

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

Celebrating Our Collective Heritage

On May 2, 1997, the Franklin Delano Roosevelt (FDR) Memorial was dedicated and opened to visitors in Washington, D.C. In doing so, it became the 375th park unit in the National Park System. The memorial celebrates America's longest-serving President, whose spirit and optimism led this Nation through the dark years of world economic collapse and World War II. When one walks through the 7.5 acre setting of the granite memorial to America's 32nd President, one can not fail to go back to this time when the United States served as the beacon for hope and freedom around the world. The legacy of both Franklin Delano Roosevelt and a generation of Americans is celebrated in four distinct "outdoor rooms" which use granite walls, landscaping, bronze sculpture, and 21 inscribed quotations to commemorate this moment in our history. This memorial is quickly becoming one of the popular destinations on trips to the Nation's capital. Many of the visitors linger in the quiet alcoves, absorbing the sights, sounds, and moods of the memorial.

The FDR Memorial provides the National Park Service with an excellent opportunity to educate and celebrate a crucial era in our country's heritage. This is what was envisioned in 1916 when the National Park Service was established. The Park Service does so, across the width and breadth of our land, at a diversity of places that reflect our environmental and cultural heritage. This array of heritage areas is of such national significance and value so as to justify special recognition and protection in accordance with the various laws of our land.

The units, with designations as varied as national park, national lakeshore, national historic site and national recreation area, encompass more than 83 million acres in 49 States, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands, American Samoa, Guam, and the Northern Mariana Islands. Our preserved heritage ranges from the awe-inspiring wonder of the Yosemite Valley to the ancient forests of Redwood National Park; from the rare opportunity to view grizzly bear at Denali, to the contemplation of stirring ideas at the Lincoln Memorial; from at-risk youth enjoying their first park experience in the marshes of Gateway National Recreation Area in New York, to the silent ruins of New

Park Service Mission

"To preserve unimpaired the natural and cultural resources and values of the national park system for the enjoyment, education, and inspiration of this and future generations."

Mexico's Fort Union, standing guard over the trails of western expansion; from the hallowed grounds of our country's battlefields at Yorktown and Fredericksburg, to the dignity and eloquence represented at the home of Frederick Douglass.

The Omnibus Parks Act

On November 13, 1996, President Clinton signed into law the Omnibus Parks and Public Lands Management Act of 1996 (Public Law 104-333). This Act, the most far reaching and comprehensive park bill in recent years, significantly increased National Park Service authorities and responsibilities, and established several new park areas. Foremost among its provisions was the creation of five new National Park System units for which the Park Service assumed operational management responsibilities in 1997:

- Tallgrass Prairie National Preserve (Kansas)
- Boston Harbor Islands National Recreation Area (Massachusetts)
- Nicodemus National Historic Site (Kansas)
- New Bedford Whaling National Historical Park (Massachusetts)
- Washita Battlefield National Historic Site (Oklahoma)

The Tallgrass Prairie provides the Park Service an opportunity to preserve, protect, and interpret for the public an example of a tallgrass prairie ecosystem on the Spring Hill Ranch, located in the Flint Hills of Kansas. Of the 400,000 square miles of tallgrass prairie that once covered the North American continent, less than one percent remains, primarily in the Flint Hills of Kansas. Boston Harbor Islands preserves a large number of islands in Massachusetts Bay to provide open space and recreational opportunities, as well as protecting important historic and natural features. At Nicodemus, the new park unit interprets the only re-

maining western town founded by African-Americans during the Reconstruction period. New Bedford, center of the American whaling industry during its peak in the 19th Century, offers the Park Service an opportunity to interpret this important era and its impact on American society, culture and economics. In western Oklahoma, along the meandering banks of the Washita River, the Park Service will tell the story of one of the largest engagements between Southern Plains tribes and the United States Army, with emphasis on the struggle of the Southern Plains tribes to maintain their traditional ways of life.

Also included in the Omnibus Parks Act was the authorization of the Presidio Trust which clarified Park Service responsibilities and provided the framework for management of the Presidio, a unique urban park located within the boundaries of Golden Gate National Recreation Area in San Francisco. In addition, the law authorized the Secretary to make matching grants to Historically Black Colleges and Universities for the preservation of their cultural heritage. Preservation goals include the restoration or rehabilitation of selected buildings to preserve their historic character while ensuring continuing contemporary uses. In the law, nine new Heritage areas were designated. The Heritage site designation enables the Park Service to serve as a catalyst to help state and local governments and private groups to protect and conserve important resources with a minimal Federal dollar investment.

Recreation Fee Demonstration Program

In 1997, Congress approved a three-year test fee demonstration program covering the Federal land management agencies. Under the new authority, the National Park Service identified 97 fee demonstration "projects" to test the pilot program. The program is designed to increase funding available to the Service in addressing the backlog of maintenance and resource projects throughout the Park System, while testing new and innovative methods of fee collection. Participating demonstration park sites will retain 80 percent of any new revenue generated as a result of this new program. The remaining 20 percent of this new revenue will be available to the Director of the National Park Service for discretionary distribution to parks throughout the System. Funds made available to the parks through this program will remain available for obligation until September 30, 2002.



