



# FIELDREPORT

Southeast Region | Summer 2013



## National Parks and Hydraulic Fracturing Balancing Energy Needs, Nature, and America's National Heritage

NPCA recently published a report on the fast-growing fracking industry and its potential impacts on our national parks. We wanted to share the Executive Summary with you. To read the entire report, please visit <http://www.npca.org/protecting-our-parks/air-land-water/mining-and-fracking/>.



Hydraulic fracturing (or “fracking”) has the potential to rewrite America’s energy future, presenting the possibility of an energy-independent nation. This relatively

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**Above:** In this satellite image of North America at night, natural gas flares illuminate fracking fields near Theodore Roosevelt National Park (ND). These flares diminish dark night skies that once brought visitors to the park for stargazing. Courtesy of NASA. Illustration by NPR.

## Industrial Pig Farm Will Harm the Buffalo River

**T**he Buffalo River in Arkansas’ Ozark Mountains became America’s first National River in 1972. Today, over forty years later, the water quality of the river and the economic stability of the region are threatened by the location of a new industrial pig farm, or Concentrated Animal Feeding Operation (CAFO) in Newton County, Arkansas.

While the Buffalo River offers extraordinary recreational opportunities along 135 miles of free flowing river, only 11 percent of its watershed is within the national park boundary. The health of this pristine river is dependent upon the water quality of its tributaries, many of which lie outside the park’s boundaries. The newly-built factory farm, C & H, is on the banks of Big Creek, a major tributary of the Buffalo National River located less than six stream miles from where they meet.

This CAFO was built to supply pork to Cargill, an international producer of food, agriculture, financial, and industrial products. It was backed by taxpayer money but residents and taxpayers weren’t given a meaningful say in the permitting process. C & H took out a \$4 million loan, backed by a federal guarantee from the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Farm Service Agency (FSA). The FSA failed to give the public adequate notice and also failed to

allow other government agencies, including the National Park Service, opportunity to carry out their responsibility to protect the river and public health in the region.

The facility, permitted by the Arkansas Department of Environmental Quality, is the first large swine CAFO in the state. C & H’s Nutrient Management Plan, an important component of the facility’s permit application, contains significant omissions, errors, and misrepresentations. The 6,500 pigs at the C & H facility will generate close to 3.5 million gallons of manure and wastewater annually that will be distributed onto nearby fields. Instead of providing reassurance, the management plan makes it clear that the facility will be dumping this phosphorus and nitrogen-rich hog waste onto fields that already have plenty of these nutrients. The excess will then be available to run off into groundwater, risking the growth of nuisance algae and alterations to the local stream system’s ecology. The area’s porous karst geology makes it more likely that contaminants will leach into the groundwater and become a health risk for paddlers, fishermen and swimmers, threatening both residents and tourists alike.

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**Top:** Paddlers enjoying clear water and scenic gorges on the Buffalo National River. ©Steve Bly/Alamy

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

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NPCA is America's only private, nonprofit advocacy organization solely dedicated to protecting and enhancing the National Park System.

NPCA was founded in 1919 and today has more than 750,000 members and supporters.

[www.npca.org](http://www.npca.org)

## REFLECTIONS FROM THE SENIOR DIRECTOR

I'm at my desk trying to wrap up a few things before making the long haul along the Blue Ridge Parkway from Knoxville up to Shenandoah National Park. My wife, Lisa and I are embarking on a long over-due vacation in our Volkswagen camper to reconnect with the national parks.



to turn 10,000 acres into public land by implementing a long-term set of easements and transfer options. The transfer of this final piece of property protects the extraordinary biodiversity of the park and provides landscape connectivity between the Smokies, the adjacent Cherokee National Forest, and the Joyce Kilmer/Slickrock Creek Wilderness Area.

