



**Trustees**  
FOR THE PARKS

NEWSLETTER SPRING 2017

# THE NEW LAY OF THE LAND

NPCA FOR THE DEFENSE

MORE THAN JUST TALK

CITY KIDS DISCOVER  
NATIONAL PARKS

AND MORE!



## UNPRECEDENTED

The National Park Service is in its 101st year. NPCA has been around for 98 years. So when I say our parks have never faced a political climate like this, it is really saying something.

As a Trustee for the Parks, you understand the intensifying threats to our national parks better than most. You also know that NPCA has a long history of winning park protection victories against seemingly impossible odds. So while there is no question that national parks are at great risk, there is also no doubt that NPCA is the vigilant, passionate defender our parks need at this moment.

I encourage you to review our analysis of the new political climate for park issues. The “lay of the land” in Washington, DC continues to be divisive, but we are pushing harder to ensure long-term protection for national parks here with crucial assistance from our network of regional offices that reach and activate park supporters across the country.

In addition to thanking you for your leadership support, I want to introduce you to Erin Mezgar. Erin is NPCA’s Associate Director for the Trustees for the Parks Program. She is eager to make your Trustee experience as fulfilling as possible, and to hear from you with any questions or ideas: [emezgar@npca.org](mailto:emezgar@npca.org), 202-809-2800.

In these unprecedented times for national parks, I am grateful for your unmatched commitment to protecting them.

Sincerely,

Theresa Pierno  
President and CEO



National Mall in Washington, DC

## THE NEW LAY OF THE LAND

Anyone looking out from the White House or U.S. Capitol has a stirring view of America’s world-renowned National Mall and Memorial Parks. That constant reminder of the majesty and inspirational power of national parks, however, has never been enough to ensure our elected leaders will act in the parks’ best interests.

That is why National Parks Conservation Association (NPCA) is still needed now as much as we were when the organization was created — to press for fuller protections, responsible management and adequate funding for all national parks. NPCA’s role as an advocate for the parks is particularly important in the current volatile political climate.

### An Alarming Start

The new administration raised serious questions about its commitment to national parks early on by nominating Scott Pruitt to lead the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). As Oklahoma Attorney General, Pruitt repeatedly sued the EPA to block clean air and water standards. Pruitt’s anti-environment record, coupled with proposed deep cuts to the EPA’s budget, threaten to leave parks without vital protections.

And in Congress, legislation to rollback safety standards for oil and gas development in national parks was introduced less than a month into the new session. In addition, the long-standing Stream Protection Rule that protected park waterways against contamination from coal mining operations

was wiped off the books in a matter of days.

Kristen Brengel, NPCA’s Vice President of Government Affairs, was not surprised that the Stream Protection Rule was targeted, but disappointed by the quick reversal of so much hard work: “This rule was decades in the making. It’s based on sound science. And it’s needed to keep park rivers and streams healthy. Now it’s gone just like that and visitors to many parks could be exposed to toxins — not to mention the impacts to wildlife and natural resources.”

Several crucial environmental and wildlife protections were gutted or wiped out under the Congressional Review Act, which gives Congress authority to quickly approve — or eliminate — federal regulations. It also prohibits the re-issuing of protections once they have been removed.

The Methane and Waste Reduction Rule, for example, protects park air quality against methane leaks from oil and gas operations on adjacent land. It also produces revenues of more than \$300 million annually in royalties on natural gas from public and tribal lands. This important rule is now on the chopping block.

### Budget Battles Ahead

The administration’s first federal budget blueprint, unveiled in March, brought more concerns about the future of national parks. Though we don’t yet know all the details, from what we have seen we can say that lowlights of the proposed budget include

slashing the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) budget by 31% and imposing a 12% cut on the Department of the Interior which manages the National Park Service.

National parks rely on the EPA to implement and enforce laws like the Clean Water Act and Clean Air Act so park visitors can breathe healthy air, swim in clean water and enjoy scenic vistas unmarred by haze pollution. Cutting the EPA's budget by nearly a full third would jeopardize those important efforts. Adding insult to injury, critical programs that are proposed for elimination include the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative and the Chesapeake Bay Program.

The proposal also would eliminate funding for National Heritage Areas that support local economies by supporting historic preservation and interpretation. And funding would be slashed for the Land and Water Conservation Fund, which prevents commercial and residential home construction in the middle of national parks. The worst-case scenario from the few details we've seen go even further, from hundreds fewer park rangers to closed historic sites and limited hours at visitor centers.

