs for NPS personnel were reduced by 82 percent from FY 2002 to FY 2004.

Question 3. I have heard that some park units have had to lapse positions, eliminate temporary and seasonal employees in order to find sufficient funds to give full time employees authorized pay increases and keep up with increasing utilities costs.

- A. Is this true?
- B. Why did it occur?
- C. Which parks have done this during your tenure as Director?
- D. How many lapsed positions are there currently?
- E. Was the White House aware of and did they approve of this approach to allocating the full complement of an authorized pay increase?

Answers.

A. Yes.

B. Management frequently requires trade-offs between the number of permanent, seasonal, and temporary employees and decisions on how and when to fill vacant positions and meet other needs. Short-term lapses in filling positions are a normal part of managing any organization, since replacements are rarely found immediately once a position becomes vacant. However, long-term lapsing of permanent positions, as well as reductions in the number of temporary and seasonal employees also has occurred, largely because of the need to absorb pay and pay-related benefit costs. Congress has enacted a higher percentage pay increase than the Administration budget proposed every year for the past four years. In the past two years, the differences between budgeted and enacted pay increases have been 2.0 percentage points or more.

In addition, in many parks, long-term lapses of some positions have occurred as a result of the need to fill other types of positions. A park manager may have had to lapse interpretive ranger positions, for example, to help pay for additional law enforcement positions. NPS has developed a core operations analysis process that seeks to determine the right mix of permanent, seasonal, and temporary employees that is efficient, sustainable, and covers all of the key functions.

C. Nearly all parks in the System have had to lapse positions.

D. The total number of lapsed positions changes daily in the System as positions are filled. There is no readily available way to determine on a System-wide basis which vacant positions we are actively trying to fill and which ones we do not intend to fill due to budgetary or other concerns.

E. The Administration is aware that agencies face difficult budgetary decisions when Congress enacts a larger pay increase than the rate budgeted for in the President's budget, and that lapsing positions is a way of compensating for a higher mandated pay increase. Because pay costs account for such a large proportion of a park's operating expenses, lapsing positions is often the only short-term option a park manager has available to respond to higher mandated pay increases.

Question 4. The Washington Post reported in yesterday's paper that the cultural resources portion of the National Park Service was undergoing a reorganization. The Post used the term "massacre" to refer to the changes.

- A. What changes are you making in the cultural resources section of your organization and why?
- B. Why is Carol Shull, the Keeper of the Register for more than a decade and a National Park Service employee for over 30 years, being relieved of responsibility for the National Register program?
- C. How were people directly affected by the changes notified of the impending changes? Were they given options for retirement or other career opportunities?
- D. What makes the new Keeper of the Register better qualified than the individual being replaced?

Answers.

A. The NPS is proposing to restructure the cultural resource programs in Washington, DC to establish a management arrangement that will promote cooperation

and efficiencies among related programs and focus priorities on the core mission of the NPS. The approximately 150 employees serving under the Associate Director for Cultural Resources and reporting directly to one assistant director will be grouped by related programs under three assistant associate directors: one for park cultural resources programs, another for historical documentation programs, and a third for heritage preservation assistance programs. Each of the assistant associate directors would be senior staff members who are emphasizing greater cooperation and efficiencies among related programs. This would be a more practicable and productive management arrangement than the current one.

In addition, the restructuring highlights the importance of the National Register of Historic Places within NPS and the Department of the Interior. By appointing the Associate Director of Cultural Resources to serve as Keeper of the National Register of Historic Places, the designation of Keeper will be returned to the highest level within the NPS Associate Director structure, where it was from the early 1980's to 1994. The elevation of the Keeper reflects the crucial role that the National Register has in nearly all of the NPS cultural resources programs.

B. Carol Shull will be reassigned to the position of Chief, Heritage Education Services, because of the importance of enhancing the American public's understanding of the importance of our cultural heritage. Ms. Shull has already established an important series of lesson plans for grades K-12 and travel itineraries using National Register properties. The proposed reorganization will utilize Ms. Shull's leadership and expertise to develop and implement similar heritage education programs in other cultural resource programs.

C. The people most directly affected were notified of the proposed new organization an hour before its formal announcement. The appropriate union officials were also notified in advance, as required by statute, regulation, and contract. It is up to each employee to decide whether or not to retire. Each affected employee will be assigned to a new position, at the same pay, that is appropriate to his or her professional background.

D. The new Keeper of the National Register, Dr. Janet Snyder Matthews, has 30 years of experience in preparing National Register nominations and National Register compliance documentation for work associated with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act. She has chaired the State of Florida's National Register Review board and served as State Historic Preservation Officer of Florida, where she oversaw the state's National Register program and compliance review program. These state positions provide substantive experience for understanding the National Register process from the grassroots nominations to State review to NPS submissions. Dr. Matthews also chaired the National Historic Landmarks Committee of the National Park System Advisory Board prior to her competing for and being hired for the career position of Associate Director for Cultural Resources of the National Park Service.

The National Register of Historic Places defines the benchmark for eligibility for Federal and State preservation grants and Federal historic preservation tax incentives and provides consideration for Federal Government actions that may affect resources. Raising the Keeper title to the highest possible level within the Associate Director organization reflects this important reality.

Question 5. The position of law enforcement ranger (GS-0025) qualifies individuals for retirement after 20 years of service. Some individuals that performed law enforcement ranger duties have been denied full retirement benefits. The code that qualifies these retirement benefits is 5 USC 8336(c), commonly referred to as 6(c) retirement benefits. Interpretation of eligibility is determined by the Firefighter and Law Enforcement Retirement Team (FLERT). It has come to our attention that there are many concerns as to how these retirement rulings are being made.

A. How many people have filed a request for 20-year retirement under 6(c) with FLERT each year since its creation in 1997?

B. How many of these requests have been denied each year since 1997?

C. What would be the cost in retirement pay and benefits over the next 20 years to cover those denied claims?

D. What is the current backlog of claims awaiting a ruling by FLERT?

E. What is the current status of benchmark position descriptions regarding the Law Enforcement Ranger, GS-0025 series and interpretation of this series as primary law enforcement duties as reviewed by FLERT?

Answers.

A. We do not know how many NPS law enforcement rangers have filed requests for 20-year retirement under 6(c). The FLERT office is only able to provide information on the number of claims reviewed in FY 2004 and FY 2005 at this time. We do know that about 1,200 requests for 20-year retirement were filed prior to 1997.

B. In FY 2004 and FY 2005, out of 316 claims reviewed, 99 were fully denied, and 121 were partly denied, and 96 were approved.

C. Without knowing the number of people whose claims have been denied since 1997, we cannot calculate the cost of covering denied claims.

D. As of March 18, 2005, there were 135 claims pending.

E. FLERT has told NPS that they do not think NPS law enforcement rangers (025 series) fit the definition of law enforcement personnel. NPS is in discussion with FLERT about this matter.

Question 6. How much have your costs increased since 2001 as a result of homeland security and have you seen an equivalent budget increase to support the effort?

Answer. Since the attacks on September 11, 2001, NPS has received over \$120 million in extra appropriations directly related to homeland security costs. This money has gone toward security at border and icon parks, training and recruitment, non-recurring construction projects, and emergency funds to respond to the actual attacks. NPS also used concessions fees to cover nearly \$12 million in extra homeland security costs at the Statue of Liberty. NPS has also absorbed over \$9 million in costs that allowed the Service to react to Code Orange threat levels, mostly in 2003.

Question 7. What is the fixed costs percentage of park operations service wide?

Answer. A recent analysis of NPS accounting data showed that 85 percent of total obligations in park operating accounts were for pay, personnel benefits, and other fixed costs in 2004.

Question 8. You have been director of the NPS for four years and have done an admirable job in that position.

A. What have been your priorities for the past 4 years and what progress have you made toward accomplishing them?

B. Has the budget allowed you to implement any special projects or programs in support of your priorities?

C. What are your priorities for the next 4 years?

Answers.

A. My priorities for the past four years have been: improving the conditions of facilities in the National Park System, sustaining park operations, continuing enhancement of natural resource protection, and improving management of the National Park Service. We have made substantial progress in each of these areas.