At the beginning of May, I was able to celebrate the victory of another long haul: the successful finish of a 15-year process to preserve 10,000 acres of biologically-rich mountainside adjacent to Great Smoky Mountains National Park. This effort culminated in the donation of the final 4,000 acres to the Nature Conservancy by its current owner, Brookfield Renewable Energy, Inc., completing the transformation of the mountain land to public ownership.

The rest of the story: Back in the late 90's, when the dams along the Little Tennessee River next to the Smokies came up for relicensing, NPCA organized nonprofit partners and state and federal agencies to enter into an alternative licensing process with the owner of the dams at the time, the Aluminum Company of America (ALCOA). After years of negotiations with ALCOA, we hammered out an agreement, subsequently approved by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC), that set a plan in motion

Later in May, NPCA presented our newly-created Sequoia Award to long-time NPCA supporter Fred Stanback for his long-term work to preserve the integrity of some of the world's oldest mountains. I recalled the long-term effort by many to end the threat of the North Shore Road in Great Smoky Mountains National Park, the years-long struggle to prevent a gravel mine from destroying an entire mountainside adjacent to the beautiful Roan Mountain section of the Appalachian National Scenic Trail, and the 11-year legal battle to dramatically reduce the air pollution coming from the 59 boilers of the Tennessee Valley Authority system. (Last week, I saw the park's air monitoring data—proof that it is working.)

To reach such results, we have to be in this for the long haul. As members of NPCA, your support helps keep us pushing forward. So I thank you. From the bottom of my heart.



**Above:** Blue Ridge Mountains viewed from the Appalachian Trail on Roan Mountain ©Design Pics Inc./Alamy



# Fostering Inter-Agency Collaboration along Middle Georgia's Ocmulgee River

**N**PCA is pursuing a multi-part strategy to connect and protect public lands along 50 miles of the Ocmulgee River flowing south from Macon. Public lands in this corridor are an incredible asset to the region and include Ocmulgee National Monument, Bond Swamp National Wildlife Refuge, and the Echeconnee Creek, Oaky Woods, and Ocmulgee State Wildlife Management Areas.

To date, realization of the full range of conservation, recreation, and tourism benefits of these special places to the middle Georgia community and economy has been hindered by a pattern of fragmented and uncoordinated multi-agency management. But this situation can be improved. As one of the wildest remaining places in the Georgia landscape, the river corridor south of Macon holds great potential to become a top recreation and tourism destination for millions of Georgians and visitors to enjoy as they paddle, fish, hike and hunt.

NPCA and its Macon partner, the Ocmulgee National Park & Preserve Initiative, are actively promoting interagency dialog and avenues for greater collaboration; the goal being to expand conservation, education, interpretation, and appropriate recreational access. Sponsors supporting this effort include the Community Foundation of Central Georgia, Bragg Jam, Cox Communications, NewTown Macon, the Ocmulgee Land Trust, and The Trust for Public Land, with assistance coming from The Conservation Fund's green infrastructure planning program.

On June 7th, NPCA hosted a kickoff meeting in Macon, bringing together representatives from the National Park Service, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, Georgia Department of Natural Resources, Robins Air Force Base, and the U.S. Forest Service. This was the first such meeting of its kind in middle Georgia. Among the questions examined were:

- What regional cross-boundary issues and challenges are important to the agencies? How might collaboration around these issues and challenges improve management outcomes?

**NPCA  
IN THE  
FIELD**



**Above:** Ocmulgee River Fishing Day participant holds "the one that didn't get away".  
©Georgia Wildlife Federation

- Where does the Ocmulgee fit in the context of current federal and state conservation and recreation initiatives? How might the agencies coordinate to better align with national and state trends and priorities?
- What other national examples exist of multi-agency, co-managed landscapes, and how might they serve as models for middle Georgia?

In the weeks ahead, we intend to establish an informal working group to identify potential action items that could form the basis for a corridor-wide inter-agency partnership. While the specifics of this partnership are still to come, NPCA will continue facilitating the dialog and working toward consensus on concrete steps toward a more integrated, interactive, and accessible public landscape in middle Georgia.

