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Craig Kenkel selected as new Superintendent at Cuyahoga Valley National Park

OMAHA, Neb. – Craig Kenkel has been selected as the Superintendent of Cuyahoga Valley National Park headquartered in Brecksville, Ohio. Currently serving as Superintendent at San Francisco Maritime National Historical Park in San Francisco, Calif., Kenkel succeeds Stanley Austin, who became the National Park Service Southeast Regional Director in July 2013, and begins this new assignment this Spring (specific date yet to be determined).

In announcing Kenkel’s selection, NPS Midwest Regional Director Michael T. Reynolds said, “Craig’s leadership experience and ability to build strong relationships and accomplish major initiatives with partner groups will serve well to meet the needs of Cuyahoga Valley National Park.” “He will continue to elevate the park within the Cleveland-Akron metropolis as a major urban national park, will engage new communities, and will lead an effort to build diversity, relevancy, and inclusion.” Reynolds added.

“I’m excited to soon be working with Cuyahoga Valley’s dedicated team of park staff, partners and local constituents to enhance what I believe is already a model 21st century park.” Kenkel said of this new opportunity. “Since first visiting the park in 1992, Cuyahoga Valley has been on my personal ‘top ten parks list.’ That one can find this incredible river valley park rich with history, nature, and opportunities to play and learn in a large urban/suburban area is wonderful and compelling; I look forward to professionally and personally experiencing this park.”

Kenkel began his NPS career in 1983 as an architecture student intern at the Denver Service Center. He began working full-time at DSC as a historical architect on the Western Team in 1985, and project work took him to Sitka NHP, Klondike Gold Rush NHP, Olympic NP, Crater Lake NP, Yosemite NP, Sequoia NP, Point Reyes National Seashore, and Petrified Forest NP. In 1988, Kenkel transferred to the Western Regional Office in San Francisco, where he served first as a project

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architect and then as Regional Historical Architect for the national parks of Hawaii, California, Nevada, Arizona, and the U.S. territories of the Pacific.

From 1992 to 2005, Kenkel worked at the Midwest Regional Office, transitioning from Regional Historical Architect to Regional Chief of Cultural Resources. Accomplishments include leading the team that designed the visitor experience for Brown v. Board of Education National Historic Site; managing the expansion of the Regional Cultural Resources Program to include both park and community programs, with staff growth from 9 to 30; and serving as the NPS architect on the public-private development team for the new Midwest Regional Office building, the first NPS facility to be LEED gold certified.

In 2005, Kenkel became Chief of Cultural Resources at Golden Gate National Recreation Area, his first 'park' assignment, and served for a year as acting deputy superintendent before becoming Superintendent at San Francisco Maritime NHP in 2010. He fondly describes the maritime park as a place where 'ship happens!' and is honored to be part of the team that opened a new permanent exhibit in the park visit center, re-energized park partnerships, respectfully dismantled the National Historic Landmark steam schooner Wapama, is bringing active maritime steam back to Hyde Street Pier, and is readying the NHL coastal lumber schooner CA Thayer for her final phase of a 10-year restoration project.

A Harlan, Iowa, native, Kenkel and his nine siblings were raised on a livestock and grain farm near Earling in the southwest region of the state. He received his Bachelor of Arts in Architecture degree from Iowa State University in Ames, Iowa, in 1985. In his spare time, he enjoys hiking, backpacking, biking, cooking, traveling, all things mid-century modern, and improving his pool game. Kenkel is drawn to exploring and understanding urban/wild edges, and he looks forward to engaging in Cleveland's sustainability and historic preservation initiatives.

Authorized as a national recreation area in 1974 and re-designated a national park in 2000, the 33,000-acre Cuyahoga Valley NP preserves rural landscapes along the Cuyahoga River between Cleveland and Akron.

The park has a rich cultural legacy. Remains of the Ohio & Erie Canal, which flowed through the valley in the 19th and early 20th centuries, offer a glimpse into the past. The 20-mile Ohio & Erie Canal Towpath Trail follows the historic route of the canal. Historic structures and natural features can be seen as the trail continues along the Ohio & Erie National Heritage Canalway, and sustainable farming ventures help preserve the valley's agricultural heritage.

Cuyahoga Valley NP offers a wide variety of cultural, historical, recreational, and natural activities and experiences in one setting.

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