- On facilities, if Congress approves the levels of funding requested in the Administration's FY 2006 request, we will have fulfilled the President's commitment to spend \$4.9 billion on the deferred maintenance backlog over five years. Since FY 2002, we have undertaken over 4,000 maintenance projects. The comprehensive asset management strategy we have developed has enabled us, for the first time in NPS history, to inventory our assets and measure the condition of our facilities. We anticipate having comprehensive condition assessments for all 388 park units by the end of FY 2006, which will enable us to target funds to our highest priority needs. We are targeting funding to cyclic maintenance to ensure that recent improvements will be adequately maintained.
- For park operations, NPS received the largest annual increase in its history for FY 2005—a net increase of \$64 million. The Administration's request for FY 2006 builds on that budget with a proposed increase of \$50.5 million for park operations, a figure that fully covers salaries, benefits, and fixed costs.
- For natural resource enhancement, the Natural Resource Challenge continues to build a scientific base of knowledge about park resources. Funding proposed for FY 2006 will allow us to complete the monitoring of park vital signs and water quality in all 32 multi-park networks.
- In the area of management reforms, we have made progress on several fronts. In our concessions program, we have made the program much more business-like, and we have begun to professionalize our workforce. By the end of this year, we expect that we will have awarded 447 of the almost 600 NPS concession contracts over a four year period. Other business-like improvements we have made include the development of a park scorecard to aid in the evaluation of base budget increases for park units, a core operations analysis to focus resources toward functions that are critical to the NPS mission more effectively and efficiently, and a partnership project review process to ensure that only partnership construction projects that are of the highest quality and are determined to be feasible and sustainable are recommended to Congress for approval.

B. Yes, the funding that NPS has received from Congress, largely reflecting the Administration's requests, has enabled us to make considerable progress on all of the goals discussed above.

C. My five stated goals as Director of NPS, what we refer to as “Doing Business in the 21st Century,” are the following:

Management Excellence: the NPS promotes management excellence and strives to be a model of government accountability. The improvements to concessions, the development of park scorecards, the analysis of core operations, and the review of partnership construction projects mentioned above are examples of ways in which we are promoting management excellence.

Outdoor Recreation: the NPS has a critical role in helping provide appropriate outdoor recreation, playing an important part in the seamless network of parks and the physical and mental health of all Americans. We are developing an effective strategy that includes a public education campaign to integrate park units, managed areas, and outdoor recreation programs with the President’s Healthier U.S. Initiative, and have established a subcommittee on health and fitness of the NPS Advisory Board.

Conservation: we are working to select and implement major restoration projects that demonstrate good science and practical resources. The progress we have made in inventorying and conserving natural resources in our parks through the Natural Resource Challenge is an integral part of this work.

Sustainability: the NPS is actively pursuing sustainability of its facilities, operations, business practices and resources through conservation, sustainable design, fiscal responsibility, information technology, active partnerships, philanthropic support and positive relationships with Congress. Our efforts to increase civic engagement to develop a seamless network of parks are part of our pursuit of sustainability.

21st century Relevancy: to continue to be relevant to contemporary America, programs and initiatives will emphasize the importance of understanding the needs of all cultures and making parks relevant to young people. One example of our efforts in this area is promotion of the Junior Ranger program.

Question 9. What progress has the administration made toward reducing the maintenance backlog in the national park system?

Answer. NPS has made significant progress in undertaking specific maintenance projects throughout the National Park System as well as in establishing and implementing a new management framework that will guide the Service’s approach to asset management. If enacted, the President’s FY 2006 budget and surface transportation reauthorization proposal would fulfill the pledge to devote \$4.9 billion over five years towards the NPS maintenance backlog.

With the funds appropriated and collected thus far since FY 2002, NPS has undertaken over 4,000 projects ranging from road repairs, to historic building stabilization, to restroom rehabilitation. In addition, NPS has completed the first-ever systematic inventory of its assets and conducted initial condition assessments at all parks. Comprehensive condition assessments are scheduled to be completed by the end of FY 2006.

Question 10. How many competitive sourcing studies have been conducted, in which disciplinary areas, and what were the findings?

Answer. Two competitive sourcing studies have been conducted. In 2003, NPS conducted a study involving archeology work, covering 43 FTE, at the Southeast Archeological Center in Florida. The government bid prevailed. The process had a one-time cost of \$129,000 with projected savings over five years of \$4.2 million. In 2004, NPS conducted a study involving maintenance work, covering 74 FTE, at Natchez Trace Parkway. The government bid prevailed there as well. The process had a one-time cost of \$192,000 and is projected to save \$1.105 million over five years.

Question 11. When functions of the Heritage Conversation and Recreation Service were “consolidated” by secretarial order in 1981 several policies and programs, including Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) state assistance, were assigned to the National Park Service. It soon became widely known that many senior NPS staff viewed the LWCF state program as competition for appropriations that might otherwise go to the national park system, or other federal land programs. In fact, two of the stated reasons for the President’s proposal to terminate and zero fund the LWCF partnership: we don’t have enough money, and it is no longer important to the department’s mission, appear to reinforce those perceptions. The budget document further observes that local and state public recreation and park system are sufficiently funded to take care of their own needs, despite the fact LWCF is not a means tested program, but rather one of reinvestment of Outer Continental Shelf Fund receipts. Even the Office of Management and Budget determination of no demonstrable program values is questioned by informed groups and individuals close to the program.

A. Executives from the Department of the Interior and National Park Service often speak of the value to the American people of partnerships. Why is there little or no mention of LWCF state and local investments that collectively meet national recreation and park goals?

B. Would you document for the subcommittee your assertion that state and local governments are sufficiently funded to meet present and presumably future recreation resource needs?

Answers.

A. The LWCF State grant program has a good record of contributing to national recreation and park goals: nearly 40,000 grants, valued at approximately \$3.6 billion, have been awarded since the inception of the program. The elimination of grant funding in the proposed budget is due partly to the determination that the mechanism for actually measuring performance has been inadequate, as OMB's 2003 PART review revealed. We are working hard to remedy this problem so that we can fully integrate the LWCF State grants program with recreation and park performance goals in the future.

B. The Fiscal Year 2006 *Interior Budget in Brief* (February, 2005), page DO-11, states that "The LWCF State grants support State and local parks that have alternate sources of funding through State revenues and bonds." That statement does not address sufficiency of State funding; it points to other available sources of funding for the purposes of the program—including bonds, which are a financing mechanism that is available to States but not the Federal government.

Question 12. The budget proposes to terminate funds for state LWCF assistance. Would you elaborate on this? Does this suggest that the President or the Secretary will recommend legislation to terminate the program?

Answer. LWCF State grant funds were not included in the FY 2006 budget request for two principal reasons: One was that the Administration is committed to the President's goal of reducing the Federal budget deficit in half in five years; this resulted in budget decisions aimed at meeting the most mission-critical elements of the National Park Service. The other was that in 2003, as mentioned above, the LWCF State grant program went through a PART review by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) as they evaluated the effectiveness of all Federal programs. OMB concluded that the program could not adequately measure performance or demonstrate results.

The decision not to fund LWCF State grants in 2006 is not unprecedented. This program was not funded in fiscal years 1996 through 1999. It was also not funded in 1982 and was funded at essentially nominal levels for several years later in the 1980's.

The Administration does not plan to recommend legislation to terminate the program. The National Park Service will continue to process new grants from prior-year funding and administer and monitor the projects through completion, which often take State and local sponsors three to five years. NPS staff will also continue to administer the provision of the LWCF Act that requires that an assisted site remain in public outdoor recreation use in perpetuity unless the Secretary of the Interior gives approval for converting the site to another use. In addition, the program will continue to work with all of its partners to enhance the use of performance information in managing the program.

QUESTIONS FROM SENATOR BINGAMAN

PARK SERVICE RESTRUCTURING

Question 1. The proposed employee restructuring in the cultural resources division has drawn a lot of attention recently. As part of the restructuring, your Associate Director for Cultural Resources disallowed "flex time" schedules for employees at the GS-14 and GS-15 levels in the cultural resources division. Are you planning a similar restriction on flex time employment for other Park Service employees outside of that division? If not, please explain your rationale why employees in one group should be treated differently from other employees at the same grade level within the same agency. Also, will SES and political appointees be subject to the same work time restrictions?

Answer. The disallowance of alternative work schedules for GS-14 and GS-15 employees by the Associate Director for Cultural Resources applies only to employees who are under her management those who work in cultural resources programs in Washington, D.C. Each manager is responsible for determining an effective and efficient schedule to perform the work assigned; the Associate Director for Cultural Resources feels that she needs her key program management officials, all of whom but two are supervisors, to be present on a regular schedule. Other staff remain free

to work under an alternative work schedule with the approval of their supervisor. The Associate Director for Cultural Resources is the only SES employee in cultural resources and there are no political appointees in this program area. The Associate Director herself works a regular schedule.