# National Parks and Hydraulic Fracturing

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new extraction method is now responsible for 90 percent of domestic oil and gas production, with thousands of wells peppering the countryside. The number of wells is expected to skyrocket during the next two decades. The Energy Information Administration estimates that the United States has 2,119 trillion cubic feet of natural gas and 25.2 billion barrels of crude oil recoverable through fracking. What will history say about this innovation? What will the impacts be on America's public lands—especially our cherished national parks?

No one knows for sure. Most Americans aren't witness to fracking operations, which typically take place in remote, rural locations inhabited (and visited) by few people. Most North Dakotans, for example, live within eight miles of the Minnesota border, so they've never laid eyes on the

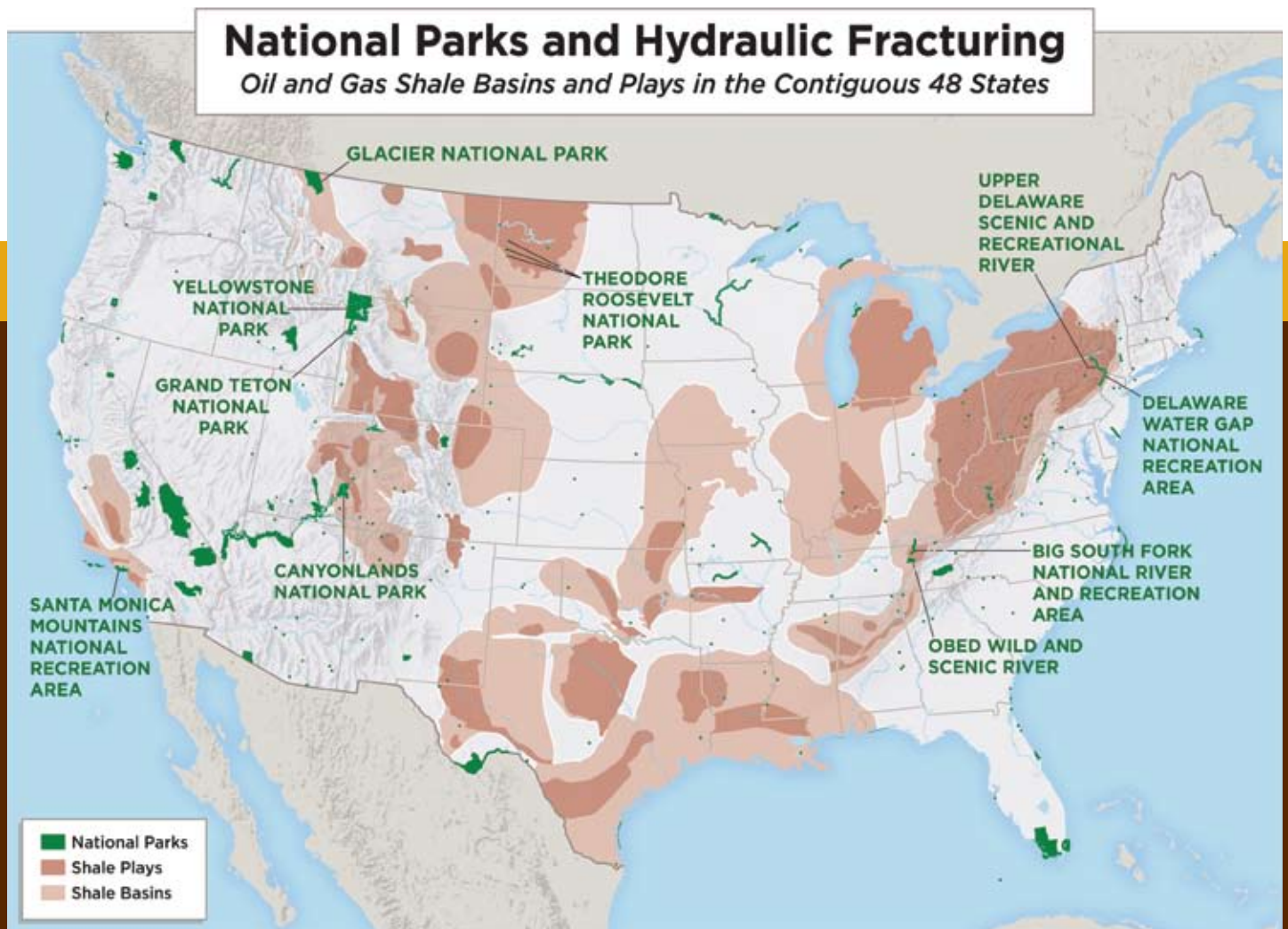
fracking wells that are springing up in the western part of the state, near Theodore Roosevelt National Park.

