

STATEMENT BY KEVIN KELLY  
PRESIDENT  
DELAWARE NORTH COMPANIES PARKS & RESORTS, INC.

BEFORE THE  
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON RESOURCES  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON NATIONAL PARKS, RECREATION AND PUBLIC LANDS

OVERSITE HEARING TO EXAMINE THE PROPOSED CHANGES TO THE NATIONAL PARK SERVICE  
MANAGEMENT POLICIES 2006

FEBRUARY 15, 2006

Mr. Chairman and members of the Subcommittee, thank you for giving me the opportunity to testify on the 2006 Draft Management Policies to guide the management of the national park system.

My name is Kevin Kelly. I am the president of Delaware North Companies Parks & Resorts, a leading provider of food service, hospitality and recreation services at national and state parks and other special places such as the Kennedy Space Center Visitor Complex and the U.S. Mint in Philadelphia and Denver. We are part of Delaware North Companies, a 90-year old privately held company that is a global leader in hospitality and food service with more than 40,000 employees and operations throughout the United States, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and the United Kingdom. In fact our company was founded one year before the establishment of the Organic Act in 1916.

Delaware North Companies has been operating in national parks for more than a decade. Throughout our tenure we have focused on balancing our responsibility as stewards of these magnificent places, with welcoming the millions of visitors who come to experience the incredible jewels of the National Park Service. Today, we proudly operate in four national parks: Yosemite, Sequoia, Grand Canyon and Yellowstone.

My experience with national parks encompasses nearly 30 years, including seven years living and working in Yosemite National Park. While there, my responsibilities grew to the post of chief operating officer, overseeing all of the visitor services and amenities at the park—including management of the hotels and camps, the mountain climbing and ski schools, food and beverage, transportation, retail and interpretive programs. Suffice it to say, my experience is unique. The ability to call a national park not only my home, but my office, is something very few people can say.

Many say that our national parks are the heart and soul of America. From a personal standpoint, my family's experience at Yosemite is one that holds a special place in my heart. I know I share this sentiment with the millions of visitors who take time each year to truly experience our national parks. It is these experiences that guide my opinions surrounding the new draft.

I spent a great deal of time reviewing the draft management policies. I not only tried to view these changes from the point of view of a concessions company, but more importantly, I looked at the draft from the perspective of what these changes would mean for visitorship, stewardship and the future of our national parks. The visitor does need to be represented in decision making and the policies of the National Park Service; this point is clear in its vision.

As we know, the Organic Act directs the NPS to conserve the scenery and the natural and historical objects and the wildlife therein and to provide for their enjoyment in such manner and by such means as will leave them unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations. In my opinion, the 2001 management policies paid great attention to the first part of the mission, but not the second.

A best-selling business book that I read during my time at Yosemite, *Good to Great*, discussed at great length the "Genius of And." The "Genius of And" speaks to the fact that when conflicting individual ideals are balanced and brought together, a greater ideal can be achieved.

When contemplating the future of this document, I believe it is important to consider this concept. As I have seen from living and working as a steward of our national parks, it is in fact possible to preserve our national parks for future generations, AND, to also provide for the enjoyment of millions of visitors today. It is possible to focus on conservation and protection, AND, fulfill

the legacy of the founding visionaries of national parks—that is to create a place where people from all walks of life and incomes can experience the best of America.

The power of AND really speaks to the importance of balance. It sends a powerful message that the national parks are America's parks—they are here today to be enjoyed, not compromised, but visited to build appreciation and dedication to their importance for future generations. We must continually ask ourselves, "What is the spirit of the national parks." Without balance, there is no spirit.

The guidelines, directives and systems that are in place are designed to provide unwavering controls over what happens in our national parks. This allows for the assurance that these parks will be protected, AND, should also ensure their enjoyment and use. The new language speaks to the importance of cooperative conservation, civic engagement, AND, the use of scientific, scholarly and technical information to guide decision making. Our national parks are some of the most beautiful and pristine places on Earth. Visitors from all over the world experience their beauty, their history and their majesty. They are respected and endeared, and because of the mission of the National Park Service, millions of people have been part of a special experience in a truly special place.

The National Park Service fully recognizes its mission, challenges and important relationships. While the Organic Act is the foundation, the management policies are the house, the roof, the doors and the windows. They provide a framework to sustain the vision of the National Park Service for the generations who want to experience them today and for those who will visit them in the future.

I was also asked to comment on the Director's Order 21, which addresses considerations for NPS fundraising and the criteria and relationships with fundraising partners.

The principal question to be answered is whether the overall public interest, and especially the visitor experience and stewardship, will be better served under this agreement. It is true that donations and fundraising reflect both an opportunity and a need to leverage resources. It is also true that there are companies and entities that have social responsibility missions—looking for opportunities to make the world a better place, while at the same time demonstrating to their customers, employees and partners that they are good corporate citizens.

At the same time, fundraising and donations are incredibly important for cause-based organizations, especially those that are highly visible. We can see this today in the support given to numerous foundations, the arts and social causes. There are many best practices in place today that can serve as a benchmark for the National Park Service, including entities like *NPR* and *PBS*.

Obviously, the same safeguards and checks and balances that exist today in virtually every area of the National Park Service would also apply here, ensuring the usage and visualization are inline with overall National Park Service objectives.

Over the years, I have had the opportunity to see firsthand the joy of families who visit our national parks each year. I have seen parents and grandparents passing on the extremely important legacy of our national parks, the importance of preserving them, and also enjoying them. Balance can be achieved at our national parks through the power of AND. The parks can and will be preserved, and in fact improved, AND as important, they will be enjoyed, as they were meant to be.

Thank you for your time and attention. I am happy to respond to questions.