MANAGEMENT POLICIES

Question 2. During your confirmation hearing in 2001 I asked about your support for the NPS Management Policies, particularly Management Policy 1.4.3, which states in part: "Congress, recognizing that enjoyment by future generations of the national parks can be ensured only if the superb quality of park resources is left unimpaired, has provided that when there is a conflict between conserving resources and values and providing for the enjoyment of them, conservation is to be predominant." You answered, "I am advised that courts have consistently interpreted the Organic Act this way. Therefore, I would agree that the resource is always the primary focus." I would like to follow up on your answer.

A. In September, 2003 you wrote to the Chairman of the House of Representatives' Subcommittee on National Parks that you had begun "a systematic review of the NPS Management Policies of 2001." What is the status of that review? Are the Management Policies being revised?

B. In the same letter, in response to a question asking you to provide the "legal basis for concluding that the Organic Act requires that 'when there is a conflict between conserving resources and values and providing for the enjoyment of them, conservation is to be predominant'" you replied "we believe this statement is an inaccurate interpretation of the law . . . The Act states that enjoyment by the public should be achieved consistent with leaving resources unimpaired for future generations. This does not mean that the mere presence of conflict constitutes impairment or places conservation as preeminent over enjoyment." Your answer to me at your confirmation hearing seems at odds with your later answer to Congressman Radanovich. How do you reconcile both of your responses? Has your position changed from your testimony in 2001? Do you still agree "that the resource is always the primary focus" and can you assure me that you are not seeking to change Management Policy 1.4.3?

Answers.

A. The NPS Management Policies issued in 2001 are under review in the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Fish and Wildlife and Parks. Until that review is concluded, we will not make any decisions about whether or not we plan to seek any changes in the Management Policies.

B. I do not interpret the responses you referred to as being inconsistent. In my 2001 confirmation hearings, I gave a response that indicated my understanding of how the courts had interpreted the Organic Act with respect to giving priority to conserving resources. In the 2003 letter to the Chairman of the House Subcommittee on National Parks, my response took issue with that interpretation. As noted above, until the Assistant Secretary's review is concluded, we will not make any decisions about whether or not we plan to seek any changes in any of the Management Policies.

MAINTENANCE BACKLOG

Question 3. Your testimony referred to the comprehensive asset management strategy that the Park Service has developed to inventory and measure the condition of its facilities. I have yet to hear any National Park Service official provide a clear answer as to the progress being made in reducing its backlog. You have stated many times that the FY 2006 budget meets the President's goal of spending \$4.9 billion to address the deferred maintenance backlog. Aside from the fact that the President's original goal, as stated in the FY 2002 *Interior Budget in Brief* (p. DH-20) was to *eliminate* the maintenance backlog over five years, not simply address it, and that the majority of the funds provided reflected a continuation of previous funding levels, can you tell me specifically what the current estimate is of the deferred maintenance backlog? I understand that the exact maintenance backlog will be constantly changing as new projects are added and others completed, but if you don't have a specific estimate, how can you measure your progress in any meaningful way?

Answer. Trying to establish a set dollar amount for the maintenance backlog and measuring progress in terms of dollars spent is not an effective way to measure or evaluate performance accomplishments relative to NPS assets. It is far more effective to measure performance over time, which NPS can now do through the use of the Facility Condition Index. In addition, it is important for the agency to set prior-

ities within its asset inventory, so that limited funds can be applied to the most significant resources within parks. It is not practical to assume that every asset, regardless of its priority, will be brought to or kept at to the same level of condition. NPS has established a framework for reducing the backlog while also managing the asset inventory and making smart decisions so that future growth in deferred maintenance is avoided.

HOMELAND SECURITY FUNDING

Question 4. Your testimony noted that one of the major challenges that the National Park Service has faced in recent years has been the need for more security, and that after the September 11 attacks, the Park Service has focused more law enforcement and security resources on icon parks and other high risk areas. I would like to better understand the effect homeland security costs have on your budget. I have been told that security-related operating costs for the Park Service now total approximately \$40 million in annual recurring costs, and that the Park Service does not receive reimbursement from the Department of Homeland Security for those costs. Is that correct?

Answer. Annual costs are about \$43 million a year and those costs are not reimbursed by the Department of Homeland Security. However, NPS has received increased operating funding to pay for increased security costs. Since 2001, the overall operational base level of funding for NPS law enforcement and security has increased about 25 percent.

LAND AND WATER CONSERVATION FUND

Question 5. The FY 2006 budget proposes no funding for the Land and Water Conservation Fund's State grant program. In the 2004 annual report on the State LWCF program prepared by the National Park Service, you are quoted as saying that "the 40th anniversary [of the LWCF] is an opportunity for us to reflect the program's enduring and ubiquitous legacy. Parks and recreation in America depend on LWCF. Without it, many of our nation's parks would simply not exist." According to the FY 2006 *Interior Budget in Brief* an OMB PART review in 2003 "found the current program could not adequately measure performance or demonstrate results." Given your experience as a former State parks director, do you agree with the OMB assessment that the LWCF State program cannot demonstrate results? If so, how do you reconcile that with your praise for the program in the 2004 annual report?

Answer. The 2003 PART review indicated that the LWCF State grants program could not adequately measure performance. This does not mean that the program itself performed poorly, but rather that we were unable to adequately measure performance at that time. We still believe that the LWCF State grants program is a good one and has many positive benefits for natural recreation. However, we cannot demonstrate this with more than qualitative and anecdotal evidence. Therefore, the challenge before us now is to work with our State and local partners to obtain good data and performance measures for enhanced management of the program in the future. We are working toward this goal with OMB and are making excellent progress.

QUESTIONS FROM SENATOR LANDRIEU

Question 1. Can you please address the recent restructuring of the Cultural Resources division at National Park Service? The dramatic changes have been caused great concern. Can you please outline the changes, why they were made, and what potential negative affects they may have on the National Park Service?

Answer. The proposed restructuring of the cultural resources programs in Washington, D.C. is designed to promote cooperation and efficiencies among related programs, and to enable us to focus on our core mission and enhance the visibility and effectiveness of historic preservation for the nation. It highlights the importance of the National Register for Historic Places through the appointment of the Associate Director of Cultural Resources to serve as Keeper of the National Register.

The proposed structure groups related programs and functions under three assistant associate directors: one for park cultural resources programs, a second for historical documentation programs, and a third for heritage preservation assistance programs. These changes are based on a year-long review of the legislation and other documents related to cultural resources, interviews with clients and customers, and comments and suggestions from managers and staff. In the overwhelming number of cases, employees' work and duties are unchanged.

A handful of employees will be assigned to new positions appropriate to their professional background. For example, Carol Shull, the Keeper of the National Register, will be reassigned to become Chief, Heritage Education Services, in recognition of the importance of the heritage education program that she established to enhance the American public's understanding of the importance of our cultural heritage and the need to preserve our Nation's history. John Robbins will be the Chief of the Historic American Buildings Survey (he is currently manager of the National Center for Cultural Resources, a position proposed for abolishment.) A separate Historic Preservation Grants division will be established because of the high visibility and critical nature of our many preservation grant programs that administer over \$70 million in annually awarded grants.

National parks will benefit from the restructuring because the cultural resource programs that affect parks will be grouped under one assistant associate director. The National Conference of State Historic Preservation Officers and the National Trust for Historic Preservation, our two closest partners, have endorsed the changes involved with establishing the other two assistant associate positions. We also have heard from dozens of current partners in the governmental and private sectors regarding the positive nature of the proposed changes.

Question 2. Why did NPS again zero out funding for NCPTT, the National Center for Preservation Technology and Training program operated in conjunction with Northwestern State University in Louisiana after several officials have made supportive comments indicating its importance to the National Park Service, as well as private and public preservation organizations?

Answer. The budget proposal for NCPTT is not to eliminate the center but to eliminate direct Federal funding for the center. NPS recognizes that the NCPTT has provided a valuable service. However, the NCPTT could become self sufficient by charging user fees to the entities that directly benefit from the services. In these fiscally tight times, the Administration is seeking to ensure that NPS resources are aimed at the programs that most directly serve the parks. In the past, none of these grants have been used to directly benefit NPS park units. The NPS will continue to rely on the Historic Preservation Center in Frederick, Maryland, for training park staff on preservation work on historic buildings, which does provide direct assistance to parks.

Question 3. Why did the National Park Service budget request eliminate all funding for heritage areas after the NPS Advisory Board concluded "Heritage areas add new dimension to the National Park Service providing an opportunity to conserve nationally important living landscapes and cultures . . . the NPS has an important role as an expert, convener and catalyst. The NPS can also provide credibility, planning and interpretation expertise, and organizational capacity . . .?"

