



Toward A New Era of Philanthropy and Partnerships

2014 National Park System Advisory Board Report



On the Cover: Damaged by an earthquake in 2011, the Washington Monument undergoes repairs funded through a public-private partnership. NPS photo.

National Park System Advisory Board



Citizen advisors chartered by Congress to help the National Park Service care for special places saved by the American people so that all may experience our heritage.

Tony Knowles
Anchorage, Alaska
CHAIRMAN

February 2015

Honorable Jonathan B. Jarvis
Director, National Park Service
1849 C Street, NW
Washington, DC 20240

Paul Bardacke
Santa Fe, New Mexico

Dear Director Jarvis,

Linda J. Bilmes
Cambridge, Massachusetts

The National Park System Advisory Board is pleased to transmit ***Toward a New Era of Philanthropy and Partnerships***, a report developed by our Philanthropy and Partnerships Committee. The Board adopted the report on December 5, 2014.

Leonore Blitz
Washington, DC

In late 2013, you asked the Board to assist the National Park Service in the revision process of Director's Order #21, the principal policy document that guides donations and fundraising for all parks, programs, and external partners. To help inform the Board's support, we created the Philanthropy and Partnerships Committee, a group of diverse leaders representing corporate America, nonprofits, universities, museums, foundations, youth groups, outdoor recreation organizations, NPS partners, park philanthropists, and concessions.

Judy Burke
Grand Lake, Colorado

Milton Chen
Nicasio, California

The Board applauds the Committee's work. The Committee's report encourages the NPS to align itself with best practices in the philanthropic sector, coupled with new business behaviors initiated by both the NPS and its partners. The key recommendations offer the NPS a more current, consistent, responsive, and equitable policy guidance framework and include the following:

Rita Colwell
College Park, Maryland

- Redistribute greater partnering authorities to park and program managers and give NPS managers and partners more authority in the donor vetting process;
- Develop a branding strategy that supports the philanthropic work of the NPS and its partners;
- Design a consistent donor recognition framework for gifts given at the national and local levels;
- Provide NPS employees with appropriate guidance and training on how public-private partnerships in philanthropy enhance the NPS mission; and
- Ensure that the NPS continually integrates current philanthropic sector best practices, using Federal agencies, such as the Smithsonian Institution and the Library of Congress, as models.

Belinda Faustinos
Azusa, California

Carolyn Finney
Berkeley, California

The redistribution of authorities and the implementation of new practices must be advanced by clear strategic directives, national guidelines, and new training. The National Park Service's Centennial in 2016 offers an opportunity to test and evaluate some of these recommendations.

Gretchen Long
Wilson, Wyoming

The implementation of all recommendations must involve clear, two-way communication between key NPS support offices in Washington, D.C., and the broader park and partner fields. NPS management is encouraged to promote employee understanding of this need and to be especially mindful not to distract from the Service's central mission.

Stephen Pitti
New Haven, Connecticut

The Board hopes this report will prove beneficial to the NPS as it proceeds to revise Director's Order #21. The updated policy guidance will be a catalyst for a new era of partnerships and philanthropy for the National Park Service.

Sincerely,

Margaret Wheatley
Provo, Utah

Tony Knowles
Chair, National Park System Advisory Board

Executive Summary

The Philanthropy and Partnerships Committee of the National Park System Advisory Board (the Committee) was created to improve the capacity of the National Park Service (NPS or Service) for partnership with current and new nonprofit partners, and identify opportunities to drive greater private support through philanthropy. Committee membership was selected based on understanding of current challenges with NPS practices, and expertise in the fields of partnership and philanthropy. Throughout its work, the Committee sought to create actionable, timely recommendations to allow the NPS to take advantage of the once-in-a-lifetime 2016 National Park Service Centennial.

The Committee investigated current NPS approaches and performance across five areas: *Donor Recognition, Branding and Intellectual Property, Agreements, Risk Management, and Diversity and Inclusion*. Based on findings from these five areas, the Committee identified four broad opportunities for improvement to NPS business practices and operating approaches. These would bring the agency in line with contemporary best practices in partnerships, philanthropy, and nonprofit management:

Increasing Donor Stewardship and Donor-Centricity¹

The Committee found that current donor recognition within the NPS is inconsistent and varied, and falls short of widely held practices within the philanthropic community. It, therefore, recommends that the NPS stimulate widespread park philanthropy by encouraging employees to promote the philanthropic activities of official nonprofit partners. Key actions include creating opportunities to donate within parks, participating in fundraising events and donor visits, and sharing success stories. The Committee also encourages the NPS to create multiple, varied opportunities to reach and recognize potential donors.

Optimizing the NPS Stakeholder System

The Committee's view is that the NPS operates as part of a complex system of interdependent stakeholders (including the National Park Foundation, the Friends Alliance, corporate and foundation partners, donors, etc.). The Committee has identified numerous opportunities for the Service to optimize this system and achieve its stated organizational goals by shifting responsibility for some activities within the stakeholder system. This includes redistributing authority among NPS leaders and nonprofit partners, and empowering park superintendents and managers, along with their nonprofit boards of directors and management, to appropriately assess and decide on collaborative courses of action.

