



NPCA's Clean Air Advocacy in Action

This spring, the comment period for EPA's proposal on new ozone standards closed and NPCA generated 13,270 member comments supporting strong public health and ecosystem standards to limit the impact of ozone pollution—part of the half million comments the EPA received from the environmental community.



Too much ozone pollution makes the air unsafe to breathe, jeopardizes healthy growth in trees, and causes leaf injury to plants. EPA is charged with periodically revising pollution standards, including ozone standards, based on the best available science. In its recent ozone proposal, EPA looked more closely than in past proposals at the impact of ozone on people who spend a lot of time outdoors. The agency's own scientific advisors were also able to provide richer data from more robust and varied studies regarding ozone's impact on plant life.

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Upcoming Southeastern Park Bills and National Legislative Priorities

Following park legislative victories in 2014, NPCA faces a full plate of opportunities and challenges in the new 114th Congress. Two southeastern park bills, introduced but not passed during the 113th Congress, have now been reintroduced, i.e. a park expansion and re-designation at Ocmulgee National Monument (Congressmen Sanford Bishop and Austin Scott—HR 482) and a boundary adjustment for Shiloh National Military Park (Congresswoman Marsha Blackburn—HR 87). In addition, reintroduced park expansion bills for Kennesaw Mountain National Battlefield Park and Fort Frederica National Monument are expected soon, with Senator Johnny Isakson as sponsor. A bill to rename the Martin Luther King, Jr., National Historic Site as a national historical park was introduced in 2014 by Congressman John Lewis, but has yet to be reintroduced.

Another critical conservation bill for the southeast and the nation is Senator Richard Burr's Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) reauthorization. The \$900 million that LWCF is supposed to receive annually

in royalties from federal offshore energy leases consistently gets diverted by Congress for other purposes, with only a fraction of the full amount being appropriated for land acquisition in any given year. Senator Burr's bill (S 338) from the 113th Congress would have both permanently reauthorized and fully funded LWCF, removing the need for further Congressional appropriations. The reintroduced bill (also labeled S 338) keeps the permanent reauthorization, but removes the full funding provision. Still, it's a big step in the right direction and would authorize Congress to provide \$900 million a year, whereas without reauthorization the fund itself will expire. Southeastern co-sponsors include Senators Lindsey Graham (SC) and Johnny Isakson (GA).

Other NPCA national priorities include:

Protecting the Antiquities Act by rejecting any congressional proposals to undermine this law. For over 100 years, the Antiquities Act has been a bipartisan conservation tool used by eight Republican and

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Top: A Civil War era cannon overlooks the battlefield at Kennesaw Mountain National Battlefield Park. An important local recreation site, the park boasts over 18 miles of maintained, interpretive trails. ©Rob Hainer | Shutterstock **Left:** With the clean-up/shut-down of numerous coal-fired plants in the TVA system, visibility has improved significantly at Great Smoky Mountains National Park, but still has a long way to go. ©Sepavo | Dreamstime.com

FIELD REPORT

Summer 2015

Southeast Regional Office

Advocating for National Parks in Alabama, Arkansas, Georgia, Kentucky, Mississippi, Tennessee, North Carolina and South Carolina

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Since 1919, the nonpartisan National Parks Conservation Association has been the leading voice of the American people in protecting and enhancing our National Park System. NPCA, its 1,000,000 members and supporters, and many partners work together to protect the park system and preserve our nation's natural, historical, and cultural heritage for our children and grandchildren.

REFLECTIONS FROM THE SENIOR DIRECTOR

The end of last year's contentious 113th Congress saw the passage of legislation that added several important and worthy areas to the National Park System's repository of our nation's natural and cultural heritage. As part of our Future Parks strategic initiative, NPCA staff across the country, including the Southeast, worked diligently on these parks bills—in some cases, for years. The bills authorized seven new national park units, including several NPCA priorities, such as Harriet Tubman in New York, the Manhattan Project (with sites in three states, including Oak Ridge, Tennessee), Valles Caldera in New Mexico and Tule Springs in Nevada; nine national park expansions (among them Vicksburg in Mississippi, Gettysburg, San Antonio Missions, and Oregon Caves); eight special resource studies (including Mill Springs Battlefield in Kentucky and the West Hunter Street Baptist Church in Atlanta); and funding extensions for 14 national heritage areas. Also included were an important mineral withdrawal just outside Glacier National Park and a critical extension of the American Battlefield Protection Act. Though all of these park efforts had been years in progress, and each had been vetted and passed through Congressional committee scrutiny, they were, at the end of the session, all added to the National Defense Authorization Act which, along with Appropriations, was the only legislation likely to be signed into law.