Answer. We recognize that the Congressional heritage area designation is an effective tool to bring together local communities interests for the preservation of local heritage resources. With designation, local communities are able to coalesce support for important regional needs that conserve cultural and natural resources, improve the quality of life, and help to develop sustainable self-supporting economies. We believe, however, that Congress should enact national heritage area legislation that would provide a clear process and criteria by which to assess the national significance and other relevant characteristics of proposed heritage areas.

The FY 2006 budget request does not eliminate but rather reduces funding for the national heritage areas to \$4.9 million for commissions and grants. This reflects an emphasis on encouraging them to become self-sufficient. However, the FY 2006 request expands opportunities and resources that the heritage area partners can competitively apply for, including \$15 million for Save America's Treasures, \$38.7 million for historic preservation grants to States and Tribes, and \$12.5 million through the new Preserve America grants programs.

THE COALITION OF NATIONAL PARK SERVICE RETIREES,
Tucson, AZ, June 14, 2005.

Hon. CRAIG THOMAS,
Chairman, Subcommittee on National Parks, Committee on Energy and Natural Resources, U.S. Senate, Washington, DC.

DEAR SENATOR THOMAS: I am in receipt of your letter of May 13, 2005, with further questions regarding my testimony before the Subcommittee on National Parks of the Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources on May 10, 2005. I apologize for the delay in replying but I did not receive the letter until June 2, 2005. I will reply to the six questions in the order in which you presented them.

Question 1. Based on your experience as a former Regional Director of the National Park Service, what do you consider the highest priority for the National Park Service at this time?

Answer. I believe the highest priority is to immediately increase the annual recurring operational budget for the National Park Service by at least \$600 million dollars to restore the Service's ability to manage the daily operations of our national park system. There is respectful recognition of some of the budget gains made over recent years but the needs have far outstripped the gains indicating the scope of the problems that must be addressed. This recurring budget increase will restore Service ranger protection and education programs, fill lapsed positions throughout the Service, provide facility managers with funds required to care for federal assets, and continue the recent programmatic gains in science and resources management. The budget hemorrhage must be halted, pragmatically based on the notion that "today's budget deficit is tomorrow's backlog". The second highest priority is to stimulate and create a national dialog to explore and determine the future of our national park system. It is time to end the repetition of headlines about park deficits, deferred maintenance, and reduced visitor services. I believe that a non-partisan Centennial Commission on Parks should be established composed of the highest caliber national leaders dedicated to restoring the values of our national park system by evaluating the mission and roles of a national system of parks for the 21st century. The work of this Commission would create a bold, multi-year plan focused upon the future of our park system within the broader national and international context of environmental management.

Question 2. What area of park operations and management is in greatest need of budget adjustment?

Answer. I believe there are two critical operational areas that must be addressed quickly. The first is resource and visitor protection programs. The promise made to the people of the United States to protect resources and people in our parks is in jeopardy. The crisis is acute, as revealed in no less than six formal reports over the past six years. These reports have ranged from a Report to Congress, to an internal report by the Departmental Office of Inspector General, to reports by nationally accredited institutions such as the International Chiefs of Police and National Association of Professional Administrators. There is absolute unanimity in all the reports in characterizing the crisis that faces the National Park Service to assure resource protection, public safety and the welfare of our ranger force engaged in law enforcement, search and rescue, and emergency medicine. No new studies are required. What is required is a strategic plan to implement the studies already completed. Where required, effective budget strategies in collaboration with the Department of the Interior and Congress must be developed to achieve staffing and equipment solutions in balance with other important operational requirements in parks. The figures for personnel additions vary from 615 new rangers (28% increase over existing) to 1295 new rangers identified by the NPS pursuant to requirements in Title 8 of P.L. 105-391, the National Park System Omnibus Management Act of March 2000. As background for your consideration I attach, for the record, a draft White Paper titled, *Our Heritage Protection: A Promise to the People*, written for the consideration of the Service's National Leadership Council (9/6/02) to be considered as a potential strategy for engaging the issue at the national level.

The second area requiring increased emphasis is Education and Interpretation. The core mission of the National Park Service has always included and been defined through protection of resources and providing visitor experience. Education is a required role of the agency in order to preserve resources and provide visitor enjoyment. Education as a component of the NPS mission is not new. The NPS must better connect stewardship education with resources research and science. Education can serve as the connection between the public who own the resources and those invested with the responsibility to manage them. The existing education and interpretation program in the NPS, while not in perfect health, is vibrantly alive at different, isolated parks across the System. These programs have inspired millions of people about the importance of parks to the global community. However, the program languishes. It is under-funded and under-lead. It is a program that suffers budgetary cuts the first. Connections to outside educational institutions are sporadic or not in place. Working with schools in curriculum development, innovative distance learning opportunities and site-based school opportunities must be a key focus of national park service educational programs in concert with improved conventional visitor use programs. Several NPS Regions were innovative in seeking new approaches but were consistently hampered by lack of funds and national leadership. One such approach, *A Contract With The Future* (3/02) is attached, for the record, as one example of the unrealized potentials of this program.

Question 3. Does the National Park Service allocate sufficient funds for administrative functions such as travel and headquarters and regional duties?

Answer. The regional offices and other headquarters offices suffer at least the same levels of operational needs as parks do. These offices have successfully transitioned into more effective “support” and “oversight” institutions where a collection of trained professionals can meet the technical needs of groupings of parks. It is often more efficient and effective to centrally locate a cadre of technical professionals to meet the wide range of needs from a variety of parks. Often, the effectiveness of these professionals to offer assistance to parks is compromised by the lack of staffing to meet the diversity of needs and by lack of travel money to get to the parks to assist them. There are frequent cases where a field superintendent must tackle an issue or develop a plan that exceeds the capacity of the park to engage. In requesting assistance from support offices their pleas for help frequently go unanswered because the support office does not have the capacity either—they are stretched too thin. These technical support offices sincerely attempt to assist but their capacity to do so is frequently compromised. Frequently, the only way a support office can provide assistance is to assess the field units of a percentage of their field budgets. It is common practice, and a necessary one, to assess all field units from both a Headquarters Office level and a Regional Office level, to develop the contingency funds necessary to assist the field units. Incidentally, the Department of the Interior makes the same kinds of assessments of the Bureaus in order to fund Departmental initiatives, some of which have merit and some don’t.

Question 4. I have heard that some park units have had to lapse positions, eliminate temporary and seasonal employees in order to find sufficient funds to give full time employees authorized pay increases and keep up with increasing utilities costs. Did this occur while you were a manager in the NPS? Is this a widely practiced management option to make ends meet?

Answer. The answer to both of these questions is YES. This is a common management practice to meet the budget realities that park managers at all levels face on a daily basis. I would refer you to my testimony and the personal anecdote of a senior park manager that reflected upon this issue. That manager stated, “year after year Congress authorizes mandatory pay increases to federal employees without fully funding them. In FY 04, we received a 4.1% pay increase with less than a 1% park budget increase. As managers, we groan when we see proposed salary increases because we know it will diminish our ability to fulfill our mission—and at the same time we are happy for our staffs who work so hard”. Further, the problem is exacerbated by the higher cost of benefits “with the federal match of retirement accounts, overhead for employees has skyrocketed from about 11% to close to 50% in some cases and as Civil Service employees retire replaced by FERS employees the salary overhead for parks increase.” Further, the Coalition of National Park Service Retirees released a report of a survey conducted in May 2004 of 12 representative parks across the nation. Relative to your question the following findings are important:

- Eight of the 12 National Parks are operating with 2004 budgets that went down—not up.
- All of the 12 national parks have 2004 employee levels that are down—not up.
- Six of the 12 national parks already have or will cut visitor center hours or days.
- All of the six historic parks reported further deterioration of key facilities.
- Nine of the 12 national parks reported circumstances that will diminish in a material way the ability of visitors to enjoy the national parks.
- Some parks will see less visitor and resources protection and reduced emergency response capability.

This survey is found at www.npsretirees.org in a press release dated May 27, 2004. Specific anecdotes from individual park managers eloquently describe the severe budget restrictions they face and the necessary management decisions they must take to balance the budget.

Question 5. In your testimony you referred to a survey of 12 parks. Was the survey conducted by mail, e-mail, or internet? How many individuals responded to the survey? What steps did you take to prevent the results from being skewed by having multiple responses from the same individual?