Other national parks in relatively undeveloped regions have also seen fracking arrive at their doorstep: from Glacier National Park's eastern boundary, visitors can throw a stone and hit any of 16 exploratory wells and their associated holding tanks, pump jacks, and machinery that is capable of forcing millions of gallons of pressurized fluids into energy deposits hiding thousands of feet beneath the earth.

Yet even the experts can't predict fracking's impacts. Will it contaminate the air we breathe in national parks? Will it harm native wildlife and the water and forests they depend on for survival? Will it damage the resources we value in our national parks? The answers are just beginning to emerge.

Consequently, the National Parks Conservation Association recommends that policy-makers require a measured, thoughtful approach to fracking, especially near national parks and in their surrounding landscapes. We must make every effort to understand and anticipate potential consequences—before they become irreversible.

Some impacts of fracking are already obvious. A web of new roads is expanding across the lands that lie above key oil and gas deposits. A proposed bridge and a new road to service a planned fracking field would dominate the view from Elkhorn Ranch, where President Roosevelt conceived his influential conservation theories. Astronomers at Theodore Roosevelt National Park—which once offered some of the nation's darkest, most pristine night skies—also see a new constellation of flares from nearby fracking wells. Visitors heading east from Glacier National Park encounter road signs urging caution against the poisonous gases that fracking operations emit.