Developing Brand Assets and Brand Management Tools

The Committee found that the NPS lacks a coherent, comprehensive brand-unifying strategy that effectively communicates its mission, relevance and value to stakeholders. The Committee recommends that the Service develop a coherent brand strategy that draws from best-in-class examples within the government, nonprofit and corporate sectors. This brand strategy would, in turn, need clear stakeholder guidelines, while protecting brand integrity and intellectual property.

Increasing Diversity and Inclusion:

The Committee found that, despite ongoing efforts to address diversity gaps, many stakeholders perceive the NPS as lacking diversity and a sense of inclusion. The Committee recommends that the NPS and its partners significantly increase representation of diverse and under-represented audiences across critical stakeholder groups, including visitors, volunteers, employees, partners, suppliers and philanthropic donors.

¹ Donor-Centricity is a commonly used term in the philanthropic sector that denotes the process an organization uses to maintain an on-going relationship with its donor or donor community.

To improve current business practices and operating approaches, the Committee recommends numerous revisions of Director’s Order #21: Donations and Fundraising. The modifications remove unnecessarily restrictive provisions, such as rejecting private contributions, complicating collaboration and discouraging partner engagement. They ensure optimization of the NPS stakeholder network with language and actions that promote trust, shared mission, collaboration and shared value creation. The Committee believes that these broad recommendations, together with specific editorial revisions to Director’s Order #21, will position the NPS for success as it enters its second century.

The NPS is at a critical juncture as it approaches its 100th anniversary. The Committee believes that, given the large funding backlog, a shifting demographic, and rapidly changing societal expectations of philanthropy, there is both a tremendous need and an opportunity to become more externally focused. By embracing and more fully leveraging its system of trusted stakeholders, the NPS can stimulate myriad opportunities for increased support and participation, while successfully navigating concerns about commercialization, endorsement and risk. It is the Committee’s belief that this will more effectively build the NPS brand, embrace innovation, reduce inefficiencies and ultimately attract increased support—all without compromising the Service’s high standards or the expectations of the general public.

The Committee urges decisive action, in this historic moment, to protect and strengthen the unique, priceless national treasure that is our National Park System.



The Statue of Liberty was a gift to the United States from the people of France in 1886. Extensive restoration in the 1980s was made possible through collaboration between the NPS and the Statue of Liberty-Ellis Island Foundation. NPS photo.

Introduction

The National Park Service (NPS), and the parks that make up the system, would be unrecognizable without the support of partners and philanthropists that has existed from its inception. Yet, park philanthropy has not reached its potential. Current NPS policies and practices often become obstacles to creating and sustaining effective partnerships. The NPS and its partners recognize that the centennial provides an historic opportunity for the NPS to position itself as a best-in-class philanthropic partner.

The Philanthropy and Partnerships Committee of the National Park System Advisory Board (hereafter, the Committee) was created to develop timely, actionable recommendations that will unleash greater private support and dramatically improve the NPS's partnership capacity. The NPS aspires not only to work as efficiently and productively as possible with current donors, but also to engage with an array of stakeholders outside its existing base of support. This report articulates the Committee's expectations for a substantive revision of Director's Order #21, the NPS policy related to donations and fundraising, to solve its key challenges and to better position national parks in today's competitive philanthropic environment. The Committee believes the adoption of its recommendations will accomplish this task.

Objectives

The Committee's principal objective was to provide recommendations to develop a new Director's Order #21 that donors and nonprofit partners will find comprehensible and less restrictive. The recommendations will be successful if they:

- *Increase private support for the NPS mission*
- *Improve efficiencies in philanthropic partnerships at the national and park levels*
- *Enhance the NPS brand through partnerships*

In formulating its recommendations, the Committee considered best practices and business models from the broader philanthropic community, corporate brand strategies, and public-private partnerships across government.

While the Committee respects the underpinning motivations of the existing policy, it found that many provisions unnecessarily reject private contributions, complicate collaboration and discourage partner engagement. The Committee's recommendations are designed to alleviate these restrictions by reallocating roles and responsibilities among stakeholders.

The Committee has identified numerous opportunities for the NPS to optimize this system and achieve its stated organizational goals. These include redistributing authority among NPS leaders and nonprofit partners, and empowering park managers and their nonprofit boards of directors to appropriately assess and decide collaborative courses of action.

These recommendations position the NPS and its current partners to include new and diverse supporters in the next century of park philanthropy. Nonprofit NPS partners will be essential to engaging new constituencies at a grassroots level. In this respect, the Committee believes that fostering philanthropic partnerships is a key strategy for problem solving within the NPS ecosystem².

²Business Ecosystem is a network of organizations including suppliers, distributors, competitors, and government agencies involved in the delivery of a specific product or service through both competition and cooperation. The NPS ecosystem includes friends groups, concessioners, cooperating associations, and other nonprofit partners.

