

**STATEMENT OF JONATHAN B. JARVIS, DIRECTOR, NATIONAL PARK SERVICE,
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR, BEFORE THE HOUSE SUBCOMMITTEE
ON FEDERAL LANDS, COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES, CONCERNING
H.R. ____, THE NATIONAL PARK SERVICE CENTENNIAL ACT.**

December 2, 2015

Mr. Chairman and members of the subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today to discuss the National Park Service Centennial Act.

In 2016, the NPS will celebrate 100 years as the steward of the Nation's most cherished natural and cultural resources. As outlined in our Centennial Plan, *A Call to Action*, the NPS is actively preparing for its second century of operations, and working hard to connect with and create the next generation of park visitors, supporters, and advocates. Earlier this year, the NPS, in partnership with the National Park Foundation, launched a campaign to engage the next generation and new audiences in the life-enhancing and sometimes life-changing experiences at national parks. Our efforts will draw new visitors, especially millennials and young families, to experience the national parks. We experienced a record year in 2014 with over 292 million visitors and are on track to exceed that number in 2015. These visits do more than provide inspirational, educational and recreational opportunities; in 2014, they drove \$29.75 billion¹ in economic impact, supporting hundreds of thousands of jobs in communities around the country. We are also working with the National Park Foundation to leverage the interest of major corporate partners in engaging with this once in a lifetime anniversary.

As we look ahead to the next century, another component of our Centennial effort is legislation to establish, clarify or expand a number of key existing NPS authorities to allow us to better serve the American people. Today the subcommittee is considering a discussion draft bill, The National Park Service Centennial Act. This draft legislation is comprised of elements of the Administration's legislative proposal of the same title, which was transmitted by Secretary Jewell on behalf of the Administration on August 31, 2015, and was subsequently introduced by Rep. Grijalva as H.R. 3556. We appreciate the subcommittee's interest in acting on Centennial legislation and we look forward to continued discussions with you. The Department will provide specific views on the legislation after the bill is introduced.

The Administration's proposed National Park Service Centennial Act would provide new sources of funding and strengthen the ability of the National Park Service to manage and operate the national parks and programs that provide so many important natural, cultural, and recreational benefits to the nation. There are ten titles included in the legislation.

Title I, the Centennial Declaration, would recognize that the NPS has responsibility not only for administering the units of the National Park System, but for programs that provide financial and technical assistance to states, communities, and individuals to protect our national heritage. Title

¹ "2014 National Park Visitor Spending Effects Report," National Park Service, accessed November 30, 2015, http://www.nature.nps.gov/socialscience/docs/VSE2014_Final.pdf.

I would also direct the Secretary of the Interior to utilize these financial and technical assistance programs to further the conservation and enjoyment of the natural and cultural heritage of the Nation for the benefit and inspiration of the public.

Titles II-IV would implement part of the President's Fiscal Year (FY) 2016 Budget request to Congress. Title II would establish a National Park Centennial Challenge Fund, consisting of a mandatory appropriation of up to \$100 million for FY 2016, FY 2017, and FY 2018 to be used as the Federal match for signature partnership projects that will help prepare the national parks for another century of conservation, preservation, and enjoyment.

Title III would provide a mandatory appropriation of \$300 million to the NPS Construction Account for FY 2016, FY 2017, and FY 2018, to correct deficiencies in NPS infrastructure and facilities. In addition to requested discretionary appropriations, funding from Titles II and III would be directed towards NPS' deferred maintenance backlog and would restore and maintain all high-priority non-transportation assets into good condition over ten years, consistent with the FY16 Budget proposal.

Title IV would establish the Centennial Land Management Investment Fund, consisting of a mandatory appropriation equal to \$100 million for FY 2016, FY 2017, and FY 2018 to provide funding for the Secretaries of the Interior and Agriculture to jointly establish a competitive program available to the four Federal land management agencies for projects that enhance visitor services and outdoor recreational opportunities, restore lands and waters, repair facilities or trails, or increase energy and water efficiency.

Title V would direct the National Park Foundation to establish a special account known as the Second Century Endowment for the NPS, consisting of gifts or bequests provided for this purpose, for projects and activities that further the mission of the NPS.

Title VI would establish the NPS Second Century Fund in the Treasury, which would be funded through additional lodging and camping fees and additional funds collected from purchases of the lifetime pass for citizens 62 years of age or older.

Title VII would clarify or expand authorities for activities that the NPS are already conducting to allow us to better serve the American people. This includes providing clear authority for the interpretation and education work of the NPS by consolidating a number of disparate authorities currently used, and directing the Secretary to ensure that management of National Park System units and related areas is enhanced by the availability and utilization of a broad program of the highest quality interpretation and education. Title VII would also raise the age limit for participation in the Public Lands Corp from 25 to 30 and extend the direct-hire authority from 120 days to 2 years, consistent with Department of the Interior resource assistant direct-hire authority. And, this title would remove the \$3.5 million authorization ceiling for the Volunteers in the Parks to accommodate the funding needed to support this growing program.

Title VIII would establish the NPS Visitor Services Management Authority (VMSA), and authorize the Secretary to establish a pilot program to allow the VMSA to award and manage contracts for the operation of commercial visitor services programs and activities.

Title IX would authorize the Secretary to enter into agreements for the creation of reproductions of a museum object in which the object and its intellectual property rights are under the control of the Secretary.

Title X would redesignate the Secretary of the Interior and the Director of the NPS as ex-officio members of the NPF board. It also would authorize appropriations of \$25 million for each of FY 2016 through FY 2026 to NPF that would be used to leverage additional non-federal funds to support our national parks.

The provisions I have just outlined are the key components we believe are necessary to move the National Park Service into its second century.

We appreciate the opportunity to discuss these issues with you. We look forward to working with the Chairman and members of the subcommittee on this important legislative effort.

Mr. Chairman, this concludes my statement. I would be pleased to answer any questions you or the other members of the subcommittee may have.