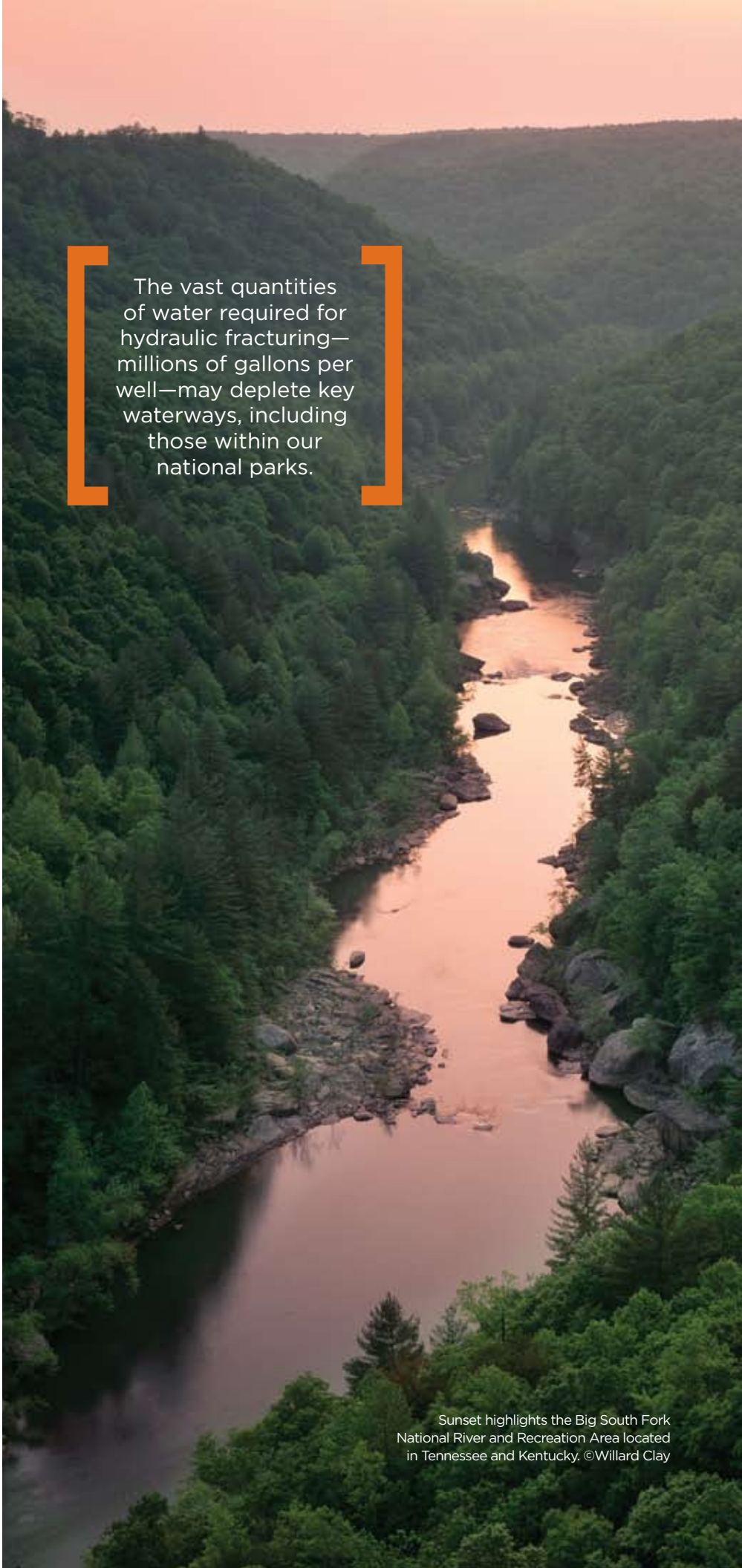


Other impacts from fracking are more obscure. The vast quantities of water required for hydraulic fracturing—millions of gallons per well—may deplete key waterways, including those within our national parks. Fracking’s expanding infrastructure may disrupt wildlife migrations into and out of our parks. The industry’s waste products may pollute air, land, and streams. Some fracking projects appear to have resulted in groundwater contamination. Although the specific causes aren’t fully understood, a Duke University research group (Warner et al. 2012) proposed that geologic fissures between the deep shales and shallow layers of groundwater may provide conduits for toxic fluids to rise to the surface, where they may threaten people and wildlife.

In fact, mounting evidence suggests that surface waters contaminated by fracking can harm domestic animals—and those consequences seem likely to impact national park wildlife as well. These are warning signs, not conclusive proof, of fracking’s impacts. Yet these early indications of harm to America’s natural resources and national parks suggest the wisdom of a careful, considered approach to hydraulic fracturing, rather than blind complicity and a zealous rush toward monetary riches. National parks are managed under a precautionary principle designed to err on the conservative side of any potentially negative impacts. The same principle should be applied to fracking activities on lands adjacent to our national parks. That said, the National Parks Conservation Association does not oppose oil and gas development, and we acknowledge that hydraulic fracturing provides real value to our energy-dependent nation. Our goal is to prevent an unexamined embrace of an oil and gas extraction method that can have far-reaching consequences for America’s most cherished landscapes.

Now is the time to investigate the impacts of fracking on America’s national parks. With the first wave of fracking wells yielding evidence for study—but before fracking has become a juggernaut producing a wake of irreversible damage—policymakers should examine the industry’s corollary impacts and steer a wise course for the benefit of all Americans and their national parks. We must understand fracking’s impacts on the nation’s waters, air, wildlife, and cultural landscapes—splendors that are preserved in our national parks and that are unmatched anywhere else in the United States.