It is important to note that proposed presidential budgets do not end up as final budgets because it's ultimately Congress who holds the "power of the purse." Months of committee and

subcommittee meetings, congressional hearings, negotiations and public debate will take place before Fiscal Year 2018 park funding levels are finalized. NPCA has decades of experience navigating the complex budget and appropriations process. All staff, members and volunteers will be fully engaged over the coming months to avert disastrous funding cuts and secure adequate funding for national parks.

### **Endangered Rangers?**

The proposed funding cuts come on top of a damaging presidential memorandum during the first week of the administration that freezes hiring of federal employees and seeks to downsize the federal workforce. For the National Park Service, this adds an additional, potent threat to a grave situation.

There are already more than ten percent fewer staff in parks than a few years ago. As the superintendents who manage our parks will tell you, they can't afford the people they need to maintain restrooms and visitor centers, fix trails, manage wolves, bears, bison and other wildlife, and protect our cultural treasures. Now they are threatened with not being able to hire the few staff they can in the current environment.

NPCA has the expertise to recognize the threat that park rangers could become the next endangered species on our national parks. We are working

tirelessly to impress upon key members of Congress and the Administration that parks need more staff, not less, to care for our heritage and accommodate record numbers of visitors.

### **All Hands on Deck**

The new lay of the land for national parks presents many challenges. But there is also progress to be made on some fronts, such as reducing the National Park Service's \$12 billion deferred maintenance backlog. We've worked with our champions in Congress to secure the introduction of legislation to address parks' repair needs, the National Park Service Legacy Act, S. 751, introduced by Senators Warner (D-VA) and Portman (R-OH). We'll be working over the coming months to cultivate support for this important bill that would repair park roads, visitor centers, trails, and more.

What comes of those opportunities, and how many attacks on national parks can be successfully turned back, hinges on NPCA Trustees for the Parks speaking up frequently and forcefully on behalf of America's national parks. That fact never changes no matter who is in the White House or Congress.

*Visit [npca.org](http://npca.org) for the latest updates on budget negotiations, threats facing the parks and to sign up for NPCA Action Alerts.*

*Budget cuts could end the Chesapeake Bay Program, harming water quality and wildlife in more than 50 national parks across the Bay watershed.*





Hikers on the Appalachian Trail

## NPCA FOR THE DEFENSE

In recognition of both the challenging political climate for national parks and the potential power of the courts to protect parks, NPCA is making significant new investments in its National Parks Legal Defense Fund.

- Protecting the Appalachian National Scenic Trail from clear cutting to make way for a major gas pipeline.
- Requiring clean up measures at Wyoming's largest coal plant to improve air quality at Yellowstone and Grand Teton National Parks.
- Due to repeal of the Stream Protection Act, examining each individual mining operation that may contaminate downstream park waters to determine which ones must be challenged by individual lawsuits.

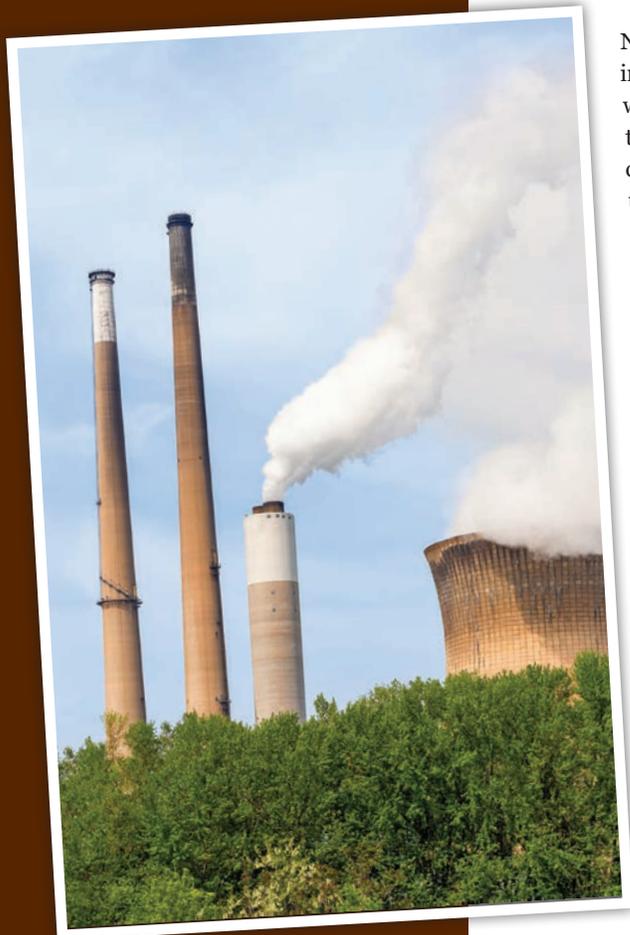
NPCA's legal team is already involved in more than 30 cases with enormous implications for the future of national parks. That caseload is expected to grow to unprecedented levels over the coming months, as litigation becomes the last line of defense for America's national parks.