Legacies of Partnership and Philanthropy



William Kent (left) and Stephen T. Mather in Muir Woods National Monument, the first national monument created from land donated by a private individual. To spare old-growth redwoods from logging, Kent and his wife, Elizabeth, bought one of the last stands and donated it to the federal government. F. Ransome, NPS Historic Photo Collection.

NPS history is incomplete without stories of generosity and park philanthropy. The creation and improvement of many national parks is due to the generosity of individuals of every economic level who are committed to our shared natural, historical and cultural treasures. From William and Elizabeth Kent's gift of Muir Woods, to the Rockefeller's efforts to preserve Grand Teton, many iconic parks were preserved through the gifts of private citizens. Equally important are more recent philanthropic campaigns to engage the broader American public—from school children's pennies collected to restore the Statue of Liberty, to the successful fundraising efforts to construct the Flight 93 National Memorial.

Park philanthropy has historically relied upon vibrant partnerships between national parks and nonprofit organizations. Through the sale of educational materials and the investment of the profits in park programs, nonprofit cooperating associations have been helping parks fulfill their educational, interpretive and scientific missions since the 1920s. By the 1980s, many associations began adding fundraising as a tool to achieve their missions, and new friends groups emerged for the sole purpose of becoming national park philanthropic partners. Together such partners,

from community-based friends groups to the National Park Foundation, form a growing continuum of support that contributes over \$150 million annually to the National Park System. These nonprofit partners offer expertise and capacity that, alone, the NPS could never achieve.

Beyond sources of land and money, park philanthropy and partnerships build and strengthen bonds between parks and their advocates. While all citizens are owners of the parks, those who make additional voluntary contributions of time, treasure, and talent have a special interest in the National Park System's welfare. Philanthropic outreach beyond current park supporters and into our nation's diverse communities is essential to the future sustainability of the National Park System.

Support for the proposition that the National Park Service Centennial will mark a pivotal point in the relationship between the NPS and its partners has been growing for almost ten years. A vibrant next century for our national parks will rely upon new generations of visitors, advocates, donors, volunteers and staff. Unless nonprofit park partners engage in unprecedented outreach and take strategic risks, the next generation will be disconnected and our parks will lack the protections they need.

Increasing Donor Stewardship and Donor-Centricity



Celebration of Yosemite National Park's 150th Anniversary included groundbreaking for a landmark project to preserve the Mariposa Grove of Giant Sequoias, made possible through a partnership between the Yosemite Conservancy and the NPS. NPS photos.

Roles and Responsibilities of the NPS and Partners

An understanding of the important role that both the NPS and nonprofit organizations play in fostering donors is key to the success of park philanthropy. NPS policies must encourage park managers, as well as front-line staff, to promote the philanthropic activities of official nonprofit partners and seek opportunities to reach and recognize potential donors.

The Committee recommends that Director's Order #21 establish positive roles and responsibilities for all partners. NPS employees must be encouraged to work with their nonprofit partners by: identifying worthy campaigns, programs and projects; authorizing the tasteful recognition of donors and nonprofit partners within national parks; creating opportunities for giving within parks; participating in fundraising events and donor visits; sharing success stories and helping steward donors; and ensuring donation accountability through reports that may be shared with donors.

Fundraising nonprofit partners have the responsibility to: engage all of the American public—including individuals, foundations and corporations—in park philanthropy; describe the opportunities, needs and philanthropic merit of the NPS; and openly communicate their fundraising messages with the Service.

In addition to individual roles, the NPS and nonprofit organizations have joint responsibility for planning how to achieve shared outcomes. This is particularly true in philanthropic partnerships where formal agreements authorize the solicitation of donations for park resources and programs. The Committee recommends that the NPS and its nonprofit partners:

- *Collaborate on the development of strategic plans to renew foundational commitments and align key strategies to achieve their shared vision*
- *Establish operational plans and priorities annually to guide and authorize significant philanthropic efforts*
- *Develop gift acceptance policies that align with park values and meet the approval of a nonprofit park partner's board of directors*
- *Communicate intentionally, transparently, and in a timely manner*

The Committee's goal is to allow the NPS and its partners to work more collaboratively than current practices permit. Ongoing joint planning between the Service and its partners will provide much needed flexibility. This flexibility will allow the NPS to dispense with requirements, such as feasibility studies, no longer considered "best practices" in many philanthropic situations. In this new model, the Service and its nonprofit partners will collaboratively determine if and when such steps are necessary or prudent.

Finally, the Committee recommends that Director's Order #21 continue to educate NPS employees on current related laws and policies. For example, while NPS employees may act as liaisons to a nonprofit partner, they cannot hold positions of authority in said organization. At the same time, NPS employees must be challenged to consider innovative uses for existing partnership instruments (e.g. cooperative agreements and challenge cost share authorities) to leverage public and private support for the benefit of a shared vision.

Fundraising in National Parks

Acknowledging that park visitors are some of the most likely prospective donors, approved organizations might develop visitor-centered fundraising activities. NPS superintendents should be encouraged to approve activities that inform visitors of the need for and the means of making contributions, and identify how such donations will be used. These events must be developed collaboratively with the park superintendent, and visitors should be easily able to opt out and have their privacy respected.

