

December 16, 2008

Memorandum

To: National Leadership Council

From: /s/ Mary A. Bomar, Director

Subject: National Tourism Strategic Plan

As you know, the Organic Act of 1916 states that “The service thus established **shall promote** [emphasis added] and regulate the use of the Federal areas known as national parks, monuments, and reservations...to conserve the scenery and the natural and historic objects and the wildlife therein and to provide for the enjoyment of the same in such a manner and by such means as will leave them unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations.”

From its origin, our Service has been linked to tourism. The attached National Tourism Strategic Plan has been designed to reestablish that connection in a meaningful way. I am pleased to approve this document and encourage the field to use it as a tool to enhance the visitor experience. Developed by the National Tourism Council (NTC), this plan addresses all three of my leadership goals of re-engaging the American public with their parks, increasing the capacity of the National Park System, and developing a new generation of leaders. The NTC has taken the extra steps of connecting the elements of the tourism strategies to Director’s Order #17, the Centennial Initiative, and the Interpretation and Education Action Plan. The timing of these initiatives coming together could not be better for the second century of national parks.

In commending this National Tourism Strategic Plan to the field, I firmly believe that it has been designed to benefit our parks. The guiding principles used in development of the plan were: (1) that our parks should be able to take advantage of underutilized marketing capacity of our tourism partners through proactive engagement; (2) that tourism opportunities identified in the plan offer the potential to leverage critical Agency resources to achieve maximum benefit; (3) that the parks, regions, and WASO each have distinct but complementary roles to play in carrying out the tourism strategies; (4) that tourism strategies must be designed to meet the unique requirements of each individual park; and (5) that park participation in carrying out the strategies in the plan must be on an “opt-in” basis.

I want to commend the Tourism Council and the National Tourism Office for their work in putting together a practical and meaningful plan to address tourism in the National Park Service. Specific thanks goes to Dean Reeder, Chief of the National Tourism Office, Marty Sterkel who chaired the Council and the members of the NTC that included Ray Murray, John Quinley, Don Wollenhaupt, Rich Weideman, Joanne Blacoe, Bill Line, John Keck, Tim Cash, Bill Dickinson, and John Benjamin.

Furthermore, I specifically recognize the connection between this tourism strategic plan and the role parks and park partners can play in stimulating our nation's economy. To that end, I have directed the tourism office, the regions and parks to confirm this link and to propose innovative ways to include economic stimulus projects in the plan's implementation.