

NATIONAL PARKS CONSERVATION ASSOCIATION, OUTDOOR INDUSTRY ASSOCIATION, INTERNATIONAL MOUNTAIN BICYCLING ASSOCIATION, WESTERN STATES TOURISM POLICY COUNCIL, NATIONAL ALLIANCE OF GATEWAY COMMUNITIES, OUTDOOR ALLIANCE, FRIENDS OF BIG BEND NATIONAL PARK, THE WILDERNESS SOCIETY, FRIENDS OF ACADIA, AMERICAN RECREATION COALITION, NATIONAL PARK HOSPITALITY ASSOCIATION, ASSOCIATION OF PARTNERS FOR PUBLIC LANDS

SUPPORT THE NATIONAL PARK CENTENNIAL FUND ACT:

Restore our Parks for the 2016 Centennial

In August 2006, Secretary of the Interior Dirk Kempthorne announced that the National Park Service will undertake a campaign to prepare for the 100th anniversary of the Park System in 2016. As part of this Centennial Initiative, Secretary Kempthorne proposed to create a partnership between the federal government and the American people by committing to a federal investment that reinvigorates the long-standing tradition of philanthropy directed toward our national parks. The proposed program is called the Centennial Challenge.

H.R. 3094, *The National Park Centennial Fund Act*, will bring the Centennial Challenge to life. The Centennial Challenge Fund, established through this act, is a matching donation fund in the federal treasury that will provide up to \$100 million a year for each of the fiscal years from 2009 to 2018. The act both authorizes and appropriates funding for these projects. This fund would allow supporters of the parks to match their contributions with federal dollars to carry out signature “Centennial projects or programs” at a national park unit, provided that the National Park Service and Congress approve the project or program. Non-federal philanthropic participation is strongly encouraged, while ensuring that parks without strong philanthropic partners can also participate.

To ensure that Congress has the opportunity to review and approve the proposed project list, the bill requires the Interior Secretary to submit to Congress, as part of the President’s annual budget submission, a list of Centennial projects proposed to be undertaken in the following year. The yearly project lists are to be developed by the Secretary with input from the public and National Park Service employees. Projects must meet specific criteria set forth in the bill. All projects must be consistent with National Park Service policies and adopted park planning documents and be representative of the breadth of the national park system.

The bill also requires that project proposals fall into one of seven categories or ‘initiatives’ defined in the bill: Education, Diversity, Supporting Park Professionals, Environmental Leadership, Natural Resource Protection, Cultural Resource Protection, and Visitor Enjoyment and Health. No more than 30 percent of the amounts available in the fund in any fiscal year may be spent on large dollar construction activities.



The National Park Centennial Fund Act also specifies that the federal dollars made available from the Centennial Fund shall supplement and not replace annual National Park Service expenditures, and that adequate permanent staffing levels must be maintained. The Secretary is required to submit a report to Congress each year detailing Centennial Fund accounting, results, and National Park Service staffing levels.

The Centennial Challenge is an important component of the Centennial Initiative, allowing both the government and the philanthropic community to do their part in preparing our national parks for their second century. The first round of Centennial Projects, a total investment of \$51 million in private and federal dollars is already underway. Congress should act now to make the full program a reality for the next 10 years.