The Committee further requests that Director's Order #21 include provisions for:

Donation collection, such as the use of donation boxes	Cash, credit card or electronic contributions may be collected at sites and activities approved by the superintendent, provided they are used for the stated purposes. The Committee recommends that partners who assist in the collection and accounting of donation box funds be permitted to use an appropriate percentage of these funds to offset expenses.
Displays or access points to information	Parks are encouraged to have displays that educate visitors about philanthropic opportunities.
Events and in-park celebrations	People are most likely to make the connection between their donations and park goals at events held within parks. Park superintendents should approve event plans and fundraising purposes and goals should be clearly articulated.

Donor Recognition

Given the norms and expectations of recognition in American philanthropy today, the Committee recommends that the NPS more prominently acknowledge donors within the national parks. The current state of donor recognition is inconsistent across parks, with varying levels of sophistication, clarity, and effectiveness at encouraging further philanthropy. The Committee believes the Service can achieve greater donor recognition tastefully and without commercializing parks by applying best practices found in similar environs, including universities and museums.

The Committee recommends that the NPS create multiple and varied opportunities to stimulate diverse support of our nation's parks within a consistent framework. These opportunities should balance the needs of today's donors while protecting the NPS brand, ensuring a positive visitor experience, and maintaining the parks' natural and cultural beauty. Key elements include:

Encourage donor recognition through naming opportunities	<p>Today, Director's Order #21 prohibits donor recognition via naming on specific park assets (e.g. benches, motor vehicles, bricks or other core furnishings). Additionally, inconsistency across the system creates a confusing brand and consumer experience. Exceptions have been granted by the NPS in some cases; other parks have created workaround solutions.</p> <p>The Committee believes that naming opportunities are an appropriate form of in-park recognition and recommends a policy that permits its use. Naming opportunities could include, but are not limited to: donor walls, non-historic buildings, rooms, benches, pavers, gardens, vehicles, furniture, digital and media platforms, museum collections, programs, endowed positions, park publications, video credits, media, websites, and speaking podiums.</p>
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As park assets and units are limited, the Committee recommends that all naming opportunities have a clearly articulated and limited duration. Donors must understand that naming a park asset in perpetuity is not permissible.

Support and enable the use of logos

Given the norms and expectations of recognition in American philanthropy today, the Committee believes that the NPS may support and allow the use of logos as a form of in-park donor recognition. Policy should specifically allow donor logos (e.g. for corporate, foundation and nonprofit partners) to appear in parks.

Encourage greater inclusion by creating ways to recognize donations of any size

As national parks are a shared public asset in communities all across the country, the Committee encourages the NPS to promote philanthropy at all socioeconomic levels and recognize donations of any size and manner.

Enable support of iconic and lesser-known parks and NPS programs

The Committee recognizes opportunities to encourage philanthropy at both national and local park levels. Contributions to individual parks and their partners will be recognized at the local park level.

The NPS must also develop a national strategy for in-park recognition and guidance for rights and benefits beyond in-park recognition of major donors. Partners like the National Park Foundation will work with major donors and parks to create agreements for recognition both at the national and individual park level. Similarly, occasions to highlight significant and important local park level philanthropy and partnerships at the national level should be considered and pursued.

The Committee recommends that the NPS and its nonprofit partners collaboratively develop donor recognition plans that reflect the character, enabling legislation and philanthropic potential at each individual park. Accordingly, new national strategies for donor recognition must respect and support local recognition strategies and donor sensibilities.

Optimizing the NPS Stakeholder System



Philanthropist David M. Rubenstein's (speaker) \$7.5 million donation matched funds allocated by Congress to repair earthquake damage to the Washington Monument. NPS photo.

To improve efficiencies in philanthropic partnerships, NPS policies must be open to reimagining the allocation of authority and control between Service leaders and nonprofit partners. Rather than centralizing control in the NPS Washington Office and the Department of the Interior's Office of the Solicitor, the Committee urges the Service to empower park superintendents and program managers, along with their local nonprofit partners, to appropriately assess and decide on collaborative courses of action at a local level. Strengthening local decision-making and accountability incentivizes communication and trust considered vital to NPS partnerships.

Rethinking Agreements

Anyone can make donations to support national parks. People are encouraged to do so through organizations recognized by the NPS as authorized partners. Approved park partners have opportunities to maximize donations and effectively steward donors that the NPS does not.

Agreements articulate a relationship between the NPS and nonprofit partners built upon trust, communication, and respect. They are not contracts. Their character, tone and scope should focus on ensuring the viability of these special relationships rather than reducing them to transactional, tit-for-tat exchanges. Agreements may promote partnership longevity so as to harness the greatest potential support from the American public. Agreements should be simple and easy to work with for the emerging nonprofit partner, the high-performing partner, and the NPS.

The Committee strongly believes that authorized nonprofit partners must have a current agreement with the NPS. However, NPS policy and guidance should anticipate a master partnership agreement that defines the public-nonprofit relationship and the expectations each partner fulfills. Addendums may be adopted for large campaigns or construction projects when further assurances of mutual interest and commitment are required. Depending on the scope of the agreement (i.e. an agreement for a nonprofit serving one NPS unit partner versus a regional nonprofit partner), the NPS Director is strongly encouraged to delegate the authority to approve partnership agreements to the concerned park or program manager without compromising transparency and accountability.