Collecting fees at Jefferson National Expansion Memorial (photo by Park Service).

During 1997, parks implemented flexible rate schedules, identified new categories of fees, and tested innovative and cost-effective methods for collection. A total of 34 parks initiated a fee for the first time. Many new types of fees were initiated, including fees for special interpretive programs, backcountry fees for overnight usage, boating fees and recreational vehicle dump fees. Automated fee collection machines, designed to accept both cash and credit cards, were installed at 31 parks. For many of these parks, the automated machines are now the primary means of collection.

In fiscal year 1997, the fee demonstration resulted in an additional \$45.078 million becoming directly available to parks without being subject to congressional appropriation. Examples of projects undertaken in 1997 include the rehabilitation of boardwalks at Glacier Bay National Park, creek restoration at Muir Woods National Monument, and the upgrade of a sewage treatment plant at Mount Rainier National Park.

Upheaval and Opportunity at Yosemite

During the first three days of 1997, heavy rains caused record flooding in numerous western parks. Hardest hit was Yosemite National Park, California, where flooding of major rivers and tributaries severely damaged the park infrastructure and forced the park to close for ten weeks. Four primary highway routes leading into the park were impassable, stranding up to 1,200 visitors and employees in Yosemite Valley for several days. Floodwaters backed up in the central valley, submerging park offices in eight feet of water. Employee housing, roads, 350 campsites and 500 guest lodge units



Flooding at Yosemite National Park (photo by Park Service).

were flooded. Seventeen resource restoration projects, ten known archeological sites and several historic structures were damaged in the high waters.

Funds were provided by Congress to cover flood recovery projects. However, many of the structures that were destroyed or severely damaged were located in a floodplain. The flood provided a unique opportunity to implement the park's General Management Plan (GMP), as approved in 1980. The GMP included guidance for the relocation of buildings and facilities from the floodplain into more protected locations. Consensus was reached between Congress and the Administration that this would be the wisest course to pursue and funds for this purpose were included in the Supplemental Appropriation. The flood, so devastating in its immediate impact, opened the doors to a future teeming with opportunity.

Preservation through Partnership

The Park Service has made considerable strides in achieving its commitment to preserve America's natural and cultural heritage through partnerships with State and local agencies, community organizations, and private groups. In 1997, the partnerships that were forged enabled the Service to preserve important battlefields that shaped our Nation's history, to promote parks as outdoor classrooms, and to improve resource management through science and education. Our partners were directly responsible for an important preservation victory at Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania County Battlefields Memorial National Military Park. The Willis Hill property, an 8.5 acre tract on Mary's Heights in the heart of Fredericksburg battlefield, threatened by

development, was put up for sale. Faced with both the prospect of potential incompatible use of this land within the Park Service boundary, as well as a higher competing offer, the Civil War Trust, a national organization dedicated to the preservation of Civil War battlefields, and the local Central Virginia Battlefields Trust, came to the aid of the Park Service. With the financial assistance offered by these groups, the Park Service was able to match the competing proposal. Due in no small part to the enthusiastic fervor of the battlefield preservation community, the seller elected to accept the offer of the Park Service and its partners. On June 21, 1997, amidst much fanfare, the land was officially conveyed to the Park Service. The land, with its panoramic view of the battlefield, is now open to the public and the Park Service is now initiating efforts to integrate the new land into the park experience.

Resource Stewardship

Traditionally, preservation of resources was adequately accorded to parks when they were first established. However, as outside influences continue their ever increasing march towards park boundaries, the protection offered by being a unit of the National Park System is not enough to safeguard habitats and historic landscapes. Threats to resources in National parks are as varied as the parks themselves. Agricultural runoff containing toxic pollutants drains into delicate wetlands; air pollution from near and far wafts across park boundaries, diminishing visibility and harming sensitive streams, soils, and vegetation; urban encroachment into historic scenes imperils the integrity of cultural landscapes and impairing scenic views. Compounding the problem is the existence of degraded resources in new units at the time of their acquisition, such as historic buildings in need of repair, or land with abandoned mines that drain pollutants into park waters. Inside the parks, increasing or inappropriate visitor use is also damaging resources. As the American and the world populace grows more enthralled by national parks, resource management must keep pace with our success in accommodating visitors. Left unchecked, these factors of change could threaten the very existence of our natural and cultural heritage.

The Park Service undertakes an array of research, preservation, mitigation, and restoration activities to combat these threats. The Park Service has defined a basic set of 12 inventory data needs critical for every park, in addition to the other specialized inventory needs



The Presidio at Golden Gate National Recreation Area (photo by Park Service).

existing for individual parks. A Servicewide network of prototype ecosystem monitoring programs is being implemented to help acquire the common basic data sets in an effective and cost-efficient manner. To date, work on seven of the 12 prototypes has begun. Collection of this baseline data is necessary to plan future actions and develop useful measures of performance.