Should our country be adding new responsibilities to the National Park System at a time when the parks suffer from a maintenance backlog pegged at \$11.5 billion and a continuing shortfall in operational funding from Congress? It's a fair question. Certainly, parks should not be added to the system by Congressional caveat or without a thorough vetting

of the costs of preserving such places and their stories. But the cost of inaction must also be weighed. It is estimated that around 6,000 acres of forest and open space are lost to development in this country every day. That translates to an area the size of Seattle every nine days. In many ways, we are in a race against time to preserve our nation's biological integrity, recreational opportunities, and institutional memory. If we maintained a policy of conserving only one acre of land for every ten we developed, we would still be way behind where we needed to be. Intelligent, strategic, and value-based preservation of America's remaining natural and cultural heritage is a critical component of leaving our grandchildren a living landscape and the opportunity to learn from that land, from our successes and from our failures. Congress must do its part to recognize and support this essential American enterprise. As the National Park System approaches its centennial in 2016, our nation needs to learn the lessons of intrinsic values more than ever. And, more than ever, these places need your voice.

Below: Workers leaving the Y-12 uranium enrichment plant at shift change in Oak Ridge, TN.
©Ed Wescott 1945





Ocmulgee Campaign Update

According to the National Trust for Historic Preservation, one of the nation's richest archaeological landscapes lies right at the doorstep of Macon, Georgia, along the Ocmulgee River. Prehistoric Mississippian people farmed the river's floodplain terraces, constructed earthen mounds, and built a large ceremonial center, occupying the region between A.D. 900 and A.D. 1650. Excavations in the 1930s documented human presence dating back to the last Ice Age up to 17,000 years ago. In 1936, the Ocmulgee National Monument was created to preserve these Native American antiquities in an area known as the Ocmulgee Old Fields. Unfortunately, the Great Depression intervened and only a fraction of the cultural landscape was incorporated into the Monument. But now that may be about to change.

In April of 2014, the National Park Service completed a study recommending that the Monument should be quadrupled in size from 700 to nearly 3,000 acres. This recommendation has garnered widespread support, with more than 15 local governments and business associations passing resolutions in favor of the expansion, along with two

“...one of the nation's richest archaeological landscapes lies right at the doorstep of Macon, Georgia, along the Ocmulgee River.”

tribal governmental organizations in Oklahoma representing over 500,000 Indian people throughout the United States.

A bill has been re-introduced in the U.S. House of Representatives by Congressmen Sanford Bishop and Austin Scott (HR 482) that would authorize 1) expansion of the Monument, 2) its re-designation as a National Historical Park, and 3) further study of the extended 50-mile river corridor between Macon and Hawkinsville, to investigate possible consolidation of additional existing public lands for inclusion in the national park system. Senator Johnny Isakson is expected to reintroduce the Senate version soon. NPCA and its local allies are working to advance this legislation, build the case for the river corridor's national significance,

and create new opportunities for recreation and visitation.

Bolstering this effort, in December 2014 NPCA received funding from the John S. & James L. Knight Foundation to commission a study of potential economic impacts of a national park and preserve designation on the travel-tourism-outdoor recreation economies. Results will be available in early 2016 and will provide regional decision makers with a powerful economic planning tool, hopefully reinforcing support for ongoing conservation efforts.

What you can do: 1) Please write to your member of Congress and ask them to co-sponsor the Ocmulgee Mounds National Historical Park Boundary Revision Act of 2015 (HR 482); and 2) Stay informed—visit npca.org and sign up for e-news about exciting campaign initiatives as we move this work forward.

