

Dear US Senators and Representatives and President Obama:

We, the undersigned organizations, representing millions of Americans across the country, write to you with deep concern about the threats to funding for the National Park Service and ask that you spare national parks and park programs from the impact of further appropriations cuts and from the budgetary sequester. All the people who enjoy our public lands stand to lose in the event of a sequester, with national parks being the most prominent places used by people throughout our country and the world. Additional cuts to the National Park Service would harm those who visit our parks nearly 300 million times annually, the businesses that serve their needs and jobs created by their visits, and our important efforts to use our parks as magnets for visitors from around the world.

The federal government has a fiduciary responsibility to protect for future generations our national treasures, including Yosemite, the Grand Canyon, Gettysburg, the Lincoln Memorial, and the Washington Monument. These are places that Americans want and expect to be maintained, yet the purchasing power of the National Park Service has already declined by \$465 million—or 15 percent—over the last decade. If the parks budget is cut more deeply after two years of challenging cuts, the consequences will be felt across the country by families, communities and businesses alike.

The Budget Control Act's sequester that is set to take effect on January 2, 2013 is scheduled to cut all Park Service accounts by as much as 10 percent. This damaging level of cuts is likely to result in lengthy closures of some parks and park visitor facilities and cause seasonal rangers who serve park visitors at peak times to virtually disappear. The Park Service, which already faces an annual operating shortfall exceeding \$500 million and a multi-billion-dollar maintenance backlog, has already endured a six percent cut over the last two years—before accounting for millions in inflation and fixed costs increases—and faces the threat of an additional five percent cut this year. Significant additional cuts, through the sequester or annual appropriations, will compromise the ability of the National Park Service to assist tourists, respond to emergencies, protect natural and cultural treasures, maintain historic sites, keep campgrounds and other visitor facilities open, serve school groups, contribute to local economies and support businesses.

Our national parks enhance local economies, both urban and rural, and provide affordable vacation destinations for people regardless of their means or economic situation. They enhance our international tourism economy, directly support more than a quarter million jobs, and secure more than \$30 billion in spending each year in communities across the country. Every dollar invested in park operations generates approximately \$10 in gross sales revenue and every two Park Service jobs yields one outside the Park Service. Concessioner operations in national parks alone provide some 25,000 jobs.

The budget for national parks and programs represents only 1/13<sup>th</sup> of one percent of the federal annual spending, a significant decline from the 1/10<sup>th</sup> of one percent devoted to parks two decades ago. Parks are an investment that produces economic value well in excess of that amount. Rather than compounding our deficit problems, our parks produce exceptional economic value and jobs in communities across the country. The lands and waters protected by national parks and programs provide healthy recreational opportunities and, along with other important public lands, are the foundation for a recreational economy that drives \$646 billion in direct consumer spending and 6.1 million sustainable American jobs. National park sites protect Civil War and other historic areas that define our nation and protect our natural legacy for future generations to enjoy.

According to Forbes, national parks comprise eight out of the top 25 American travel destinations. Failing to care for our national parks would negatively impact the national and local economies and threaten one of the pillars of the new and long-overdue effort to re-establish our nation as a premier international destination, boosting the number of international visitors and the spending they bring with them. Moreover, national parks and park programs are an important component in our efforts to increase the level of physical activity by Americans.

Our national parks are immensely popular with and valued by American families nationwide. They deliver so much for our American economy and way of life. We ask that you protect them from further cuts, both through the annual appropriations process and any sequestration under the Budget Control Act.

Sincerely,