A master agreement will incorporate many aspects of current friends group, fundraising, construction, and corporate partnership agreements. As partnerships continue to evolve, benefits to incorporating cooperative agreements and leases into these master agreements will likely emerge.

The Committee recommends master partnership agreements in one of two forms:

1. Organizations whose sole purpose is to promote one or more national parks have a master agreement that allows them to conduct fundraising and other activities on behalf of said park(s). These agreements would require jointly developed annual fundraising plans to clarify the scope of campaigns, programs and initiatives. Nonprofit organizations may not commit the Service to funds, staff, access or resources beyond agreed upon terms.

NPS policy may continue to require that agreements with new partners extend for no more than five years, providing both parties an opportunity to build trust and understand their perspective cultures. However, once a partner establishes a record of success, and upon the recommendation of the park superintendent, longer-term agreements may be generated.

NPS policy should enable such organizations—as well as nonprofit cooperating associations or educational partners whose sole purpose is to support national parks—to be eligible for a “preferred partner” status. These organizations would be subject to the terms of agreements with the NPS while being granted more authority and lengthier terms based on their mission and performance.

2. Organizations with broader missions may hold an agreement(s) related to specific fundraising activities. These agreements should include monetary goals, a fundraising plan, and a timeline for achieving established goals.

Other key elements of a new Director’s Order #21 include:

Insurance, Liability and Indemnification

Insurance, liability and indemnification requirements, following accepted business practices, are spelled out in the Friends Group Agreement template. However, they are applied differently for partner-funded interns and volunteers-in-parks (VIPs). This supports the Committee’s belief that a one-size-fits-all liability requirement is ineffective.

A more flexible framework, using established best practices, should be developed which tailors such requirements to the size and scope of proposed activities. Agreements should acknowledge that nonprofit partners, in accordance with industry best practices and applicable donor restrictions, may recoup fundraising and administrative expenses.

Intellectual Property

The Committee recommends that NPS policy regarding intellectual property model the partnerships memorialized in these agreements. Neither the NPS nor partners should, by default, have exclusive ownership of the materials created in partnership. Instead, various arrangements should be available based on the long- and short-term goals and needs of the partnership.

Communications and Messaging

The Friends Group Agreement template states that the partner must submit all partnership materials for public distribution to the NPS for advance review. In practice, national parks and programs may not have the capacity to respond to these materials at the speed of business.

Responsibly engaging the American public in NPS partnership efforts through online and print media is essential to enhancing the brands of both parties. When publicly sharing information about partnership activities, the Committee recommends omission of formal review provided the message:

- *Supports the vision, mission and values of both partners*
- *Describes jointly approved campaigns, programs and initiatives*
- *Avoids the endorsement of products, services, or donors by either partner³*

Agreements work most successfully when they foster a strong and growing relationship. For this reason, NPS policy and guidance should promote timeliness, as much as they promote thoroughness, in establishing new agreements and in the vital work of partnerships.

³ The Committee recognizes that the NPS may require a waiver of the Departmental Manual provision regarding approval of printed materials (374 DM 6.9(B)(2)) and it encourages this action.

Approval and Use of Donations

All donations to the NPS—be they direct or through a nonprofit partner—must be given in an ethical and legal manner. If a reasonable person would judge that a gift harms the NPS, then it may not be accepted; yet in the absence of real harm, the Committee believes that the NPS policy should create opportunities for individual, foundation, corporate and other donors.

Through its work, the Committee found that Director’s Order #21 and associated guidance too often require blanket donation vetting and clearance procedures. Existing requirements also fail to recognize the fluid nature of discussions with donor prospects. As nonprofit partners serve as interface between the NPS and the donor community, more efficient approval processes are urged.

The Committee believes that the NPS should entrust its nonprofit partners with the authority to review and evaluate donors and donations that support the NPS mission. Thus, the Committee recommends that, when working with nonprofit park partners who have current agreements, donors and donations be exempted from monetary thresholds⁴; rather, the NPS must trust its partners to appropriately identify risk and accept only those donations that maintain the integrity, impartiality, and public confidence in the NPS and Department of the Interior⁵.

The nonprofit may deem a gift acceptable if it: refrains from implying the endorsement of an individual, organization or product; forwards a jointly identified need of the NPS and its nonprofit partner; conforms to the jointly created gift donation policy; and adheres to laws and ethics. However, when a potential for a conflict of interest exists between the donor and the Service (e.g. a company bidding on an NPS contract or an individual in litigation with the Service), then the nonprofit must alert the NPS, who may initiate its own review.

The Committee recommends that NPS policy refrain from categorically excluding certain industries (e.g. alcohol, tobacco, or concessioners) from its potential supporters. Rather, the NPS and nonprofit partners should evaluate all donors or gifts in light of the integrity, impartiality and public confidence standards outlined above. A park and its nonprofit partner may elect to refuse donations from certain industries; however, in the absence of direction from Congress or the Department of the Interior, pre-determined national exclusions are unnecessary and counterproductive.