In this pivotal moment, we can protect, or imperil, America’s greatest legacy.



The vast quantities of water required for hydraulic fracturing—millions of gallons per well—may deplete key waterways, including those within our national parks.

Sunset highlights the Big South Fork National River and Recreation Area located in Tennessee and Kentucky. ©Willard Clay

# Ask Congress: Please Pass these National Park Bills

**A**s we go to press, we are asking you to contact your Members of Congress in support of the following legislation which will strengthen the National Park System. Some of these bills have been acted on in either the House or the Senate, or in some cases, both chambers. Most of these bills enjoy broad bi-partisan support and would add value to the National Park System by helping to tell diverse stories, protecting battlefield land as the nation commemorates the 150th anniversary of the Civil War, and conserving important natural & cultural resources.

We are asking you to urge your representatives in the House and Senate to pass these bills while the current 113th Congress is still in session. You can contact your legislators by calling the Capitol Switchboard at 202.224.3121.

## Cultural & Natural Resource Protection Bills

- 1 H.R. 1208/S. 507: Manhattan Project National Historical Park Act** - This bill would establish a park with sites in New Mexico, Tennessee, and Washington State that would preserve locations related to the history of the development of the atomic bomb. The sites would empower the Park Service to tell the whole story of this enormous endeavor without guiding or prejudicing the visitor, and without either glorifying or ignoring the significance of nuclear fission.

**STATUS:** *H.R. 1208 and S. 507 have been reported out of committee. We are seeking support for both bills in the House and Senate.*

- 2 H.R. 2271/S. 305: Champion Hill, Port Gibson, and Raymond Battlefields Addition Act** - This legislation would expand the boundary of Vicksburg National Military Park to include an additional 10,000 acres of significant core battlefield land.

**STATUS:** *S. 305 reported out of committee, we are seeking co-sponsors on Senate and House bills.*

- 3 H.R. 2259/S. 255: North Fork Watershed Protection Act** - This bill would protect western boundary of Glacier National Park from oil and gas development on adjacent lands.

**STATUS:** *Senate Hearing has been held; seeking Senate and House support.*

**Below:** Brig. Gen. Lloyd Tilghman, who was killed at the Battle of Champion Hill on May 16, 1863. The monument, sculpted by Frederick W. Sievers, was donated by his sons Frederick & Sidell and is located on Confederate Avenue in Vicksburg NMP behind Tour Stop 11. ©Blaircwh|Dreamstime.com





## Bill to tell a More Diverse Story of American History

- 4 H.R. 520/S. 225: Buffalo Soldiers in the National Parks Study Act** – This bill would determine how the Buffalo Soldiers’ story should be represented within the Park System. The African-American troops who came to be known as the Buffalo Soldiers played a central role in protecting Yosemite, Sequoia, and Kings Canyon National Parks; they were, in fact, our national parks’ first “guardians.”

**STATUS:** Both bills reported out of Committee, seeking support in House and Senate.

## Bill to expand Service Opportunities for Young Americans

- 5 H.R. 1351/S. 360: Public Lands Service Corps Act** – This bill would provide service opportunities for youth to help restore the nation’s natural, cultural, and historic resources.

**STATUS:** Bills introduced on 3/21/13 and 2/4/13, Senate hearing has been held, seeking Senate support. Needs a hearing in the House and House support.

**Below (Top):** Sunrise in Glacier National Park ©benkrut/istockphoto.com **(Bottom):** Calutron operators at their panels in the Y-12 plant at Oak Ridge, TN during World War II. The calutrons were used to refine uranium ore into fissile material. ©Ed Westcott/American Museum of Science and Energy



# Industrial Pig Farm

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Tourism is a primary economic driver in the Arkansas Ozarks and the Buffalo National River plays a major role in bringing tourists to the area. More than 1 million people visit the river each year to enjoy its spectacular setting and unspoiled character. They float and fish the river, visit historic and prehistoric sites, and hike the parks’ 100 miles of trails. They spend money at local businesses, supporting many local jobs, and also help to maintain property values by retiring in the region.

