



## Giving a Boost to Voyageur Walleye

**W**orking in unseasonably cool temperatures, among mosquitos so big they could stop a moose in its tracks, NPCA and 35 volunteers planted trees along a river that flows into Voyageurs National Park. These trees will help stabilize the riverbanks, improve water quality, and attract walleye to spawn in waters that connect to this beautiful national park.

This effort to clean up and reforest the Rat Root River in northern Minnesota is part of Nature Valley's "Preserve the Parks" partnership with NPCA. This river used to provide critical spawning habitat for Minnesota's prized walleye, until the over-harvesting of trees along the river banks resulted in erosion, silt, and log jams, which in turn led to poor water quality and a river inaccessible to both fish and recreational visitors. By planting new hardwood trees, our volunteers helped re-stabilize the river banks, reduce erosion, and repair this important waterway.

The planting event was part of a larger project led by NPCA's partner, Rainy Lake Sportfishing Club. Members of the club (based in International Falls), a team from Nature Valley (from Minneapolis), local community leaders, NPCA staff, and Conservation Corps crew members came together with Minnesota Congresswoman

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## Isle Royale: An Island Dilemma

By Christine Goepfert,  
Upper Midwest Program Manager

**I**sle Royale National Park's remote wilderness is, in many visitors' opinions, one of its best attributes. But this isolation may be contributing to the decline of one of its most beloved residents: wolves. These magnificent animals originally migrated to Isle Royale by crossing over ice bridges from the mainland, but because of the warming climate, those ice bridges are disappearing, making it nearly impossible for new wolves to enter into the mix. A drastically reduced wolf population could spell trouble for the famous Isle Royale wolf-moose study, which is the longest continuous predator-prey study in the world, and conducted by Rolf Peterson and John Vucetich of Michigan Technological University.

The eight wolves that remain at Isle Royale—one female and seven males—are inbred and face possible extinction due to low birth rates and health issues from inbreeding, causing biologists to sound the alarm and urge the National Park Service to introduce new wolves to the island.

"Wolves really do matter in this ecosystem and they are responsible for maintaining the integrity of the forest to a large degree," says Peterson.

But reintroducing wildlife in a national park isn't a decision to be taken lightly. The Park

Service has spent time a lot of time determining what to do about the dwindling wolf population, if anything. Wolves and moose are relative latecomers to the island's history, and although the predator-prey study is a valuable scientific resource, is it the Park Service's role to feed science if it isn't consistent with managing native species?



On June 20th, NPCA co-sponsored a public forum in Minneapolis where panelists discussed how to manage Isle Royale Wolves. The park's superintendent, Phyllis Green, described the park's decision-making process and made it clear that "all options are on the table." Park service wildlife experts are considering three possible actions: not intervening

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**Top:** Isle Royale National Park ©Carl TerHaar  
**Above:** Wolf scavenging at Isle Royale National Park. ©Rolf O. Peterson/Michigan Technological University

# FIELD REPORT

Summer 2013

## Midwest Regional Office

8 S. Michigan Ave., Suite 2900  
Chicago, IL 60603  
312.263.0111 • 312.263.0140 fax  
www.npca.org/midwest

### Lynn McClure

REGIONAL DIRECTOR  
lmcclure@npca.org

### LeAaron Foley

SENIOR OUTREACH COORDINATOR  
lfoley@npca.org

### Nathan Miller

AIR QUALITY ANALYST  
nmiller@npca.org

### Erin Denney-Thompson

MIDWEST COORDINATOR  
edenneythompson@npca.org

### Liz Borg

SENIOR DIRECTOR OF MAJOR GIFTS  
lborg@npca.org

## Upper Midwest Field Office

546 Rice Street • St. Paul, MN 55103  
612.270.8564

### Christine Goepfert

UPPER MIDWEST PROGRAM MANAGER  
cgoepfert@npca.org

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[kelleyalbertdesign.com](http://kelleyalbertdesign.com)



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## Viewpoint: One Hour from Chicago, A Partnership Thrives

By Jan Lariviere

**W**e often talk about “connecting with nature” and how important it is for urban residents to have access to green spaces. Living near a world-class park can improve physical health, reduce stress, and even improve people’s moods.

Chicago is lucky to have a spectacular urban oasis in Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore. I know because I recently returned to the Chicago area, as the wife of the new president of The Field Museum, and I was delighted to experience this wonderful national park so near the city on a recent trip with NPCA and museum staff. Our two organizations have formed a vibrant partnership to support the lakeshore as one of the most important natural areas in the Chicago metro area.