Considering these recommendations on donor and donation review, in light of the Committee’s other recommendations, should give rise to more streamlined partner relationships. Joint strategic and operational planning will establish a clear understanding between the NPS and its partners as to what donors or gifts will be necessary to achieve a shared goal. Trusting in the planning process and open communications, a master partnership agreement between the NPS and a nonprofit partner will authorize the necessary fundraising—without requiring separate, campaign-specific agreements. Donors may be approached and evaluated by the nonprofit partner using the gift acceptance policy, a base donor recognition platform, and the particular circumstances within a park. Park superintendents will have the discretion to work with the nonprofit partner to achieve every one of these innovations.

⁴ NPS policy may elect to maintain monetary thresholds for direct donations to the NPS; the scope of this recommendation is limited to donations received by a nonprofit park partner.

⁵ The Committee recognizes that the NPS may require a waiver of the Departmental Manual provisions regarding donation evaluation (374 DM 6.7(C) and 6.10(E)) and it encourages that action. The Committee also recognizes that the Congress requires an opportunity to review construction projects valued at over \$5 million and understands that partner construction projects will remain subject to it.

In summary, the Committee's recommendations are layered to enable more efficient partnering, largely by reallocating roles and responsibilities between the NPS and its partners. Implemented holistically, many staff, partner, and donor concerns with existing NPS policy would be alleviated.

Sharing Risk

Partnerships do present challenges; therefore partners must share risk, as well as reward. Risk-free environments are unattainable, yet the Committee is committed to creating a safe environment for innovation and nimbleness that builds on the strengths of NPS assets and partner capabilities.

The current Director's Order #21 and the model agreement templates address areas of perceived risk without taking into consideration the likelihood or implications of such risks. These include donor vetting, pre-clearance of communications materials and liability requirements. In addition to being burdensome, current risk mitigation steps constrain timely and effective action. The existing agreement and review requirements recognize neither the fluid nature of philanthropic discussions with donor prospects, nor the evolving nature of today's communications environment.

The recommendations to streamline agreements and assess partner roles in donor vetting, proposed herein, address the asymmetrical risk apportionment in the current Director's Order and partnership agreements. Adopting these recommendations will permit the NPS and nonprofit organizations to share risk, giving substance and authenticity to the partnership they have entered.



Through agreements with public and private organizations, the NPS is a partner in CityArchRiver2015, an initiative to better integrate the Gateway Arch and the surrounding park with downtown St. Louis. NPS photo.

Developing Brand Assets and Brand Management Tools



The NPS arrowhead logo, park signs, and the ranger uniform are notable examples of the NPS brand. NPS photos.



In preparation for the National Park Service Centennial, the NPS brand family has been expanded. New logos for the NPS and the National Park Foundation (NPF) join the iconic NPS Arrowhead. While the arrowhead remains at the heart of the NPS's identity, the new logos, and tools for their use, will give the NPS and NPF more options to identify their work, recognize partners, and promote centennial activities and programs. Top: the new NPS secondary logo complements the Arrowhead logo. Middle: the new NPF logo highlights the partnership between the NPS and its congressionally chartered nonprofit partner. Bottom: the NPS Centennial logo is a temporary addition to the brand family.

