



October, 2008

BRIEFING STATEMENT

ISSUE: National Tourism Strategic Plan

Background

Under the direction of the Associate Director, Partnerships and Visitor Experience, the National Tourism Council (NTC) has developed a strategic plan consistent with the policy contained in D.O. 17, the NPS Interpretation and Education Plan and the Centennial Initiative utilizing considerable input from the field and regions. In panel discussions with the NTC, several tourism partners have offered comments on the plan's viability and relevance. In designing the plan, NTC recognized significant underutilized capacity among tourism partners to benefit parks. This partnership potential, if strategically marshaled, will yield significant benefits systemwide.

Regional Directors have been briefed on the plan by their respective regional tourism coordinators. In addition, the plan has been reviewed by Deputy Regional Directors, who, as a working group, recommend the plan to the National Leadership Council (NLC) for consideration and endorsement.

In adopting the National Tourism Strategic Plan, the NLC recognized the council's due diligence, and support for a tourism program that will enable the Service to convert this additional capacity for the benefit of our national parks.

Tourism Strategic Plan Highlights

- **Proactive community engagement at all organizational levels.** The plan recognizes the importance of NPS participation in various tourism community forums. It proposes strategic actions that go beyond traditional civic engagement. Park managers would initiate strategy sessions with gateway community partners to identify the parameters of their joint and common interest. Based on confirmation of this common interest, the park would take the lead in building sustainable cooperative marketing partnerships to define the message, extend the reach of the park awareness, and leverage the park's interpretation, education, conservation, and responsible use messages. For strategic actions with a Servicewide scope, a WASO tourism program would work with national partners to leverage the goodwill and brand capital of the NPS systemwide brand. For example, we can address the awareness gap and public misperceptions about the vast and varied experiences available through park visitation without incurring the sole communications cost.

- **Better understanding of consumer awareness, expectations and motivations for travel to parks through research and analysis.** By conducting original research, again with partners, plus analysis of relevant secondary data, a tourism program can benefit parks as well as national and regional programs. By providing study results, analysis, and tourism trends for informed visitor management. An example of this is currently underway. Based on NPS initiative, a national tourism partnership is producing a survey of Hispanic/Latino travel which will help the Service better understand this critical target demographic.
- **Use of marketing tools to strategically address visitor distribution.** Again with partners who have similar interests, target marketing techniques can impact excess capacity conditions and in some cases, relieve peak season stress. One of the most attractive benefits for parks is the capability to generate marginal revenue increases over a fixed cost base.
- **Cultivate a culture of visitor centricity embedded in the training of a new generation of park leaders.** By including tourism marketing modules in NPS training programs, we will develop park managers who can anticipate, relate, and adjust to changes in visitor needs and preferences. Learning how to lead in the construction of cooperative marketing partnerships will add market-based competencies to our human capital skill sets.
- **The tourism strategic plan is a blueprint for the implementation of several agency leadership objectives.** These include re-engaging the American public with park experiences by positioning the NPS brand, targeting and reaching underserved ethnic groups, bringing kids and their families into parks, and increasing awareness and visitation to lesser known parks.

Next Steps

- Launch pilot projects as outlined in the plan. These will demonstrate various strategic principals and produce measurable results.
- Concurrent with the submission of the tourism strategic plan to the NLC, the NTC has continued working on plan refinements. At the NTC annual meeting in June, they developed a further level of plan detail; rendering shorter-termed tasks for each strategic action. A set of roles and responsibilities for each action and task will be ready for implementation. NTC is also working on a condensed version of the plan for web-ready communication with external partners and other interested parties.
- An analysis of several funding options will be undertaken to identify variable sources of new funds for parks to use in proactive partnership cooperatives.

For Further Information Contact:

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