



The Honorable Tom McClintock
U.S. House of Representatives
Chair, Federal Lands Subcommittee,
Natural Resources Committee
1332 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Niki Tsongas
U.S. House of Representatives
Ranking Member Federal Lands
Subcommittee, Natural Resources
Committee
1329 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

December 3, 2015

Dear Chairman McClintock, Ranking Member Tsongas, and Members of the Federal Lands Subcommittee:

Next year, Americans will celebrate the 100th anniversary of the National Park Service. We, the National Parks Second Century Action Coalition and other partners, write in strong support of efforts underway to prepare our national parks for a second century of service for current and future generations.

The National Parks Second Century Action Coalition is comprised of organizations supporting conservation, recreation, outdoor industry, travel and tourism and historic preservation that are dedicated to promoting the protection, restoration, and operation of the National Park System to benefit the health and well-being of current and future generations.

We applaud Natural Resources Committee Chairman Bishop for developing the discussion draft National Park Service Centennial Act, as well as Natural Resources Committee Ranking Member Grijalva for introducing the administration's Centennial proposal (H.R. 3556). These bills demonstrate needed congressional interest in providing a significant commemoration of—and support for—the National Park Service Centennial. The bills provide needed funding for programs and maintenance through the Centennial Challenge Fund as well as a path toward improved long-term fiscal health with the establishment and investment of an endowment.

With an expected influx of visitors expected during and following the Centennial year, it would be a shame if families arrived to decaying facilities and too few rangers to greet them due to the current fiscal challenges facing national parks. On the eve of the National Park Service Centennial, our national parks are facing billions of dollars' worth of overdue repairs. Additionally, there has been more than a 7%, or \$178 million reduction in the account to operate national parks and more than a 12%, or \$370 million reduction

in the total budget for the National Park Service over the last five years in today's dollars. These Centennial bills provide important support for helping relieve these significant funding shortfalls.

We support the provisions in the proposed legislation and H.R. 3556 that formally establish the Centennial Challenge Fund and an endowment to help address some of the financial needs of our nation's parks. We hope the committee will continue to investigate additional revenue sources to more robustly invest in the Centennial Challenge Fund and explore additional funding mechanisms for the National Park Service, while also more directly reducing the deferred maintenance backlog.

The Centennial Challenge is an innovative program that encourages private individuals, foundations, businesses and others to donate funds to help restore and improve our national parks by providing a federal match for the donations. Previous annual investments have supported valuable centennial projects throughout the country. If this bill were enacted, it would establish this program over three years, allowing partners additional time and certainty to raise the matching funds. The endowment would provide long term financial support for the national parks by investing monetary gifts and other contributions to be used in the future for projects and activities that support the national parks.

We also support provisions in the bills that recognize the importance of national parks as places of learning by enhancing interpretation and education programs, and by providing additional opportunities for volunteers in our nation's treasures. We also support the provisions that will help connect a new, diverse generation to the great outdoors and allow the National Park Service to recruit and hire more young and diverse Americans.

Passage of a bipartisan centennial bill, coupled with additional investments for national park roads in the transportation bill and operation and construction funding in the FY16 omnibus appropriations bill, can ensure our parks are better prepared to serve another hundred years and beyond.

Again, we thank Natural Resources Committee Chairman Bishop and Ranking Member Grijalva and their committee staff for offering a forum for discussion of strategies to keep America's national parks relevant and cherished and for offering specific steps to achieve these goals. We urge other members of the committee to support the effort and work with the Senate to swiftly move a final Centennial Bill towards passage.

Thank you for considering our views. We look forward to working with you to ensure final passage of a bipartisan National Park Service Centennial Bill.

Sincerely,

American Forests
American Hiking Society
American Recreation Coalition

Appalachian Trail Conservancy
Association of Partners for Public Lands
Destination Marketing Association International
East Bay Regional Park District
Friends of Acadia
Friends of the Oregon Caves and Chateau
Grand Canyon Association
Japanese American Citizens League
Mississippi River Fund
Mount Rushmore Society
Nature Bridge
National Park Hospitality Association
National Parks Conservation Association
National Tour Association
Recreational Equipment, Inc.
Southeast Tourism Society
Student Conservation Association
The Coalition to Protect America's National Parks
The Corps Network
The Wilderness Society
U.S. Travel Association
United States Tour Operators Association
Western States Tourism Policy Council
Wolf Trap Foundation for the Performing Arts

cc: House Natural Resources Committee Chairman Bishop and Ranking Member
Grijalva