Top: Two young Fancy Dancers in traditional dress at the annual Ocmulgee National Monument Indian Celebration. This year's celebration will be September 19-20, 2015 and feature over 200 Southeastern Indians sharing their culture through music, dance, storytelling, living history, and art/craft demonstrations. ©Sharman Ayoub 2014

Legal Victory for Buffalo National River

NPCA and local allies in Arkansas won a legal victory for the Buffalo but the work to save it is still not done. In December 2014 the U.S. District Court ruled that the Small Business Administration and Farm Services Administration acted arbitrarily and capriciously in granting loan guarantees to C&H Hog Farm, Inc. for the 6,500-head confined animal feeding operation (CAFO) located on an upstream tributary of the Buffalo National River. The agencies have until December 2015 to complete the required environmental reviews and consultations. There will be a thirty-day public comment period this summer and your input will be needed.

The State of Arkansas continues to consider restrictions on future swine CAFOs in the watershed, and has imposed a third 180-day moratorium so that the Arkansas Department of Environment and Conservation cannot permit additional medium and large CAFOs in the national river's watershed. Cargill, who owns the pigs at C&H, has agreed to a moratorium on any *future* CAFOs in the watershed but this does not solve the problem at C&H.

Unfortunately for communities along the Buffalo National River and the tourism economy that the river supports, the river's water quality and human health remain under great threat from this industrial-scale hog farm. Recent scientific findings show harmful impacts on the Buffalo River, including seepage of *E. coli* bacteria into the water downstream from the hog farm's operations, an indicator of fecal contamination.

Arkansas' seven national parks welcomed more than 3 million park visitors last year, contributing close to \$164 million to the state's economy and supporting 2,671 jobs in local businesses, restaurants, hotels and attractions. The 1.5 million visitors who came to enjoy recreation on the Buffalo National River spent nearly \$57 million locally. It is a national shame to jeopardize the Buffalo and the livelihood of the families who depend on it as the cornerstone attraction for tourism in the Ozarks. For more information on this legal victory and the ongoing fight to save the Buffalo, visit parkb.it/br14v. To receive an action alert when the public comment period begins, visit npca.org to sign up for e-news from NPCA.



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Above: A hiker beside a waterfall on the Indian Creek Trail at the Buffalo National River. This 4.7 mile trail winds along a rocky creek and high bluff, offering an intense hike with abundant waterfalls, mossy rocks and hardwood forest. ©ClassicStock | Alamy



Reaching the Next Generation

A year ago, NPCA created the Next Generation Advisory Council (NGAC), a group of individuals between the ages of 18 and 34 who are motivated by their love of national parks. The 12 members of the Council have been advising NPCA on how it can more effectively engage millennials in national park advocacy. Last month, Shelby Ward, an attorney and aquatic ecologist from Knoxville talked to NPCA's Don Barger about her experience on the council.

What do you believe is the greatest challenge to connecting your generation to national parks? Communicating to my generation about why national parks are relevant is a great challenge today. Many of my peers would rather vacation on cruises or resorts with luxurious amenities. Young families plan vacations to amusement parks instead of national parks. Also, people of color sometimes feel national parks are not a good "fit" for them. When I visit national parks, I am usually one of few people of color there. A perceived cultural irrelevancy of national parks prevents people from considering why national parks are important—let alone visiting them.

Why did you want to serve on NPCA's Next Generation Advisory Council? I wanted more people to love the national parks and I wanted to collaborate with like-minded professionals to make

that happen. My visits to national parks helped forge my identity as an American. As an eighth grader, I was inspired by seeing the Constitution at the National Archives. Hiking nature's corridors were moments where I bonded with family and friends. I want more people in my generation to have these experiences and to pass that love of national parks to their children.

What have you learned in your first year on NGAC? I've learned a lot about the challenges and opportunities associated with group work when participants span a great geographic area. Current NGAC members live in Alaska, Massachusetts, Texas, and states in between. The challenges have been worth it, because collaborating with such a diverse and talented group has helped us come up with some exciting ideas. As an example, we think that NPCA can appeal to millennials and build momentum by using storytelling via social media to establish awareness and have interactive dialogue. As it has been said before... 'you have to meet people where they are'.