Cultural landscapes provide the physical environment associated with historical events and reveal important aspects of our country's origins and development through their form, features, and use. To date, over 875 cultural landscapes have been inventoried at some level. In fiscal year 1997, a new system of software that automates the data collected from the Cultural Landscapes Inventory (CLI) was finalized and system training was provided to CLI coordinators in the field. To ensure consistency in the inventory work conducted throughout the System, the *Cultural Landscape Inventory Professional Procedures Guide* was prepared and a five-year plan was developed by each National Park Service region to implement the CLI.

The museum collections of the National Park Service reflect our heritage. One of the most impressive and important collections is maintained at Longfellow National Historic Site. An estimated 650,000 museum items and objects are included: historic furnishings; fine and decorative arts representing a broad range of American and European painters and sculptors; Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's personal library of 10,000 books; a unique collection of Asian decorative and fine arts; and thousands of letters, journals, and photographs including documents from George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, and Abraham Lincoln. These collections possess exceptional research and aesthetic value

and serve as an exquisite index to the birth and flowering of the nation. In 1997, Longfellow National Historic Site continued an active program of collections management and long-term preservation aimed at maximizing public education and access. A total of 46,000 archives and manuscript materials in the collection were processed and made available for reference and research as part of a multi-year cataloging and processing initiative.

Implementing the Government Performance and Results Act

The release of the first Servicewide Strategic Plan, as required by the Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA), was a major highlight of fiscal year 1997. In addition, individual parks and programs prepared their own strategic and annual performance plans during the year using a Park Service developed eight-step process. During the year, the Park Service trained 2,000 people in performance management practices and published resource materials, including a *Field Guide to the Government Performance and Results Act and Performance Management*. The Park Service developed software that allow parks and programs to identify their budget dollars as they relate to Servicewide GPRA goals.

Visitor Services

Our national parks commemorate the historical and cultural events, social movements and people from which we derive our collective national heritage. Individual experiences can help people gain a sense of place and a stronger sense of history and national identity. Equally as important is the sanctuary that the parks provide for the mind and spirit. The most advanced science and research, the most efficient park management, and the best resource conservation will not guarantee the preservation of the parks. Rather, it is only by making available to the public the stories and scenic wonders of the parks and by creating bonds -- emotional, intellectual, spiritual, and recreational -- that people will assume greater responsibility for the protection of their natural and cultural heritage and ensure their preservation for generations to come. To this end, the Park Service strives to provide high quality visitor experiences.

The Park Service prides itself on its interpretation of the resources entrusted to its stewardship. Proper in-

terpretation must provide visitors with the information necessary for the fullest understanding, enjoyment, and appreciation of the park story, as well as sufficient information to ensure the protection of both the visitor and the park resources. In 1997, 67 million hours of interpretation and education programs were provided. The array of services included 571 staffed information centers; 1,974 talks and campfire programs; 2,390 guided tours; and 903 historical demonstrations. Over 4 million visitors benefited directly from these programs.

With millions of park visitors seeking to enjoy the national parks each year, the responsibilities of the Park Service in providing a safe and secure park experience necessitates a proactive program of law enforcement. Although national parks remain safe places for the vast majority of visitors, crimes against persons and property within the parks have been on the rise. As part of its authority and jurisdiction, the Park Service is required to enforce Federal laws and regulations within park units. Park Service park rangers and the United States Park Police perform demanding law enforcement and resource protection activities, including drug enforcement, traffic control, watercraft and aircraft supported enforcement activities, criminal investigations and wildlife enforcement activities. Park Service rangers are also involved with drug enforcement activities such as eliminating marijuana fields on park property and apprehending violators. Rangers also participated in drug prevention programs involving elementary and junior high students, including the Drug Abuse Resistance Education (DARE) programs in schools across the country in 1997. In 1996 (latest available information), park rangers investigated 87,000 law enforcement offenses and made nearly 27,000 arrests. There were over 5,000 felony crimes, including 14 murders and 200 aggravated assaults. Theft, particularly from parked cars, constitutes the bulk of felony crimes within park areas. The U.S. Park Police investigated over 10,000 criminal acts and arrested over 2,600 people for crimes committed on park lands and adjacent areas in addition to the capture of 448 fugitives and wanted persons.

Conducting search and rescue duties and responding to medical emergencies are critical activities performed by park rangers in coordination with emergency rescue personnel (park and area communities). Last year, over 4,800 search and rescue missions were conducted in national parks that included locating and assisting individuals lost or trapped in remote or confined spaces.



Interpretive program at Independence National Historic Park (photo by Park Service).

When visiting the parks, people may choose to procure products and services from a variety of park concessionaires. In fiscal year 1997, park concessionaires deposited \$15.1 million in franchise fees to the General Fund of the U.S. Treasury and \$21.9 million to special accounts for improvements to concession service facilities without accruing possessory interest therefrom. In calendar year 1996, concessionaires provided nearly \$12 million in possessory interest extinguishment and other benefits. The net average return to the government, as a percent of gross concession revenue, has risen to approximately 7.9 percent in recent years, bringing the Park Service close to achieving the GPRA goal of having contracts return at least 8 percent of gross concessionaire revenue by September 30, 2002.