From reducing air and water pollution levels in parks, to compelling full enforcement of wildlife protections, many opportunities exist to balance the scales of justice in favor of national parks. Battles NPCA attorneys are already engaged in include:

- Challenging oil and gas drilling operations near Glacier, Carlsbad Caverns and Big Cypress National Parks.

The work of NPCA's National Parks Legal Defense Fund goes beyond courtroom battles. Other important efforts include alerting the public to attacks on the parks and pressuring lawmakers to keep key protections in place. Blocking the most harmful park policies coming out of Washington, DC is also a priority – and will likely remain one for the foreseeable future.

No matter the issue or venue, NPCA Vice President and General Counsel Libby Fayad promises, "we will defend America's national parks with passion, purpose and a smart strategy that gets results."



# MORE THAN JUST TALK

Talking is only the first step when NPCA hosts Speaker Series events around the country that bring people together to discuss national parks issues. The real point is to spark actions that protect and enhance parks in a specific part of the country.

In Philadelphia on March 1, for example, NPCA's Mid-Atlantic and Northeast staff engaged citizens in planning next steps following passage of the Delaware River Basin Conservation Act. The law is the result of nearly seven years of advocacy by NPCA and fellow members of the Coalition for the Delaware River Watershed. Now those activists are turning their attention to Congress to secure sufficient funding to protect and promote national parks throughout the Delaware River Watershed.

Two weeks later and more than 1,000 miles south, the NPCA Sun Coast office conducted a special program in Palm Beach Gardens, Florida dealing with the restoration of Everglades National Park. Overdevelopment, diverted water flows and polluted runoff have plagued the Everglades for decades. But a concerted effort by NPCA staff, local residents, elected officials, businesses leaders and other stakeholders has put the iconic "River of Grass" on a path to recovery.

Members of that coalition are working together to keep the restoration on track by pressing Florida lawmakers to further protect Everglades National Park from harmful discharges and runoff.

The most recent of these Speaker Series events took place in Seattle on April 25. NPCA President Theresa Pierno, Northwest Regional Director Rob Smith and Cultural Resources Director Alan Spears sought insights from parks supporters across the region on how to best shape the next century of Northwest crown jewels including Olympic, North Cascades and Crater Lake National Parks.

NPCA leaders, conservationists, scientists, educators and other staff members conduct a variety of Speaker Series events exclusively for Trustees for the Parks. A full schedule of upcoming events, and links to all regional offices, can be found at [npca.org](http://npca.org).



Canoers on the Delaware River

## STRENGTHEN NPCA AND SUPPORT THE NATIONAL PARKS

As the sole organization focused on protecting and strengthening the national parks, NPCA has depended on the commitment and strength of its loyal members for its achievements over the last 98 years.

**As the parks enter their second century, your support will be vital in ensuring they are there for another 100 years.** Your tax deductible gifts of \$1,000, \$2,500, \$5,000, and \$10,000 will fuel our vital efforts to connect young people and other Americans to our national parks, and mobilize them to press our elected leaders to protect and strengthen our precious parks heritage.

As a Trustee for the Parks you will receive:

- Special messaging to give you the latest news on our work
- Recognition in NPCA's annual report
- The engaging, in-depth, quarterly Trustees for the Parks newsletter
- A subscription to *National Parks*, our award-winning magazine.

### WAYS TO ACHIEVE A GIFT:

- **Give through your employer** — Your company may be one of thousands that will match your gifts to NPCA.
- **Stock gifts** — Donate stock assets to help us preserve and protect the parks.
- **Monthly installments** — Break your gift into multiple payments to make a Trustee for Parks gift more affordable.

For more information contact Erin Mezgar, Associate Director, Trustees for the Parks at 202.454.3370 or [emezgar@npca.org](mailto:emezgar@npca.org).

### CONSIDER A PLANNED GIFT

With numerous ways to make and fund a planned gift, you can increase your current income, diversify your holdings, reduce your taxes, and avoid probate costs. Please contact Morgan Dodd, toll-free at 877.468.5775 or [mdodd@npca.org](mailto:mdodd@npca.org).