Above: (L-R) Emily Douce, NPCA Government Affairs staffer and Shelby Ward, with Southeast Regional Council members Milton Russell, Will Skelton and Rebecca Bryant, pictured in Senator Lamar Alexander's office on NPCA's Lobby Day 2015 with NPCA Southeast Sr. Regional Director, Don Barger. ©NPCA



Shelby Ward has worked with local nonprofits, including NPCA, on clean air and clean water issues and is a co-founder of the annual Appalachian Public Interest Environmental Law Conference (APIEL). Shelby holds a Juris Doctorate from the University of Tennessee's College of Law and a Bachelor of Science in Biology from Howard University. She is currently pursuing a Master's of Science in Ecology at the University of Tennessee in Knoxville.

Left: NGAC Member Shelby Ward, her husband, Daniel and daughter Rebekah. ©Tasha Cole 2014

NPCA's Clean Air Advocacy in Action

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We joined forces with conservation and outdoor recreation groups to submit a one-pager supporting strong ozone standards to

protect ecosystems. We also submitted robust technical and legal comments (286 pages' worth!) as part of an environmental coalition focused on public health and ecosystem standards.

Although some of the language is technical, we're sharing it with our readers because it does a good job of explaining the things that are at risk and the actions that are necessary to protect them.



We urge EPA to protect our values.

Dear Administrator McCarthy:

The undersigned recreation and conservation organizations and our millions of members and supporters urge you to advance an ozone pollution standard that is protective of ecosystems, wildlife, and vegetation. Distinct standards are necessary to mitigate the impact of ozone pollution on sensitive species and reduce levels at the many national lands, parks, forests, and refuges that have elevated ozone pollution.

Protecting ecosystems requires distinct standards.

We request the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to instate a meaningful and protective secondary ozone limit of 7 parts per million-hours and in the W126 form. The limit and form are both critical as they represent the rightful design of an ozone standard needed to avoid impacts to ecosystems and wildlife habitat, including damage to vegetation and growth loss from trees. EPA's own Clean Air Scientific Advisory Committee (CASAC) has called the Agency's proposed upper level of 17 parts per million "unacceptably high". With a standard this high, trees that are sensitive to ozone pollution, like Black cherry, Aspen, White pine, Tulip poplar, Ponderosa pine, and Red alder are at risk.

Ozone is also a potent greenhouse gas. Reducing ozone will not only acutely protect ozone-sensitive species but also, critically, help limit climate disruption. Similar to other greenhouse gases, ozone can cause unnatural warming of the atmosphere. In turn, a warmer world is expected to result in more ozone than would otherwise form, creating an unhealthy cycle. Ozone also puts forests under additional stress causing them to grow less and store less carbon. By reducing growth stunting ozone, forests can better absorb carbon pollution by storing it in their leaves, branches, and roots.

Getting Americans outside more often is our passion and a priority for our organizations. Outdoor recreation

and preservation of healthy landscapes plays a key role in healthy living. The Administration has recognized this reality through efforts like America's Great Outdoors and Every Kid in a Park. Poor air quality is at odds with these efforts leading instead to unhealthy outdoor air and ecological degradation from air pollutants. Setting the primary health standard for ozone to a 60 part per billion level will best deliver the public health benefits of getting outside to recreate, exercise, and connect with nature.

Two standards, one population that needs them both.

Our organizations represent individuals that flock to natural landscapes as destinations for recreation and spiritual renewal and revere the many species that live on protected lands. The ozone standard that protects people's health is different from the standard that protects sensitive species. For too long, EPA has simply relied on one standard to protect all forms of life. It's time to for EPA to shift this approach.

We ask EPA to advance a health based standard that reduces the level of ozone so it is not a threat to our lungs as we and our children exercise, play or work. **And** we ask EPA to advance an ecosystem standard that will protect the natural, historic and cultural values of places ranging from the Appalachian Mountains to Sequoia National Park and the precious species that inhabit them. **We urge EPA to protect our values.**

Appalachian Mountain Club • National Parks Conservation Association • Adirondack Mountain Club • American Hiking Society
Appalachian Trail Conservancy • Colorado National Monument • EarthJustice • Epic-Environmental Protection Information Center
Friends of Acadia • GreenLatinos • Klamath Forest Alliance • New York New Jersey Trail Conference • Nature Abounds
National Wildlife Federation • Outdoor Alliance • Tribal Environmental Policy Center • Sierra Club

Protecting the Watersheds

Oil and gas companies have been drilling on Tennessee's Cumberland Plateau for many years—within park boundaries and adjacent to the Big South Fork National River and Recreation Area and the Obed Wild and Scenic River. Concerns about future projects—including hydraulic fracturing—are also mounting.