Answer. Again, I would direct you to the website, www.npsretirees.org to a press release dated May 27, 2004, which listed the contacted parks and survey methodology. The Coalition went behind the scenes in May 2004 in an attempt to get the facts about two dozen representative national parks across America. Coalition researchers went directly to their colleagues still serving in the national parks and asked them to tell the “real story” about what is going on in terms of cutbacks in

key services and personnel. The same questions were asked of all park managers. Many of those reporting acknowledged that the information was public or could be made available through FOIA request or under the authority of the NPS Director's Orders on civil engagement and public involvement. However, some of those who declined to participate cited fears of possible retribution. From its original focus on about two dozen parks, the Coalition ended up getting full reports back on 12 representative parks from across the nation. The survey, with common questions, was conducted by phone and through personal discussion. All two dozen park managers responded. However, some requested their responses not be used. The park manager was contacted only once by one Coalition researcher to avoid multiple responses from the same individual. There is no reason to believe conditions have measurably improved in FY 05. Before I presented my formal testimony to the Subcommittee I personally interviewed 2 different park superintendents. As I stated in my oral testimony, these two superintendents reflected that 92% and 97% of their budgets were in fixed costs.

Question 6. Your testimony refers to the promise of a National Parks Blue Ribbon Commission focused on determining the role of the NPS in the 21st Century. How would your organization assist in this panel were it to become reality? What are some of the visionary insights the Coalition of National Park Service Retirees can offer?

Answer. The Coalition represents a valuable source group for this panel. Today, over 400 retirees have joined the Coalition in efforts to better protect our national park system. Many Coalition members were senior NPS leaders who received awards for stewardship of America's top natural and cultural resources. The Coalition ranks include 5 former directors and deputy directors of the National Park Service, 23 former regional directors or deputy regional directors, 25 former associate or assistant directors at the national or regional level, 53 former division chiefs at the national or regional level, and over 100 former park superintendents or assistant superintendents. Collectively, the Coalition represents over 12,000 years of cumulative experience in managing our nation's park system. Bringing this level of experience and commitment to the work of the commission would add significant value to the work carried out and to the recommendations the commission might make. Coalition members would seek to assist in any way that would contribute to the success of the commission's work. Our members can serve as staff to assist the work of the panel "interpreting" the culture of the NPS and the rich legislative framework that has been developed to create and protect parks. Our members are equipped to participate with national stature panelists in the work of the Commission. Our organization would seek to provide input and testimony before the commission on a wide range of topics. Our organization would place great value in helping to shape the commission's mission, goals and objectives.

The fundamental principles of our national park system as "cumulative expressions of a single national heritage" must be nationally invigorated by citizens, organizations, our politicians, and our government as a concerted national endeavor led and fed by enlightened leaders in all communities and in all segments of our society. It is time to restore the great idea to the prominence it has always enjoyed in our national community, insulated from the divisiveness of partisan politics and destructive political ideology not practiced in the public interest. It is time to invigorate a national dialog to explore the issue of governance of our national park system, identifying the problems that prevent long-term strategies and long-term sustainability of our parks and determine if we can "find a better way" to manage our natural and cultural legacy within the context of our national and international environmental efforts. Enlightened national leadership must create the circumstances to begin this dialog on behalf of the broadest public interest. We believe that endorsing and creating a "Blue Ribbon Commission on Parks" or a "Centennial Commission on Parks" is timely given that the Centennial Anniversary of the National Park Service approaches in 2016. What better way to commemorate past successes than through a bold, responsive and innovative plan for the 21st century assuring our precious parks are passed on, unimpaired, to future generations?

Models exist for such an effort. The Civilian Conservation Corps program of the 1930's and the Mission 66 Program from 1956—1966, well demonstrate the commitment and national capacity that can come to bear on the work of the commission. We also commend to your attention two insightful reports that attempted to gain the national attention the parks deserve. *National Parks for the 21st century—the Vail Agenda*, (1991) developed in response to the National Park Service's 75 anniversary was a bold attempt to look forward and fashion a national system of parks for the future. Recently, the National Park System Advisory Board Report, *Rethinking the National Parks for the 21st century*, (2001), provided thoughtful guidance for the National Park Service in meeting the 21st century future.

In all these efforts the Coalition of National Park Service Retirees stands ready to assist and participate in any meaningful way. Even in our retirements our commitment to this great idea remains unabated.

Thank you for the opportunity to answer your questions and further elaborate on the testimony provided to you.

Sincerely,

ROBERT L. ARNBERGER,

[Enclosures.]

APPENDIX II

Additional Material Submitted for the Record

OUR HERITAGE PROTECTION: A PROMISE TO THE PEOPLE

WHITE PAPER DRAFT 9-6-02 BY ROBERT ARNBERGER

“In support of the National Park Service mission, Law Enforcement serves the public interest to protect resources and people, prevent crime, conduct investigations, apprehend criminals, and serve the needs of the visitors.”

Director Fran Mainella

The National Leadership Council has renewed its commitment to the ranger profession to develop an effective and efficient law enforcement program that is well managed and adequate to fulfill the mission, vision, and values of the National Park Service and the Department of the Interior. The promise made to the people of the United States to protect resources and people in our parks is in jeopardy unless we begin to affirmatively respond to defined failures with a new future.

The crisis is acute, as revealed in no less than six formal reports over the past four years. These reports ranged from a Report to Congress, to an internal report by the Departmental Office of Inspector General, to reports by nationally accredited institutions such as the International Chiefs of Police and the National Association of Professional Administrators. There is absolute unanimity in all the reports in characterizing the crisis that faces the National Park Service and its programs necessary to assure resource protection, public safety and the welfare of our ranger force engaged in law enforcement. Undeniably, there have been failures in seeking and defining a cohesive and responsive strategy to meet this crisis that has been well understood at the field operational level for at least a decade while being less than fully understood and embraced by National Park Service headquarters leadership over the same period of time. A new opportunity to craft a sustainable strategy that effectively engages this crisis stands before us. Lives depend upon it. Irreplaceable resources, which could be lost to future generations, rely upon it. *The promise to the people* must be honored through effective and coordinated action taken by all those who share in these fundamental responsibilities.

Organizationally, the National Park Service is already making necessary decisions by creating a new senior leadership position (SES level) titled Associate Director for Resource and Visitor Protection. The incumbent in this position will also be considered the Chief Ranger of the National Park Service and, in collaboration with the Chief, U.S. Park Police, will provide leadership, focus and policy direction for the important cadre of professionals in the Service who carry out the multi-specialist Park Ranger functions of law enforcement, emergency services, wildland and structural fire protection, and a variety of other protection program management duties.

The National Leadership Council has endorsed this organizational alignment and endorses the focused professionalism that will be gained to more affirmatively and strategically respond to the resource and visitor protection crisis before us. This first organizational decision is:

- A recognition of the significant complexity and inherent hazards associated with the Park Ranger and law enforcement profession that demands technical skill, exceptional good judgment, and professionalism in carrying out the demanding requirements of these important functions.
- Support for a dedicated cadre of Park Rangers and enforcement specialists who professionally carry out the highest ideals of resource stewardship and public service in furtherance of the National Park Service mission.
- A ratification of the intent of the variety of professional reports and investigations commissioned by Congress, the Department of the Interior, and the National Park Service that have provided direction and guidance required for program improvement.

- A statement of clear intentions to implement changes to meet the highest standards of program excellence as a *Pledge of Excellence* to our employees and a *Promise to the People* of this nation.

A STRATEGY IS REQUIRED . . .

The National Park Service leadership has commissioned a Law Enforcement Task Force to focus strategic actions and articulate implementation of recommendations made in six major reports. Expectations of the Task Force were to identify a road map to a phased plan or blueprint that logically and constructively achieved compelling support for renewed vigor of our resource and visitor protection programs and implementation of the essential program improvement recommendations. No new studies are required. What is required is a strategic plan to implement the studies already completed. Where required, effective budget strategies in collaboration with the Department of the Interior and the Congress must be developed to achieve staffing and equipment solutions in balance with other important operational requirements in parks.