We saw so much to marvel at.

We walked the trail at Miller Woods, through “dune and swale” communities dominated by black oaks. What an amazing topography only found around the Great Lakes, that supports very special native flora and fauna. We saw the rare

native lupine nearly in bloom. This is a plant that the endangered Karner blue butterfly needs to reproduce and thrive. And, of course, blueberry bushes were all about. We also saw more than 50 species of birds, including seven different kinds of warblers, though our late spring affected their migrations through the park. My favorite sighting was three red-headed woodpeckers bickering over a prime nesting hole in one of the black oaks.

A couple of years ago, NPCA and the Field Museum teamed up to develop a strategic vision for the park, and now we are working to implement the recommendations of that plan by letting more Chicagoans know this amazing resource is right in their back yards. We also work to promote science and research at the park, ecological restoration, and responsible management of the park’s natural communities, especially to help mitigate the effects of climate change in our region.

Many, more people need to enjoy the trails at Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore. It’s a magical place that beckons all to reconnect with the natural world—and best of all, it’s so easy to access from Chicago, and is truly Chicago’s neighborhood national park.



**Left:** Lariviere enjoys a hike at Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore. ©McClure/NPCA **Right:** Red Headed Woodpecker at Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore. ©NPS

### TELL US WHAT YOU THINK!

What do you like about this newsletter? What other topics or features would you like to see? Please contact us with your feedback at [midwest@npca.org](mailto:midwest@npca.org).



## Isle Royale: An Island Dilemma continued from page one

and allowing the wolves to die off; intervention only if the wolves become extinct; and bringing in new wolves now to put an end to the inbreeding—a “genetic rescue” of sorts.

The debate about Isle Royale wolves is a lively one and not all experts agree. Dr. Dave Mech, an early Isle Royale wolf

researcher, advocated for a “wait and see” approach. He was not convinced the current population would die off. And Tim Cochrane, a long-time Isle Royale researcher and ethno-historian, pointed out that Isle Royale has seen other species come and go, raising the notion that perhaps this is just the normal ecology of an island.

The debate is far from over and the Park Service will look to the public to weigh in on the preservation and management of Isle Royale’s wolves.

**Above:** Photo courtesy of Rolf O. Peterson/  
Michigan Technological University

## NPCA Thanks Congressional “Friends of the National Parks”

On July 17, NPCA presented our “Friends of the National Parks” Congressional awards in Washington, D.C. These awards recognized 157 representatives currently serving in the 113th Congress for their support of legislation during the 112th Congress that upheld the integrity of the National Park System; 26 of these awards were presented to Midwest members of Congress. Among the votes scored, one affected funding and conditions of the Antiquities Act legislation that provides Presidential authority to create national monuments; another would have given Homeland Security authority over any land, including national parks, within 100 miles of the Mexico or Canada border. For the complete list of award recipients, go to: <http://www.npca.org/protecting-our-parks/policy-legislation/park-policy/friend-award.html>.