NPCA wants to understand how parks are affected by oil and gas extraction and what can be done to avoid or mitigate impacts including air and water pollution, habitat fragmentation, and visitor enjoyment of dark skies and natural sounds. To better understand these impacts, NPCA is working to promote a new Mobile App designed by our friends at FracTracker. Park visitors can take photos of oil and gas development and upload them to an interactive map, helping to visualize the extent of development near national parks.

Within Big South Fork, there are currently 19,000 acres of privately held mineral rights. There is a chance that oil and gas exploration using fracturing technology in new wells will take place within Big South Fork or in close proximity to Obed. The map (below) shows

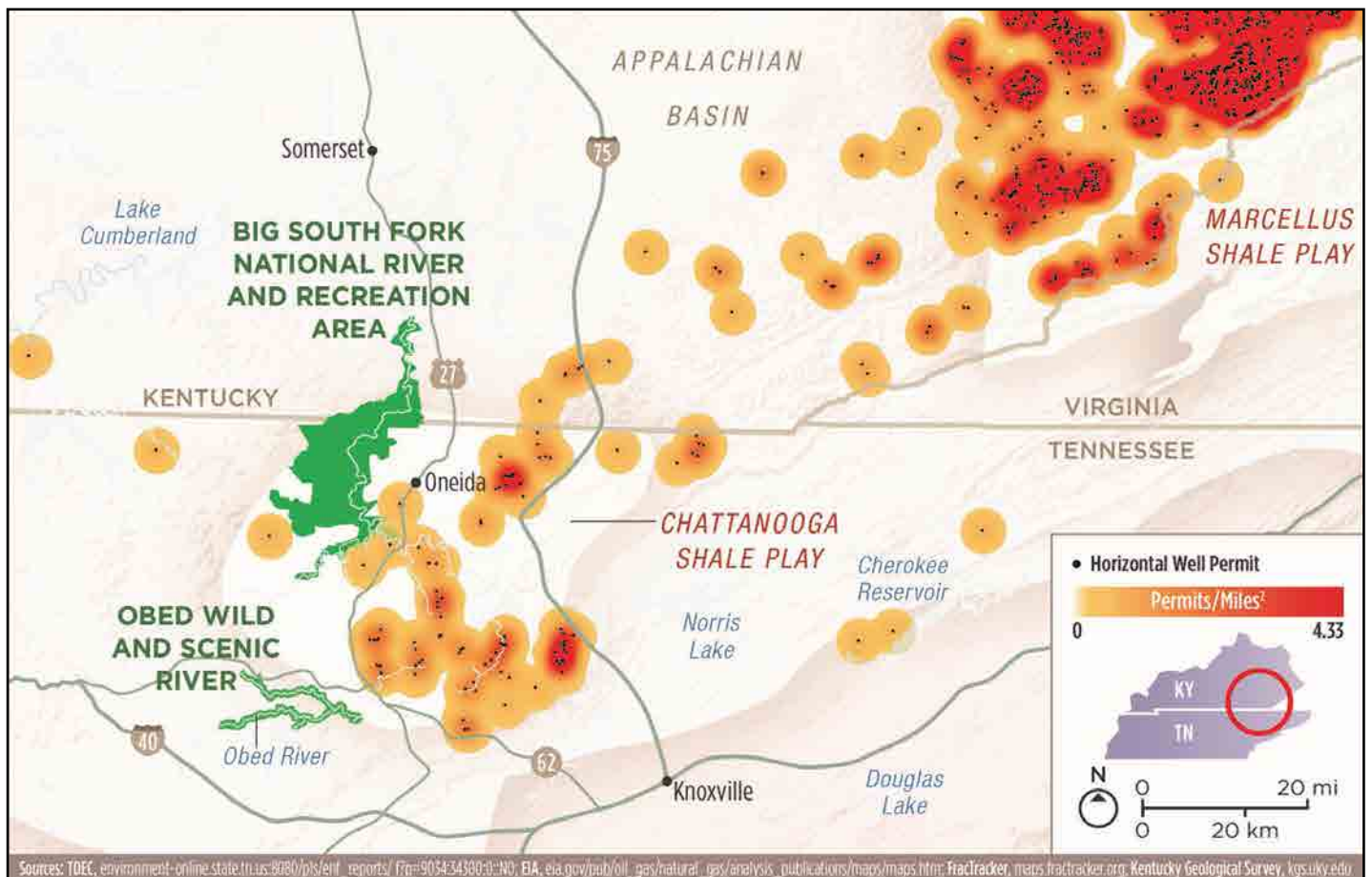


the many horizontal well permits that are currently filed in East Tennessee and Eastern Kentucky that could potentially impact their watersheds. Both parks are rife with waterways that sustain a host of plants and wildlife, including ten species of fish, mollusks, and plants that have been listed as either threatened or endangered under the Endangered Species Act. Visitors also enjoy the lush scenery and river recreation. Anything that degrades this watery ecosystem poses a

serious concern, which is why fracking deserves close scrutiny.

NPCA encourages park visitors everywhere to join the effort. Visit www.fractracker.org/ apps to download the FracTracker App yourself, and use it to record images of oil and gas development near national parks you visit. Working together we can keep our parks healthy today and for future generations.

Above: Big South Fork as seen from Angel Falls Overlook in Tennessee. Parts of the river can be floated by beginners and there are also sections like Angel Falls with Class IV rapids that should be attempted only by highly skilled paddlers with the proper equipment. ©Anthony Heflin | Dreamstime.com





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Paddlers on the Buffalo River will often see **North America river otters** that eat fish and just about anything they meet and can catch, aided by acute underwater vision and 'motion sensitive' whiskers that help them cue in on prey. ©Mike Dougherty



Upcoming Southeastern Park Bills and National Legislative Priorities continued from page 1

eight Democratic Presidents to declare 142 national monuments from *existing federal lands*. Except for the 1916 Organic Act, no law has had more influence over the development of the National Park System, protecting some of our nation's most important places including the Statue of Liberty, Grand Canyon, Muir Woods, Glacier Bay, and the C&O Canal.