According to a 2012 report released by Arkansas Department of Parks and Tourism, tourism in the Buffalo River Region created 3,495 jobs and generated \$18.5 million in state taxes and \$5.9 million in local taxes in 2012. Newton County’s Chamber of Commerce, located in Jasper, bills the area as *Nature’s Paradise, Buffalo National River Country, The most spectacular area in the Ozark Mountains.*

NPCA, along with the Ozark Society, the Buffalo River Watershed Alliance, and the Arkansas Canoe Club, is working with attorneys from Earth Justice, Earth Rise Law Center, and Carney Bates & Pulliam, LLC, to find legal and administrative solutions to protect and keep the Buffalo National River safe and clean.

Please join with us by making your voice heard! Let the USDA, ADEQ, and Governor Beebe of Arkansas know that the Buffalo National River watershed is not an appropriate location for factory farming. Insist that the ADEQ permit be revoked, FSA loan guarantees be withdrawn, and the CAFO be moved from this inappropriate site. We need your help so we can protect the Buffalo for present and future generations to come.

**Please send a letter or make a call today!**

**Governor Mike Beebe**  
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Little Rock, AR 72201  
(501) 682-2345

**Secretary Tom Vilsack**  
U.S. Dept. of Agriculture  
1400 Independence Ave SW  
Washington, DC 20250  
(202) 720-3631

**Director Theresa Marks**  
Arkansas Dept. of Environmental Quality  
5301 Northshore Drive  
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A small black bear population resides in the forests and wetlands along the Ocmulgee River in middle Georgia. These bears represent a unique local and state resource with potential economic, recreation, and tourism value that goes far beyond the current annual bear hunt. These bears are especially susceptible to habitat loss and NPCA is working to secure and connect the public lands that they depend on for their future sustainability.

©Georgia Wildlife Federation / Paul Powers

## Fred Stanback Honored with NPCA's First-Ever Sequoia Award

**N**PCA member Fred Stanback, long-time conservationist and philanthropist, was awarded the National Parks Conservation Association first-ever *Sequoia Award* on May 17, 2013. This new award, presented to Stanback at a reception at NPCA's Washington, DC office, is to honor individuals who have enhanced our organization's advocacy efforts to protect the National Park System or individual national parks.

**Sequoia Award**



"Fred Stanback embodies the very definition of the *Sequoia Award*, and it's fitting that he is our initial recipient," said NPCA Senior Southeast Regional Director Don Barger. "For many years, he has provided support to NPCA and helped to foster the next generation of park stewards through the Stanback Internship Program."

In 1995, Stanback and his wife Alice established the Stanback Internship Program within the Nicholas School of the Environment at Duke University. The program enables students to intern at conservation organizations throughout the summer months. NPCA has benefited from the assistance of Stanback interns for years—including several that went on to become employees.

NPCA's *Sequoia Award* recognizes extraordinary commitment to our organization and our work through philanthropy, volunteer service, programmatic efforts, or policy work. Awardees will have demonstrated their commitment and leadership to NPCA for a sustained period of time.

Mr. Stanback is currently on the boards of the Nicholas School of the Environment at Duke University, Catawba College and the Blanche and Julian Robertson Family Foundation. In addition, he serves on the president's council of the Southern Environmental Law Center, as well as the national council of the Sierra Club Foundation. We celebrate his conservation stewardship and hope it is an inspiration to everyone.

**Above:** Pictured L-R: Tom Kiernan, Fred Stanback, Don Barger and Jay Leutze ©Alan Spears/NPCA



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