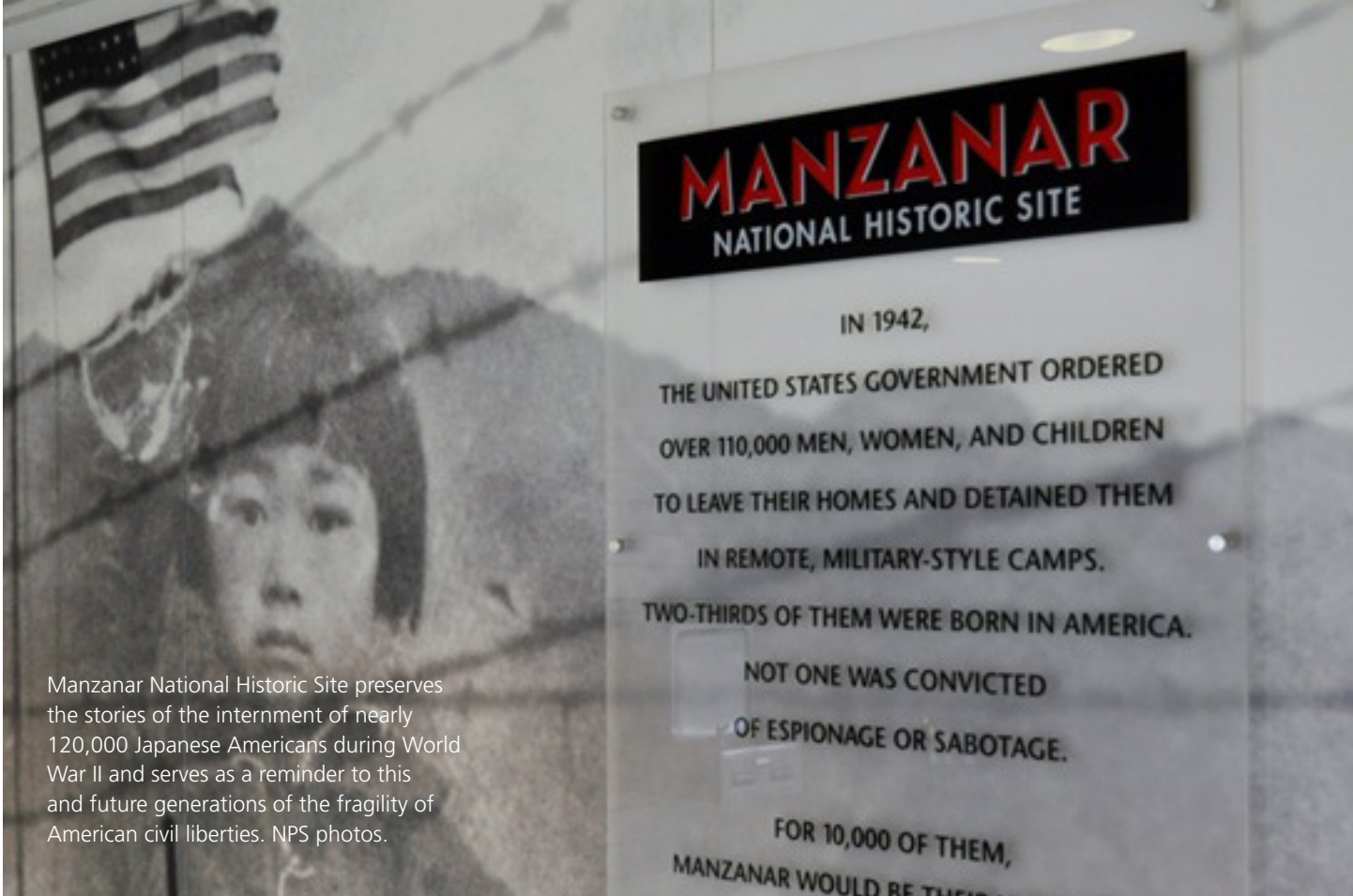
The National Park System is a priceless asset that encompasses the broad diversity and beauty that is America. Our national parks belong to and reflect all Americans. As the steward of this unique American treasure, the NPS is charged with protecting our national parks while encouraging and enabling a diverse nation to engage with, enjoy, and support them.

The Committee believes that, in order to accomplish this mission effectively, the NPS must develop a coherent, comprehensive brand strategy that draws from best-in-class examples within the government, nonprofit and corporate sectors. This strategy would help the NPS to effectively communicate its mission, relevance and value to multiple and varied stakeholders. The Committee found that, although the NPS has some executional components of a brand strategy and some strategic brand assets in place, the organization is lacking such a comprehensive and coherent strategy.

This brand strategy would, in turn, need to be supported by staffing and clear guidelines that enable broad usage by other stakeholders, while protecting brand integrity and intellectual property. To effectively manage the NPS brand and intellectual property, the Committee recommends that the Service apply a Global/Local approach leveraged by many leading brands that operate in complex geographical and stakeholder environments. This approach strives to ensure brand consistency across all stakeholder touch points, while also embracing and enabling customization and adaptation for local needs. The Committee recommends that the NPS also simplify decision-making and approvals, identifying which decisions and approvals must be made centrally, versus at the local level, and simplifying the approval process. A key focus of this approach is to gain a balance between local differences, needs and autonomy, and a streamlined set of national strategic interests and guidelines.

The Committee strongly believes that a coherent, comprehensive brand strategy, combined with a streamlined approval process, will have a powerful impact on the NPS and its system of stakeholders. This will enable the NPS to build, over time, increased brand awareness and loyalty that reaches America's diverse populations and encourages broad participation and support for the NPS, its network of partners, and ultimately, our nation's parks.

Increasing Diversity and Inclusion



Manzanar National Historic Site preserves the stories of the internment of nearly 120,000 Japanese Americans during World War II and serves as a reminder to this and future generations of the fragility of American civil liberties. NPS photos.

The Committee found that despite ongoing efforts to address diversity gaps, the NPS is perceived by stakeholders as neither diverse nor inclusive. The Committee recommends that the Service and its partners embrace a goal of significantly increasing representation of diverse and under-represented audiences across critical stakeholder groups, including visitors, volunteers, employees, partners, suppliers, and philanthropic donors.

The Committee feels strongly that the NPS must take decisive steps to ensure that both it and its stakeholders more closely reflect our increasingly diverse America. By pursuing this broad goal of diversity and inclusion, the NPS will ensure that our system of national parks will remain relevant, utilized, and supported by future generations.



First-time visitors to Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area scan for bluebirds with a park ranger. NPS photo.

