

“The Future of America’s National Parks”
Secretary of the Interior Dirk Kempthorne’s Centennial Initiative Report to the President
May 31, 2007

“Dear Mr. President,
Inspired by the passions of thousands of citizens and mindful that boldness matches our history,
today I bring you our vision to ensure that the American love affair with national parks endures.”
– Secretary of the Interior Dirk Kempthorne

Last August, President Bush charged Secretary Kempthorne with reporting, by May 31, 2007, on specific performance goals to be achieved so our parks enjoy “another century of conservation, preservation, and enjoyment”.

The Future of America’s National Parks builds upon President Bush’s National Park Centennial Initiative in the FY 2008 budget to enhance park operations and to increase significantly the experiences available to park visitors with the addition of 3,000 new seasonal rangers. The report outlines 5 overarching goals to guide the National Park Service as it prepares for its centennial anniversary in 2016. Each goal is accompanied by broad objectives, supported by specific performance goals, and potential actions and examples.

The report reflects the voices of the American public, heard in listening sessions across the country earlier this year at more than 40 different locations, with over 6,000 comments received.

• **The five overarching goals and associated performance goals:**

- *Stewardship. The National Park Service leads America and the world in preserving and restoring treasured resources.*
 - Rehabilitate historic buildings; Restore native habitats; Improve high priority assets to acceptable condition; Improve the natural resources in parks; Complete all cultural resource inventories.
- *Environmental Leadership. The National Park Service demonstrates environmental leadership to the nation.*
 - Establish programs to showcase exemplary environmental practices; Increased use of alternative energy and fuels; Reduce the environmental impact of parks on air and water quality; Ensure every new park facility receives at least a silver rating equivalent under the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design standards.
- *Recreational Experience. National parks are superior recreational destinations where visitors have fun, explore nature and history, find inspiration, and improve health and wellness.*
 - Increase annual volunteer hours by 100%; Increase visitation at lesser known parks by 25%; Rehabilitate over 2,000 miles of trails; Increase the number of visitors that attend ranger-facilitated programs.
- *Education. The National Park Service fosters exceptional learning opportunities that connect people to parks.*
 - Increase visitor satisfaction, understanding and appreciation; Enroll an additional 2 million children in the junior ranger program; Increase the number of web hits through advanced, interactive features.
- *Professional Excellence. The National Park Service demonstrates management excellence worthy of the treasures entrusted to our care.*
 - Meet 100% of diversity recruitment goals; Attain the highest employee satisfaction rate of all federal agencies; Establish a structured professional development curriculum; Improve communications and marketing capacity to increase public awareness; Reduce the number of employee lost-time and serious visitor injuries by 20%.

• **Potential Actions and Examples:**

- *National Mall and Memorial Parks:* Demonstrate the very best in urban park design, maintenance and visitor services.
- *Richmond National Battlefield Park and the Glorieta Battlefield at Pecos National Historical Park:* Protect battlefields from encroachment by acquiring high-priority lands.
- *Pearl Harbor visitor center at the USS Arizona Memorial:* Demonstrate the highest standards of energy efficient design in completion of new facilities to serve visitors and enhance understanding of the war in the Pacific.
- *Urban parks:* Use urban parks as portals to encourage children and their families to discover all national parks, based on successful models at Gateway National Recreation Area and Golden Gate National Recreation Area.
- *The Internet:* Work with educators to develop online curricula that teachers can use in classrooms and field trips to parks.
- *Education and outreach:* Establish 10 learning centers at parks near major population centers to serve students and their communities.
- *Professional Development:* Provide comprehensive, mission-oriented training within an employee’s first two years of service.