# National Parks and Hydraulic Fracturing

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

**N**PCA 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 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.

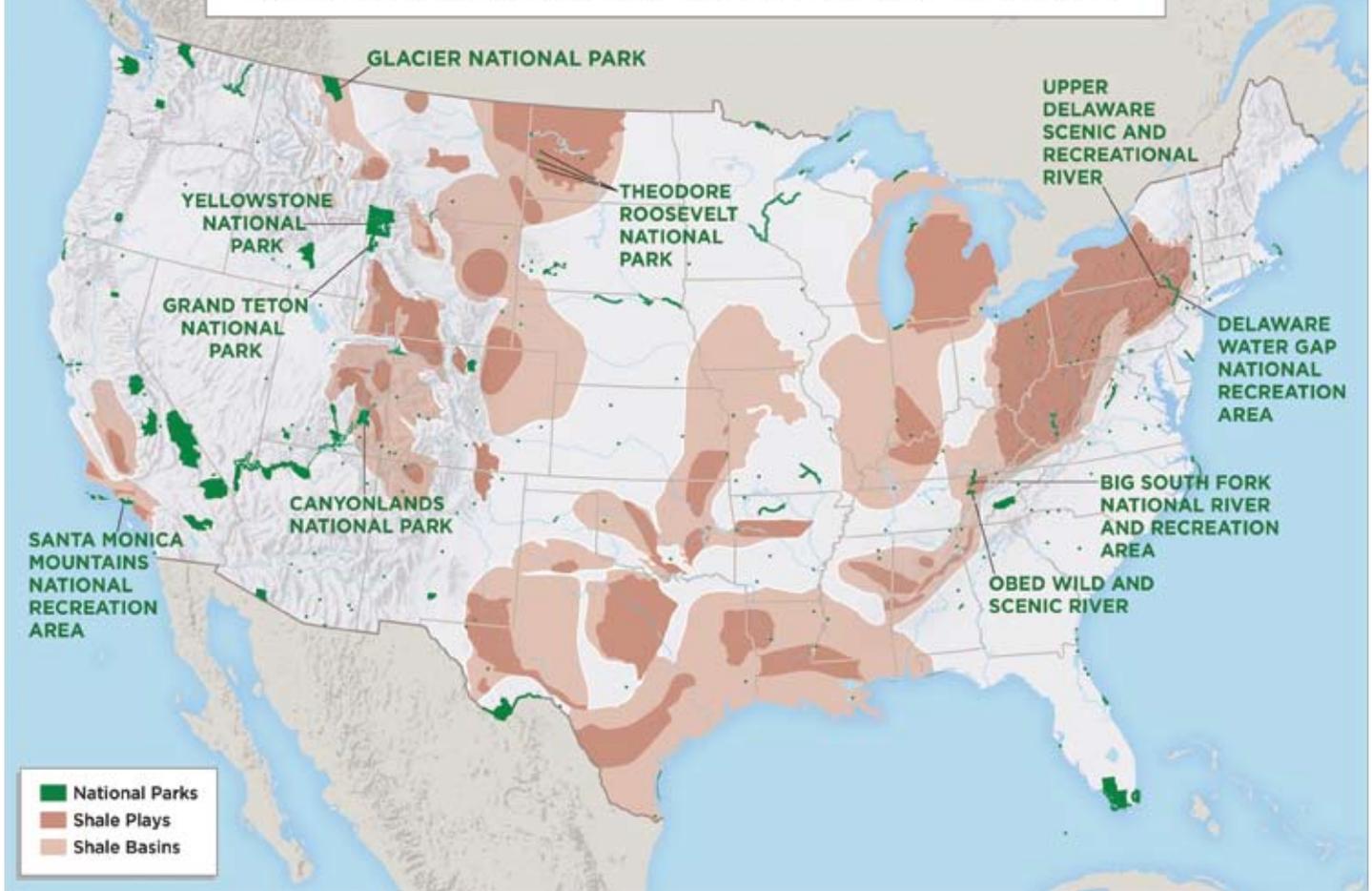
Some impacts of fracking are already obvious. A web of new roads is expanding across the lands that lie above key oil and gas deposits. A proposed bridge and a new road to service a planned fracking field would dominate the view from Elkhorn Ranch, where President Roosevelt conceived his influential conservation

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



# National Parks and Hydraulic Fracturing

*Oil and Gas Shale Basins and Plays in the Contiguous 48 States*



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 and sand 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.

**Left (top):** 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.  
**Left:** Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore ©Ashok Rodrigues/ISTOCKPHOTO

# A Big Win for Wetlands and Wildlife at Indiana Dunes

By Lynn McClure, Midwest Regional Director

**A** U.S. District Court judge recently ruled in favor of restoration at Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore, in a case of local residents crying foul over tree-cutting at Cowles Bog, a significant wetland area for wildlife. The small group of residents believed that this important project violated the National Environmental Protection Act and filed the lawsuit in an effort to halt the removal of trees.

The judge believed that the Park Service went above and beyond in gathering public input and educating the public. All counts of the lawsuit were dismissed.

Scientists, researchers and students from around the world have traveled to Cowles Bog to observe and study the unusual wetland and rare plants and animals.

Today, Cowles Bog is comprised of 205 acres, but many years ago the bog was part of a vast wetland called The Great Marsh that extended along the Lake Michigan



shoreline through Indiana Dunes. This wetland gained notoriety for its unique and vast inventory of plants and wildlife. Scientists, researchers and students from around the world have traveled to Cowles Bog to observe and study the unusual wetland and rare plants and animals.

Over time, much of the Great Marsh was drained to build homes, roads, industry, and agricultural fields. This development changed the nature of the bog, allowing for trees, cattails, and other plants to crowd out the native plant community that had thrived there for thousands of years—an ecosystem that supported birds, mammals and other wildlife.

Thanks to the recent ruling, the Park Service will resume its work to restore Cowles Bog, and, in the process, the area will once again provide a rest stop for migratory birds, protect rare species of plants, improve Lake Michigan's water quality by reducing and controlling runoff, and create new educational opportunities for students, visitors, and nearby residents. Despite the loss of trees, the result will be the comeback of an irreplaceable natural resource, and an American legacy preserved for generations of park visitors to come.