Enacting a Centennial Challenge to Commemorate the 100th Anniversary of the National Park System in 2016.

Congress should authorize a public-private partnership, using federal dollars to leverage private donations to help restore and modernize the parks. A few years ago, an initial investment of \$40 million yielded nearly \$50 million in donations.

Restoring Appropriated Funding.

The total budget for the national parks has been cut by 12% from five years ago. These reductions, in addition to the deeply damaging FY13 sequester, have meant fewer rangers and visitor programs, less maintenance, reduced hours, crumbling trails, and other impacts.

Passing the Wildfire Disaster Funding Act (HR 167/S 235). The system for funding wildfire suppression on federal lands is broken, forcing agencies to cannibalize other important accounts to fund wildfire suppression. This bill would establish a special emergency fund to cover the most catastrophic fires (similar to the way other natural disaster responses are funded) and relieve the funding pressure on the National Park Service annual budget.

Reauthorizing Federal Fee Authority. The Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act (FLREA) authorizes the Park Service to collect and expend recreation fees to benefit the visitor experience. Without it, fees would be directed to the U.S. Treasury. The current authority expires in September of 2016, and without renewal, the financial impact will be a \$180 million annual loss to the parks. Visitors will feel the pinch earlier, as parks and other federal lands will lose the authority to issue the annual *America the Beautiful* pass after September 2015.



Reauthorizing the Transportation Law. National park transportation facilities, such as roads, bridges, and transit systems, are federal responsibilities, requiring adequate funding. Our parks are suffering from a \$6 billion maintenance backlog related to transportation alone; nearly half of those are 18 mega-projects, like the Memorial Bridge in the nation's capital, which dramatically exceed the capacity of the parks' core funding. Congress needs to provide guaranteed annual allocations to eliminate this backlog.

There are many battles to fight, so stay educated and let your elected officials hear from you.

Above: An inspiring mural at the Martin Luther King National Historic Site Visitor Center. ©NPCA