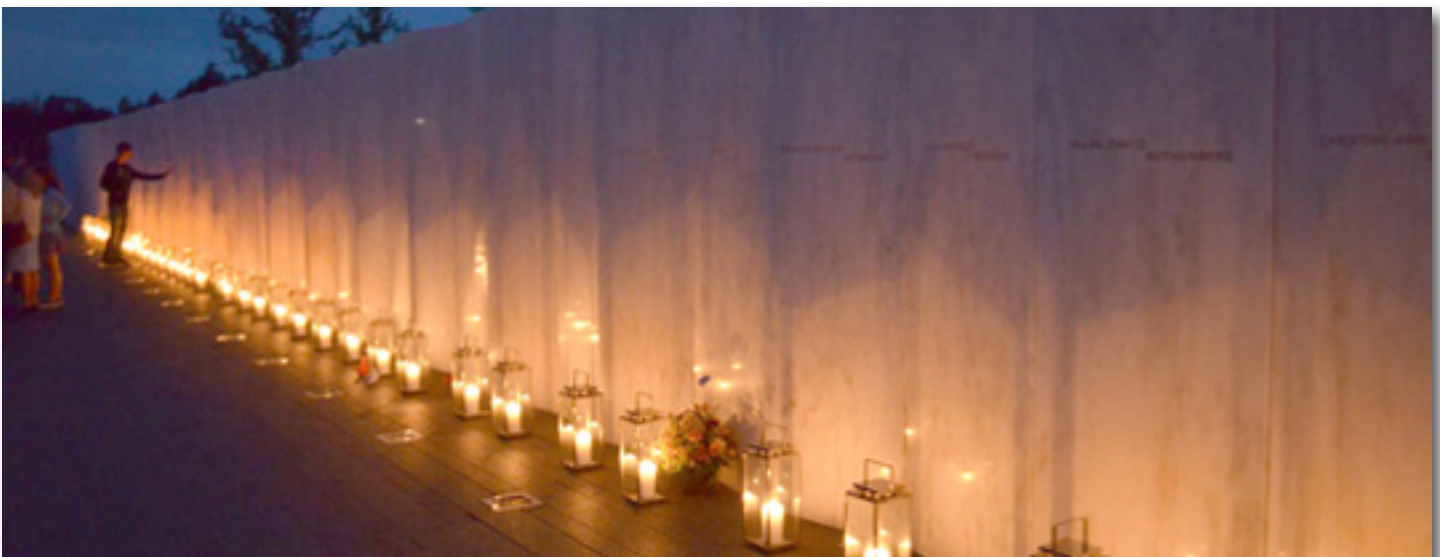
Conclusion

The Committee believes that, given the large funding backlog facing the NPS, a shifting demographic landscape, and rapidly changing societal expectations of philanthropy, there is a tremendous need and opportunity for the Service to become more externally focused. With the National Park Service Centennial approaching and the opportunity to engage with the full spectrum of the American people at hand, the Committee urges the NPS to adopt its interrelated recommendations. Only through a holistic reconfiguring of the roles and responsibilities—while simultaneously honoring the talents and expertise of both the NPS and its nonprofit partners—can we truly solve the challenges inherent in existing NPS policy and guidance on philanthropy and partnerships.

The Committee believes that extensive training and education of NPS leaders and nonprofit organizations will be essential to transition rapidly from new policy to new practices. The NPS should consider how performance reviews and compensation decisions might be tailored to increase partnership engagement and recognition, illuminate case studies, and create new assets and tools. These recommendations represent a cultural shift that must be implemented through a change management process that emphasizes accountability.

By implementing these recommendations, the NPS will build deeper and more sustainable relationships with current philanthropic partners and, importantly, increase its capacity to engage diverse and inclusive partner communities outside its current network. It will swell the ranks of official park ambassadors in gateway communities. It will encourage philanthropic choices that respond to local needs while following national guidance. It will create new opportunities for leverage among national, regional, and local partners by supporting collaboration rather than competition in achieving a shared mission. And, while the recommendations imply greater risk, the opportunities for reward to the NPS, its partners, and its individual, corporate, and foundation donors are extraordinary.

America's national parks exemplify our nation at its best; they encompass our most treasured resources and important values. The NPS deserves enormous credit for recognizing that it cannot do this work alone and that philanthropy and partnerships are keys to a sustainable future firmly rooted in open communication, transparency, and trust.



The Flight 93 National Memorial, is being built through a public-private partnership, continuing a tradition of private sector support for America's national parks that is as old as the parks themselves. NPS photo.

About the Committee

The Committee brought together 15 leaders in philanthropy, community engagement, marketing, and collaboration from across sectors—nonprofit, corporate and academic. Its membership draws from within the traditional nonprofit park partner community, as well as from leaders of organizations driving innovation and best practices in engaging stakeholders to support complex social and environmental issues beyond parks. NPS field visits to benchmark best practices and to understand the current landscape of philanthropic stewardship in national parks informed a highly collaborative and deliberative process that leveraged Committee members' knowledge and experience.

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Committee members discuss their recommendations for changes in NPS policy and practices for philanthropy and partnerships. NPS photo.

National Park System Advisory Board Members

The National Park System Advisory Board is a group of citizen advisors chartered by Congress to help the National Park Service care for special places saved by the American people so that all may experience our heritage.

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