In March 2000, in accordance with Title 8 of Public Law 105-391, the National Park System Omnibus Management Act, the National Park Service conducted a study of the law enforcement needs of both the United States Park Police and National Park Service Rangers. The report was provided to the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) for consideration in the formation of coming budgets presented by the President. Yet, as we now prepare for the 2004 and 2005 budgets little of the focused recommendations made to Congress in this report or in the five others, including one by the DOI, have found their way into formal budget planning for the President. The lack of action on the budget front is occurring at the exact same time that our agency is confronted with demands for protection far in excess of any time in our nation's history. Rangers are engaged in a war against drugs along 1019 miles of international border and 2357 miles of coastline. The National Park Service has assigned 1658 person-resources and dedicated 47,826 person days in direct support of the Department of the Interior and National Park Service homeland security priorities during the period 9-11-01 to 8-14-02. The number of rangers dedicated to homeland security assignments has ranged as high as 300 out of a permanent workforce of 1360. Over 500 different National Park Service rangers have pulled homeland security duties. While the limited ranger workforce is engaged off-site, protection needs in the parks are simply not being addressed and the risks to resources and to people is acute. The National Park Service response to the September 11, 2001 attack, coupled with the tragic reality that two park rangers and one park policeman have lost their lives while performing their enforcement duties just since this March 2000 Report to Congress was completed, underlines in very human terms the crisis before us and the human toll we will pay for hesitation and lack of action.

The Service's Law Enforcement Task Force needs to develop:

- A comprehensive budget strategy to be developed in partnership with the Department of the Interior and the Office of Management and Budget.
- A comprehensive informational and educational campaign to be developed to connect constituencies, employees, the public and members of Congress to the issues and solutions. A committee of the Task Force should be commissioned to carry out these tasks.

Budget Strategy elements to consider:

1. The National Park Service Comptroller and Chief of Budget, Bruce Sheaffer must lead and formulate the budget approach. His long history in the organization and respected credibility on the Hill and in the Department will be essential in order to succeed. A funding baseline must be established to account for increases in law enforcement appropriations since and including the Ranger Careers initiative and effectively portray the constructive impacts they have had on the organization as the first of many required investments this agency requires. The NPS must also articulate the internal organizational, training, and operational investments that have already been made in response to the various reports.

2. The two most important reports that articulate the needs of the agency relative to the National Park Ranger are the *NPS Law Enforcement Program Study: Park Protection Rangers pursuant to P.L. 105-391, the National Parks Omnibus Management Act of 1998* and the report, *Policing the National Parks 21st century Requirements* completed by the International Association of Chiefs of Police in October 2000. These two reports need to be embraced as the definitive reports that articulate the needs and resolutions. They need to be updated and integrated in order to strategically use the information in them. They do not need to be validated further.

They need to be embraced and effectively portrayed as providing the “road map to the future”. Flexibility will be required in responding to issues that were not on the table when these reports were finished, but the agency is incredibly fortunate to have these two baseline reports available for use in establishing the case record of need.

3. The two most important reports that articulate the needs of the agency relative to the Park Police are *NFS Law Enforcement Program Study: United States Park Police pursuant to P.L. 105-391, the National Parks Omnibus Management Act of 1998*, and *U.S. Park Police: Focusing Priorities, Capabilities, and Resources for the Future* completed by the National Academy of Public Administration in August 2001. Similar updating and integration is required in these reports.

4. Strategic guidance from the U.S. DOI Office of Inspector General made in its report, *Disquieting State of Disorder: An Assessment of Department of the Interior Law Enforcement* must be evaluated.

5. Prepare a multi-year phased budget approach consistent with recommendations in the above reports. The first phase should maximize the greatest gains to compensate for probable shifts in political support that can occur over long term, phased approaches. Targets for personnel and support increases should be closely tied to recommendations made in the two most important reports mentioned above. The figures for personnel additions vary from 615 new rangers (28% increase over existing) in the IACP report to 1295 new rangers in the Omnibus Act report. A strategy might be employed that merges the two report personnel recommendations into one package adding a total of 1000 new rangers in a 10 year period, with 700 personnel to be added in the first five years of increases. A rough review of figures already presented in several reports would place the approximate costs of the program near the 80-100 million dollar mark. The NPS must decide how to strategically portray Park Police and Park Ranger increases, whether in separate initiatives or a single initiative. A Business Plan approach should be taken to articulate the budget. A budget step-up plan might look like the following

Phase One

- FY 2004-50 ranger recruit intake program established at FLETC including personnel, training and support costs; funding a Case Incident Management System for required national reporting requirements; communication system funding meeting Narrowbanding requirements; specific park base increases for protection and law enforcement. Focus of this year is creating an organizational capacity to begin to handle increased recruits and necessary support and infrastructure costs.
- FY2005—100 new ranger recruits including personnel, training and support costs.
- FY 2006—150 new ranger recruits including personnel, training and support costs.
- FY 2007—200 new ranger recruits including all costs.
- FY 2008—200 new ranger recruits including all costs.
- FY 2009—150 new ranger recruits including all costs. A program assessment will be made to determine phase one capacity relative to phase two needs.

Phase Two

Add 300 or more new enforcement personnel as assessment dictates over a period of five more years (or less as the needs dictate). The assessment will look at emergent national law enforcement trends and needs coupled with trends and requirement faced by the parks at this critical mid-point in the phased program. Successes may dictate fewer personnel requirements and increased equipment requirements or situational analysis may indicate increased personnel requirements than originally predicted.

Elements to consider in a Comprehensive Informational and Educational Strategy

1. Obviously, a campaign to meet these needs must be accomplished in concert with the Department of the Interior and OMB. They must be integrated into all aspects of the campaign.

2. The strategy must focus on education about the extent of the problem and the values at risk as the fundamental component of gaining support.

3. Champions must be found within the Administration, Congress and constituencies.

4. We must present a balanced approach, able to articulate the relative priorities of how we balance this effort relative to the other operational requirements of parks.

5. We need accurate and effective marketing documents that better represent our role in protecting the nation’s heritage, of responding to a *Promise to the People*.

These should include brochures and attractive presentation of all pertinent reports, updated and accurate. Key aspects of the reports should be reproduced in attractive booklet form that portrays the ranger's important role in protecting our nation's heritage.

6. We need an effective external and internal messaging system to maintain momentum and to focus on success.

7. We might explore the use of video in a variety of ways to portray the important work that rangers do and more effectively use them in our national educational programs and our informational campaign.

8. Most importantly, the agency must develop sustainable momentum and focused leadership over the entire phase in period that is not susceptible to the ever-constant reality of "new programs" and "new initiatives". Organizational discipline will be hard to develop, and even harder to maintain.

Immediate Next Steps

- The work of the Task Force and the budget proposal concept must be taken to the NLC. This Task Force must carry its work out for the NLC instead of apart from it. It is time to bring the leadership and the Task Force together. Agenda item at NLC meeting September 16-19.
- Deputy Director Don Murphy coupled with the Regional Directors and their Deputies should invite several key representatives from the Regional Chief Ranger's Council to present before them and to clearly articulate a "sense of the field ranger" about the critical need to accelerate progress and accomplish some measurable products. Agenda item at RD/DRD meeting held in conjunction with NLC meeting September 18.
- A communique should be prepared and sent to the field articulating the most recent outcomes of the Yosemite Task Force meeting, approval to move ahead to create an Associate level position, and to lay out a general budget strategy. The field is exceptionally restless with, what appears to be lack of substantial progress by the Task Force—especially when considered in light of the tragic murder of Ranger Kris Eggle. Recommend release no later than September 5.
- Deputy Director Don Murphy needs to make preliminary contacts with the Department about conceptual approaches we are considering and seeking some level of DOI engagement in early planning. Recommend no later than September 13 to allow discussion at NLC meeting.
- Comptroller Sheaffer begin to prepare early budget approaches, collecting information, and establishing documentation of law enforcement budget expenditures since Ranger Careers that will be foundational to our work. Recommend no later than November 1.
- Deputy Director Murphy, Regional Director Arnberger, and other subcommittee members as needed, attend the IMR Chief Ranger's Conference in Salt Lake City, the week of November 4-8 in order to present status and listen to concerns. Similar visits should be made to other regional conferences. November 4-8.
- Full budget subcommittee meets at Reno, Nevada just prior to the annual meeting of the Association of National Park Rangers to formulate and advance the national budget strategy. November 14-15.
- Deputy Director Murphy and possibly the new AD/R&VP address ANPR and provide forum for discussion, input etc. Week of November 18.
- Subcommittee reports on progress to the NLC at their meeting held jointly with ANPR in Reno. November 20-21.

A CONTRACT WITH THE FUTURE

BY ROBERT L. ARNBERGER, NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
REGIONAL DIRECTOR, ALASKA REGION

MARCH 2002

"The act of creating a park is really an act of faith in all of the grand possibilities of the future. It is a contract with the future."

Dr. Shirley Malcom, National Park Advisory Board

PROUD TRADITIONS

The National Park Service has a tremendous untapped power to contribute to a more perfect American Union, a more perfect society, and a loftier vision of what the power of person and society can accomplish. Parks can serve as a foundation

of civic inspiration that it is important to care for all special places, no matter where they are, for they serve as the most basic underpinning of our way of life. They translate into *place* and *living idea* what freedom and equality represent in our society.