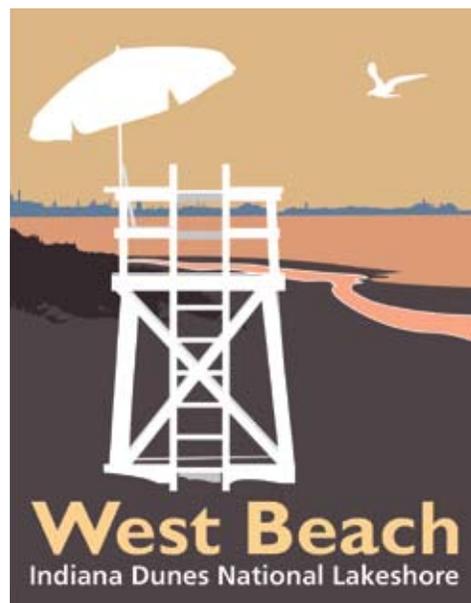
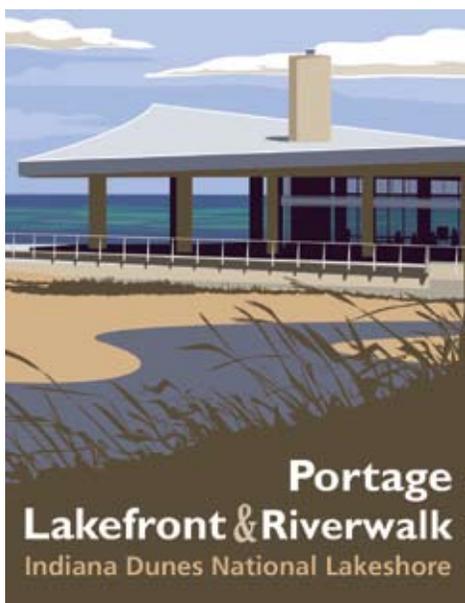
**Left:** NPS staff in Cowles Bog at Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore. ©Kelly Lenard

## New Graphics Help Visitors at Indiana Dunes

**T**he National Park Service has unveiled a series of more than 25 graphic logos that depict sites at Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore. These icons are part of a general awareness campaign that helps visitors navigate their way through the park.

“We want the public to understand that the places they enjoy are part of the same national park,” said Superintendent Costa Dillon.

Over the past five years the Park Service has installed new entrance and site signs, new wayside exhibits, and new trailhead information boards. The graphics will be available as posters in the Indiana Dunes Visitor Center gift shop.



**Above:** Two new graphics for sites at Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore. ©NPS

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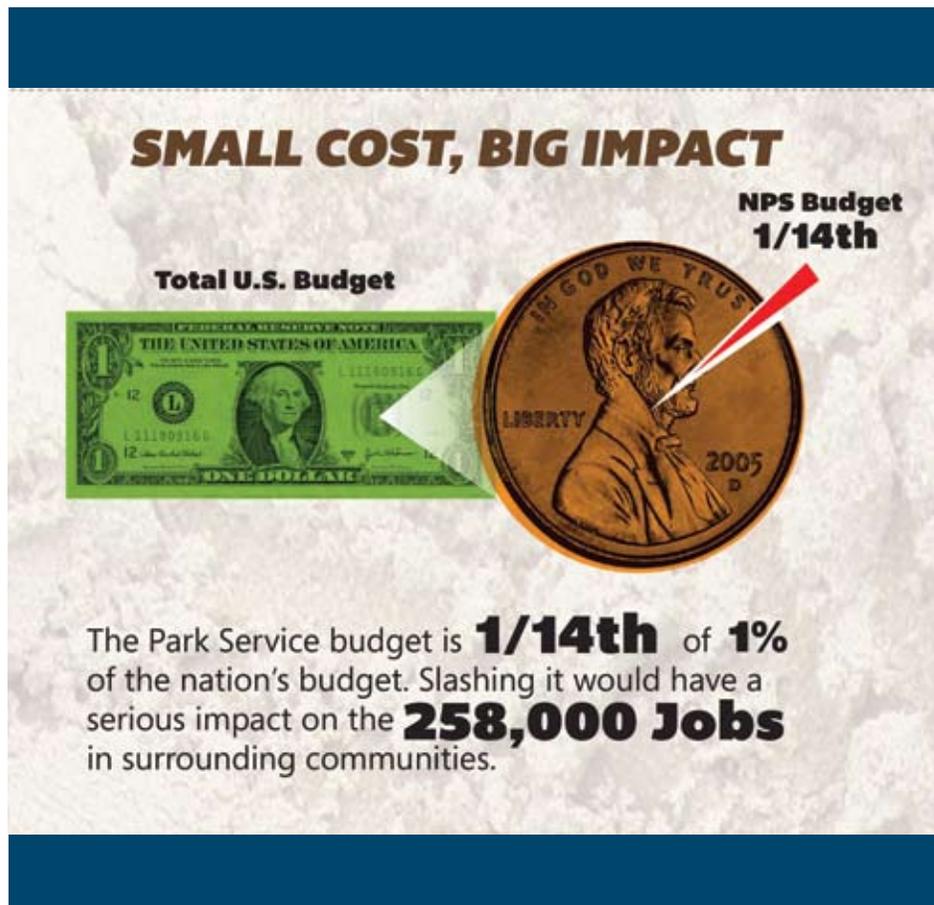
## Small Cost, BIG Impact