### TRAVEL WITH US

Check off a few more national parks from your list! Join one of NPCA's small group tours in partnership with Off the Beaten Path. Most tours are limited to 16 participants, with two guides. Please contact Ben Sander at 202.454.3305, [bsander@npca.org](mailto:bsander@npca.org), or visit [www.npcapark.org/travel](http://www.npcapark.org/travel).

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Volunteers helped take down fencing to allow Pronghorn Antelope to reconnect to historic migration pathways near West Yellowstone.

## NPCA REGIONAL STAFF: ON THE GROUND & IN ACTION

Whenever you visit any national park, you aren't too far from an NPCA regional or field office staffed by volunteers who care about the parks as much as you do. These 26 offices across the country are where much of NPCA's work takes place, and where some of our greatest park-protection victories are won.

"It's about having a strong on-the-ground presence in communities near national parks," explains NPCA Vice President of Regional Operations Hayley Mortimer, "so we can identify threats as they emerge and mobilize local folks to take effective action in defense of the parks they love."

The current extensive network of locations is the result of a strategic decision made by NPCA leaders long ago. They recognized that different parks in different parts of the country require unique conservation approaches and tactics.

NPCA regional and field staff develop and implement solutions in a wide variety of settings — from desert ecosystems to urban centers, from mountain ranges to coral reefs and everything in between. They also form key partnerships with local conservation groups so everyone concerned about the future of national parks can collaborate and have a greater impact than any single group could on its own.

Regional offices are playing an essential role in NPCA events that are inspiring Americans to connect with, restore and protect national parks from coast to coast. Activists are so

passionate about and dedicated to speaking up for national parks precisely because they have a personal stake in preserving parks right in their own backyard. Or as Mortimer puts it, "There's nothing abstract or theoretical about it when some industry or politician is threatening a national park you grew up with or that sustains your job and income. People get fired up, get involved and get results."

Sometimes taking action for national parks can be as simple as signing a petition or sending an email to a local elected official. In other cases, volunteers roll up their sleeves to pick up trash left by careless park visitors, plant trees, or to build migration-friendly fences giving park wildlife room to roam.

If you are looking to deepen your engagement with NPCA and your national parks you can find events at [npca.org/events](http://npca.org/events) or by calling one of our office locations.



# CITY KIDS DISCOVER NATIONAL PARKS

More and more young people are experiencing America's national parks for the very first time through NPCA events that aim to inspire and activate the next generation of park protectors. When people of any age get an up-close-and-personal look at their national parks, they feel a greater sense of responsibility for protecting those special places. When teenagers make that connection, it bodes especially well for the future of national parks.

NPCA brought several groups of Los Angeles high school students to Mojave to see a truly dark night sky for the first time. The stars of Hollywood have nothing on the stars, planets and humbling enormity of a California desert night sky. Awed by the sight — and by the fact that Mojave National Park belongs to them — the teens came away determined to protect it.

NPCA also partnered with Friends of Arches and Canyonlands Parks and YouthWorks Salt Lake to take 15 urban youth from Salt Lake City to Arches and Canyonlands National Parks. Through this cooperative program the youth experience new recreation

adventures while learning about careers in land management, tourism and outdoor recreation as well as what it means to be an advocate for their public lands.

All the participants who said this was their first visit to a national park guaranteed that it would not be their last. They are engaged in park advocacy projects back at home and looking forward to their next national park adventure. Introducing young people to their national parks legacy is one of the most impactful ways to help ensure national parks will be in good hands — and great shape — for years to come.

Arches National Park



## WHAT THE KIDS HAD TO SAY...

“My hope for this place is to come back here 20 years from now with my kids and enjoy it with them.”

“I've only seen nature through cameras or on TV. Actually being out here is different. Now I see these beautiful places need us to protect them.”

“There aren't many spaces like this in the rest of the world. So we have to conserve what we can.”

“I'm really glad I came on this trip. I had no idea how amazing nature really is. The rock formations blew my mind.”

To see more about their amazing adventures, watch the video at <https://vimeo.com/nPCA>





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## NEWSLETTER SPRING 2017

### MEET ERIN (AND VICE VERSA)

Erin Mezgar is your new Associate Director of the Trustees for the Parks program. She is eager to meet more Trustees — “The most dedicated group of national parks enthusiasts and defenders who I’ve ever met,” Erin says — and to make sure you have the best membership experience possible.

You can reach Erin at 202-809-2800 or [emezgar@npca.org](mailto:emezgar@npca.org) with any questions or suggestions. Until then, Erin asks all Trustees for the Parks to participate in a one-minute survey so she can get to know you better:

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



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The Blue Ridge Parkway is one of Erin's favorite parks.