The American people have chosen their best places for their parks because they have felt their best in them. These places are landscapes and historic shrines in which we feel wonder, reverence, respect—and maybe responsibility. Americans take pride in those things that demonstrate America at its best. *We take patriotic pride* that we live in a land where such places exist and that we are a people capable of reserving this natural and cultural patrimony for future generations and ours. As our society evolves, their parks mirror the interests of the people. Americans are proud of distinctly American ideas and values, and in response, protecting *living ideas* is gaining prominence. The National Park Service is not just an organization that protects *place*, but also *ideas*.

Parks can not be saved by *only* protecting parks. The greatest dreamers of the greatest National Park System have never envisioned a system that might include every place they thought should be preserved. Thus, even an imagined core mission of saving parks can only be achieved through, and with others who share in the greater mission of carrying out *the patriotic* mission of stewardship of our nations *best places* and *ideas* wherever they may be and whoever may own them.

Herein is the ultimate and undeniable obligation to provide—and accept—leadership. The National Park Service must be a principled leader, with others, in everything it does. We must vision an organization that carries out national service on behalf of the people by providing inspiration and leadership, with and through partners, that can extend to all corners of every community and to all levels of our society. This requires the National Park Service to be the very best it can be at everything it does. We must set goals of quality performance and strive to improve upon them with every success or failure. We must involve our citizens to whom the benefits pass. We must respect others, the variety of their opinions and roles, as one of the distinctly American *ideas* that we protect.

Leadership is the capacity to create the circumstances where the larger collective community can shape the future of the parks and their programs. Effective leadership with others who share common endeavors and interests can only be achieved by finding *common cause on common ground with common idea*. Success will only be realized through management and resolution of differences, by helping others to succeed in their parts of the greater mission, and seizing opportunity to succeed when it is presented.

The core mission of the National Park Service has always included and been defined through protection of resources and providing visitor experience. These two values are passed to generations yet to be born—a contract with the future. *Implicit* in the mission, *lodged* in the fine print of this contract, *understood* by those who sign and implement the contract, and *expected* by those who benefit is that *education* is a required role of the agency in order to preserve resources and provide visitor enjoyment. Education as a component of the National Park Service mission is not new. Weary employees tired of new initiatives that seemingly arrive in mystery and disappear with boredom should not suspiciously view it as a new “initiative”. As well, those “watch-dogs” concerned with appropriate roles and functions of federal agencies should not view focusing and refuting National Park Service education efforts as “mission-creep”. Instead, education is an expression of who we are, what we stand for and always have, and what the potentials of the future can be. It is a validation of future purpose. It is more than a “tool” that is used to achieve our mission which limits potentials to short term strategies and transient gains and makes the effort susceptible to claims and allegations that our education programs are nothing more than “agency propaganda”, self serving and highly suspect.

PATHWAYS TO LEARNING

The National Park Service must better connect stewardship education with resources research and science. Education can serve as the bridge between knowledge and responsibility. Education can serve as the connection between the public who own the resources and those invested with the responsibility to manage them on behalf of the national interest. The National Park System has been called “America’s greatest university without walls”, yet what the parks offer to strengthen our common ties and to contribute to the overall sustainability of our planet are not well known. The overall benefits of almost 400 System sites in this “university” system, represented by a superbly talented work force, can wonderfully enrich the educational offerings provided to the citizens of this nation. This potential must be en-

gaged more effectively, be more deeply embraced by those who labor in the Service, better understood and appreciated by the citizens for whom the parks are set aside.

The existing education program in the National Park Service, while not in perfect health, is vibrantly alive at different parks across the System. It is a program tracing its traditions to the very formation of the Service through a long history of excellence in interpersonal interpretation provided by ranger-naturalists and “park interpreters”. Exciting youth environmental education camps, teacher education laboratories, natural history institutes, and classroom visits by uniformed educators continue to demonstrate the excellence of the program. National Park Service education efforts have been emulated across the world in an international park system modeled after the American Park system. Programs have served to inspire millions of people about the importance of parks to the global community.

Justifiably proud in what we do, the Service must also rise to higher levels to do what we do, *better*. Dr. Shirley Malcom, professional educator and member of the National Park System Advisory Board answers the question of “what then is better?” “*Better* is more focused, more coherent and cohesive, and more connected. *Better* is creating bridges with the systems around us in both formal and informal education”. Creating these bridges presents incredible challenges because the National Park Service is not organized nor staffed effectively to connect with the national educational institution. Dr. Malcom observes that “we do well at educating in parks, but are not organized to effectively bridge with other educational systems or to understand what those systems require.

Parks can also be inspirational and inspiration can be part of learning at parks, but on its own, inspiration is only a pathway to something else. The synthesis of whatever action inspiration causes will be through and because of education. Reflecting on the importance of parks in providing inspiration and the connection to education Dr. Malcom states, “these places are great and I am usually inspired—but what is next? Inspiration is an aspect of motivation—but it is not education. Provocation is an aspect of motivation—but it is not education. Education is the “what next?”. Our parks must provide inspiration and offer motivation, but we also can not lose the opportunity to connect to the “what next?”—and that is education. Education connects the sense of place and idea, with inspirational, learning, and enjoyment values, to actions and outcomes accepted and acted upon.

Perhaps, our real challenge lies in not trying to teach, but more importantly, to create opportunities to *learn*. We must focus on connections—connecting parks and people through education, connecting parks to other parks and special places, and connecting with larger educational themes across the country provides the glue of common purpose. Doing *better* requires the National Park Service to go beyond where we are. Doing *better* requires us to go further than inspiration alone. Doing *better* requires us to better utilize the individual pieces of our present effort creating an “educational mosaic” of conceived design envisioned to accomplish conceived outcome. Doing *better* will require improved levels of innovation and educational scholarship. Strategic leadership embracing and enhancing the full connection between the science of protecting parks and the science of educating about parks will be required. Innovation presently fermenting throughout the System must bubble upwards to senior leadership that can begin to strategically remake and focus the entire agency’s educational efforts. Programs and people that are stagnant must be challenged to new heights. Educational managers across the System must take hold of their own career disciplines and seek higher scholarship in fields of education and science. A new era of thought and experiment must compliment Freeman Tilden’s, age-tested “Interpreting our Heritage”, written in 1957. New thought and action must build upon Bill Browns respected “Islands of Hope”. It is sad to reflect that these remarkable volumes that have guided generations of National Park Service educators were written before computers, distance education, cell phones, VCR’s and CD’s! Indeed, one of the most exciting innovations to appear on the scene, Learning Centers associated with the Natural Resource Challenge, was a concept originated by innovative resource managers and senior superintendents—not the Service’s interpreters. Scholarship into what should constitute Service *education* and how it might differ from the art of Service *interpretation* is needed to better connect site-based visitor interpretive efforts with site-based educational programs with standards-based curriculum education. The professions of “ranger interpreter” and “education specialist” must be more cohesively linked to a more full understanding of what we want National Park Service *education* to be and the most effective niche it can fill. Through more effective scholarship we can link innovation to strategy. We need to do better “asset mapping”, linking what we do well with what others do well. Then, by linking multi-sector educational assets we can create bridges of opportunity. Strategic focus will be the principal product of scholarship and asset linkages.