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America's national parks behold the country's natural and scenic splendor and tell the many diverse stories of our nation's history. Our national parks attract nearly 300 million visitors each year, and the money they spend in the parks and the communities around the park is critical for local economies. For the very small amount of the federal budget spent on national park operations, there is a huge return. And despite the endless budget debate in Congress, it's clear that national parks remain one of the best investments of the federal dollar.

Last year, the National Park Service budget was roughly \$2.2 billion, representing just one-fourteenth of one percent of the entire federal budget—and the parks leverage 10 times that in visitor spending – a pretty good return on investment.

But the recent sequester has cut funding for every national park in the system, reducing park staff, closing visitor centers, and potentially threatening local economies. Learn more about how some of America's favorite places are being affected at [npca.org](http://npca.org).



**SMALL COST, BIG IMPACT**

Total U.S. Budget

NPS Budget  
**1/14th**

The Park Service budget is **1/14th** of **1%** of the nation's budget. Slashing it would have a serious impact on the **258,000 Jobs** in surrounding communities.

## Giving a Boost to Voyageur Walleye

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Betty McCollum to plant white spruce trees at three sites along the river.

**“This project is a perfect example of a combined public and private investment in America’s great outdoors. It takes a commitment from all of us—from individuals, businesses, nonprofits, local communities and the federal government—to support American treasures like Voyageurs National Park.”**

— CONGRESSWOMAN  
BETTY MCCOLLUM

For more photos from Nature Valley and NPCA’s “Preserve the Parks” program, go to: [at http://www.naturevalley.com/preserve-the-parks](http://www.naturevalley.com/preserve-the-parks)



**Above:** NPCA staff working alongside Conservation Corps youth crew member to restore areas along the Rat Root River near Voyageurs National Park. ©Don Breneman.

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## THAT SHOULD BE A WORD...

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# National PARKATION

**“National Parkation” (noun).**

A term referring to vacation time spent at a national park.

“We are putting the kids in the station wagon for a national parkation this summer.”  
(see also “national parkationer”; one who frequently vacations at national parks)



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## Looking to Lowell for Lessons Learned

By LeAaron Foley  
Midwest Senior Outreach Coordinator

Chicago's south side is home to some of America's most fascinating and meaningful stories. In 1880, entrepreneur, George M. Pullman built the country's first planned model industrial town, which we now know as the Pullman Historic District. The neighborhood also gave birth to the nation's first African-American union, the "Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters," and the pivotal Pullman Strike of 1894. These important "events" speak to Pullman's national significance and why so many Chicago leaders have come together in support of establishing the city's first national park.

To help with that effort, NPCA led a group of Chicagoans to Lowell National Historical Park in Massachusetts this May, to help envision some possibilities for Pullman.

For more than 30 years, the people of Lowell have worked to preserve and interpret the history of this New England mill town, once known for its "mill girls" and immigrant laborers. And the signs of historic preservation and prosperity abound. Riding the

trolley through downtown Lowell and speaking with business and community groups about this national historical park's spirit of cooperation provided the Pullman group with the ability to see what we are working toward together.

Imagine the possibility to breathe life into Pullman's large factory shops, to hear the

tick-tock in the administration building's large clock tower, and to pave the way for hundreds of thousands of visitors each year to experience the history of Chicago's labor and industry. Pullman shares an important piece of American history, and establishing a national park there will ensure these many stories are told for years to come. Sign up to support Pullman at [npca.org/Midwest](http://npca.org/Midwest).



**Above:** Advocates working to establish a national park in Chicago enjoy the Lowell National Historic Park in Massachusetts. ©NPS.