SETTING THE NATIONAL COURSE

Collectively, with partners and participants, we must continue “to bubble excellence to the top” and set a strategic course to take our efforts to higher levels of success. A framework for those considerations might include the following:

- Reconfigure the education organization within the National Park Service so the Service can begin to create an “operational landscape” of renewed vigor, scholarship and strategic leadership required to do “better” as challenged by Dr. Malcom. Until the organization positions itself for leadership and success it will not be able to embrace a renewed focus on excellence and innovation. I believe a position of Associate Director of Education, Strategic Communications, and Partnerships must be established. This senior level leader should manage Harpers Ferry Center as a “center of educational excellence” replete with the agency’s leading technical experts in media, exhibitory, publications, and communication. Present dispersed offices overseeing interpretation, messaging, tourism, public affairs, and partnership work with a wide variety of foundations, cooperating associations, and friends organizations would be placed in this Directorate and will enhance the importance of education and its strategic linkages. I believe this realignment can be accomplished without major organizational dysfunction or displacement at very little cost. Of course, there are other viewpoints and potential organizational models of merit that deserve consideration.
- Create a tighter agency educational mission and strategic plan that more effectively creates the climate of educational service and leadership. Clarify roles and functions to differentiate service to the nation through education from more narrow, value-laden environmental activism that can be highly problematic to a public agency.
- Undertake a comprehensive System-wide identification of significant natural, cultural and recreational heritage themes represented in the System of parks that can begin the connection to the nation’s broader educational institutions. These themes begin to link to the variety of educational assets available to connect our efforts. National themes can be represented by regional and demographic based themes that continue to link each piece of the “mosaic” into a “conceived design and outcome”.
- Undertake asset mapping to determine potentials for partnerships and methodologies to accomplish goals in order to improve visitor interpretation, place-based education, standard-based curriculum development, and distance education. Seek “deep partnerships” that are long-term collaborative relationships, more beneficial than short-term associations without true program longevity.
- Determine specific education program niches most effective and appropriate for the National Park Service educational program at national, regional, and local levels. Determine standards of excellence, professionalism, and scholarship. Develop the partnerships, both informally and formally, to carry out the program. Define what program success is and how it might be measured.
- Change the face of the workforce and build the spirit of excellence to carry out an invigorated, empowered, and constantly evolving educational program. Hire more professional educators into the education workforce. Focus on program depth and long term sustainability rather than on program breadth and numbers of different programs.

INSPIRING PLACES INSPIRING PEOPLE . . . SETTING THE COURSE IN ALASKA

The Pacific West and Alaska Regions of the National Park Service have sought to model the leadership that must be required to move an improved program forward. A strategic plan titled, *Inspiring Places Inspiring People—2000-2004*, “provides the framework for people inside and outside the agency to collaborate on educational efforts that connect people, parks, and natural and cultural resources. It is a comprehensive strategy, embracing all activities used by the National Park Service and its partners, to inform and educate the public about park resources and issues. It is interdisciplinary in approach, recognizing that all employees contribute to the education mission. It declares the Service’s commitment to build and maintain lasting relationships with the education community as well as the broadest of constituencies, the American people and visitors to the parks from around the world.” Further, this bold and energetic plan clarifies that the term *education* “includes formal education (i.e., curriculum-based programs), as well as traditional interpretive services such as ranger-led talks, publications and other informational media. It also refers to media relations, community outreach, volunteer programs, international cooperation, and youth programs. National Parks serve as the mate-

rial and the means to teach, inform, inspire and motivate the people that we and our partners serve.”

We must invigorate our efforts to better achieve the vision of this extraordinary plan. We must activate energies throughout the region to put into action the goals and objectives articulated in the plan. I propose we consider a *5-point approach* that may focus our efforts:

1. Execute Leadership

Strategic implementation of *Inspiring Places Inspiring People* must be better coordinated and collectively embraced by all regional staff. The energy of this strategy is “drawn from its reliance on a park-based approach to realizing its purpose”. To this end, park superintendents and senior program managers across all levels of the organization are expected to implement these objectives by incorporating measurable goals and actions, appropriate to each park or program, into their organization strategic plans. Everyone is part of our educational effort and all programs must consider an educational component in their efforts and deliberations.

- In FY 03 we will commit to an additional position within the regional office funded through existing regional appropriations. This position will establish the “landscape of success” for this program by working with parks, programs and partners in a collaborative leadership role.

2. Integration of Education Effort

The variety of efforts presently underway needs to be coordinated and integrated into a single, comprehensive program. Natural Resource programs, including research being performed across the region needs to be published for the employee, the public and for other scientists brought under the educational banner. The impressive Cultural Resource publications program needs to join under the same banner. The wealth of knowledge in such areas as design and sustainability, visitor and resource protection, and community-assistance programs by the Rivers, Trails, Conservation Assistance program similarly need to be better integrated. Key to this, will be an inventory of existing efforts and asset mapping to determine publics and partners.

- In FY 02 the region completed a comprehensive assessment of curriculum based educational efforts being carried out in the parks.
- In FY 02 the region will undertake another assessment to determine the full range of programs being carried out at parks and all levels of the program. With this information more effective integration is possible.
- In FY 03 the region will undertake focused work with employees and partners to develop educational themes that fit within the national framework and resonate with Alaska people and places.
- In FY 02 the region committed to the development of a science publication printed twice annually that will focus on “NFS Research in Alaska”.

3. Create Deep Partnerships

We must better develop long-term collaborative relationships with assets that share common vision and common goals. We must expand and deepen the obvious relationship with the Alaska Natural History Association and the National Park Foundation. We need relationships with other Alaska environmental organizations, Alaska business organizations, and State and local governments. We need to establish partnering relationships with primary and secondary schools that show interest in seeking opportunities for collaboration. We need more effective connection with statewide Alaska Native organizations that also seek educative goals for their people that are so deeply linked with the resources we jointly care for. We need to create continued opportunities that maximize challenge cost share funds and be more opportunistic in recognizing great ideas and finding a way to make them happen. We must create partner excitement and synergy.

- In FY 02 Challenge Cost Share Funds will be exclusively dedicated to innovative efforts that advance natural and cultural resource management proposals that have specific educational focus and to educational efforts that push the regional strategy forward. We will seek new and innovative partnerships.
- In FY 02 the region will commit to filling a vacancy in the Information and Technology Branch with a person skilled and exclusively dedicated to better developing our web-based education and information systems for the entire region.
- In FY 03 the region will commit to either a position or contract that will provide the technical skills required to work with school districts on curriculum development.

- In FY 02 we will expand *Park Wise*, the highly successful web-based curriculum developed with the Anchorage School District and GCI, by adding additional components to the curriculum.
- In FY 02 & 03 we will support the critical *Learning Center* initiatives at Kenai Fjords and Denali as tremendously important opportunities to be centers of research activities that address research needs of parks and make information about park resources available to the public. These centers will be multi-park, theme-oriented, multi-disciplinary, governmental -non-governmental partnerships. They will utilize existing facilities to enable parks and their partners to facilitate the use of parks as libraries of knowledge and as places that support visiting researchers. The Centers will coordinate interpretation and education programs, transfer information about park resources to park-based interpreters and the public at large, provided outreach to schools, and encourage development of web sites that enable long distance learning.

4. Organizational Alignments

The organization must better align itself to meet the vision and goals of the program. The organization must better model the 5 points of our effort. We must find better ways to link efforts, to incorporate the Messaging Project, to guide and oversee efforts—and most importantly to hold ourselves accountable.

- In FY 02 the Directorate level of the Regional Office reorganized its Natural and Cultural Resource Management and Education Program efforts into a single Associate Regional Director office reporting directly to the Regional Director. The incumbent in this position directly supervises Support Office natural and cultural resource staff, interpretation, and educational program staff increasing the opportunity for program integration. To our knowledge the Alaska Region is the only region that has established leadership and oversight linkage of resources management, research and education into the same office.
- In FY 03 program leadership of *Inspiring Places Inspiring People* will be staffed by a new program leader, assisted by curriculum specialist, and will report directly to the Associate Regional Director as a “stand-alone” organizational component, with obvious collaborative linkages to the other components within this Directorate.
- In FY 03 the Alaska Public Lands Information Centers (APLIC) located in Anchorage and Fairbanks will come under the management of a single Center Superintendent that will report directly to the Associate Director, utilizing saved positions as APLIC education specialists. The APLIC primary grades education program managed by these highly skilled education specialists will be further focused, refined and enhanced to be more effective in the communities of Anchorage and Fairbanks.
- In FY 03 an *Inspiring Places Inspiring People Advisory Council* reporting to the Associate Regional Director composed of senior leaders from the parks, regional office, key partners and Native Organizations will provide the insights and energy required to move this strategy forward *with* all the players.
- In FY 03 a glossy brochure available to partners and to be used as a marketing tool for our work with non-profits and friend-raising efforts will be published that brings all the elements of the program into single focus.

5. Priorities

Commitment must be backed by human and fiscal resource allocation throughout the entire region. Superintendents must look at existing educational and interpretive programs with critical eye to assure they meet the strategic vision articulated in *Inspiring Places Inspiring People* and to assure the efforts in place are effective and efficient. Much of what we do needs to be better linked to the strategic vision and more cohesively managed and coordinated. This effort may not require funding, instead using existing staff more effectively. Our efforts will be managed as long-term investments that require staged and thoughtful work. Some priorities, out of many more to be developed, lie within the other 4 points of this plan.

Our priorities will be placed in the hands of our leaders, our employees and our partners. Only through concerted and committed action can each one of us make a difference. In the end, it will be our *Inspiring Places* that will *Inspire People* to make a difference.