



Association of Partners for Public Lands Key Concepts, Legislative and Policy Priorities 2009

Our nation has been entrusted with more than 690 million acres of public lands that include national and state parks, historic sites and monuments, forests and trails, wildlife refuges and wilderness areas, seashores, lakes, and scenic byways.

Caring for America's public lands is a shared responsibility. It requires the collective support and involvement of land management agencies, nonprofit partners, individuals and businesses. And, it requires a concerted, strategic effort by public land management agencies to encourage partnerships and collaboration across government agency lines and with citizens, communities, and organizations throughout the nation.

APPL members are nonprofit organizations with both nonprofit 501(c)(3) status and agreements with one or more public lands agencies. Their presence on more than 570 public lands sites represents a rich tradition of education and stewardship by nonprofit associations, friends groups and foundations that have grown to encompass all public lands agencies. Such partnerships hold the key to ensuring that these lands continue to serve as extended backyards for America's families, routes to a healthier lifestyle, classrooms for learning, gathering places for local communities, and connectors to our heritage.

A Commitment to Partnerships in Public Lands Agencies

APPL recognizes and promotes the rich diversity of America's public lands and the unique cultural and historic connections of all people to these places. We regard nonprofit partnerships as indispensable to public understanding and stewardship of these vast national resources and we support a national agenda for public lands fostered by these partnerships.

With a new administration come new opportunities to address economic, educational, and environmental goals on public lands. To foster these opportunities through partnerships, APPL recommends the following:

- Appoint professionals within federal agencies with expertise and a commitment to working in partnerships – across agencies and with the involvement of strong community-based, regional and national nonprofit organizations
- Encourage inter-agency collaboration in developing supportive structures and policies that enhance nonprofit partnerships and reduce the burden to nonprofit partners of multiple agency agreements and reporting requirements
- Streamline requirements within public lands agencies for nonprofit partners to work under mutually beneficial cooperative agreements
- Establish strong partnership offices within each agency and consolidate the various types of nonprofit relationships within these offices
- Engage nonprofit partners and the broader public in planning and decisions affecting their relationship with public lands

- Work with nonprofit partners to provide reciprocal training for agency staff and nonprofit representatives so that all partners carry out their work in productive relationships that are characterized by a high degree of mutual understanding, transparency in management policies, shared goals, and effective communication
- Engage public-private partners in forums to discuss emerging issues, share the impacts of external trends and internal policies, and develop workable solutions through facilitated discussion and follow-up
- Restore robust federal appropriated funding for natural resources and the environment for programs in DOI, USDA, Army COE, DOT and EPA. Secure enhanced funding where appropriate with grants that leverage federal dollars with either a state match or partner dollars.

Through the vital network of partnerships advanced by the Association of Partners for Public Lands (APPL), we work for the day when all people share the joy and inspiration of our natural world and collective heritage.

National Park Service Centennial Initiative

APPL supports the Centennial Initiative, including a Centennial Challenge Fund that will stimulate private sector philanthropy by matching federal investment in priority projects and programs to enhance the National Park System as it approaches its centennial celebration in 2016.

A Centennial Challenge Fund will demonstrate a mutual commitment and partnership between the federal government and the American people and serve as a very strong motivation to donors who are given the opportunity to leverage their gift. The National Park Service has a rich tradition of philanthropic support. Thirty national parks were created through private donations, and many more are enhanced by the contributions of people who care about them. A commitment of \$100 million per year in federal mandatory spending will leverage \$100 million or more in cash donations to the national parks – providing 3,000 more seasonal park rangers, guides and maintenance workers; repairing and improving buildings with “green” infrastructure; restoring landscapes; and involving children and families in educational and recreational opportunities.

U.S. Forest Service Partnership Enhancement Act

APPL supports passage of a U.S. Forest Service Partnership Enhancement Act that would improve the Forest Service’s ability to work with a wide variety of cooperators by expanding, clarifying, and simplifying legal authority to enter into mutual benefit agreements. Forest Service partnerships build positive relationships, provide educational services for visitors, leverage funds and services, and enable landscape scale management of natural resources. The Forest Service has accumulated authorities for working cooperatively over a 100 year period, and at times the complex patchwork of existing authorities has resulted in inconsistent interpretation and time-consuming processes.

Strengthened partnership authorities under a Partnership Enhancement Act would enhance visitor awareness of natural resources and cultural heritage through cooperative educational and interpretive programs, materials, services, and products. It would provide permanent authority for agreements to carry out activities within a watershed to protect, restore, and enhance resources and reduce fire risk on or near National Forest System lands. Because the Forest Service currently has only temporary authority for mutual benefit type agreements, new partnership legislation would allow for long-term planning in cooperative working relationships.

No Child Left Inside Act (NCLI)

APPL supports the No Child Left Inside Act (NCLI) which will provide states with an incentive to develop environmental literacy plans to ensure that all students graduate from high school with a basic understanding of the environment and our natural resources. NCLI will provide new funding for teacher training and to develop state and national capacity in environmental education. It will enhance student achievement and help children learn the critical skills for a green economy.

Getting more children engaged in outdoors, hands-on learning will over time greatly expand the science, technology, engineering and mathematics academic pipeline that are a critical part of our nation's education agenda. Getting more children outside to learn about their environment will also help to address attention deficit disorder and childhood obesity. Accordingly, our nation's public lands can serve as adjunct classrooms, and nonprofit public lands partners can provide valuable educational resources.

National Service and Student Internships

APPL is pleased to see that the President-elect has proposed to increase national service slots based on the existing AmeriCorps program. We recommend that a portion of these new positions be dedicated to a national parks and public lands service corps – and that these service positions be placed within both public lands agencies and nonprofit partnering organizations that already have a strong track record in managing youth conservation leadership programs.

APPL encourages the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) to expand the Student Career Experience Program (SCEP) to recognize for noncompetitive employment consideration the full 640 hours of work completed by a student with a nonprofit organization working under an agreement with a public lands agency. Such positions would be comparable to a formal work-study agreement between a Federal agency and an academic institution. Currently, only 320 hours can be credited for work with a nonprofit partner, requiring the student to transfer to work in a federal seasonal job to cover the other 320 hours to be qualified. Expanding this aspect of the policy will enable the agencies to obtain a larger pool of applicants from diverse backgrounds, and enable nonprofit associations, friends groups, and other partnering organizations to attract high caliber applicants with a promise of competitive advantage consideration for up to 121 days following their internships or seasonal work experiences.

Federal Land Transaction Facilitation Act

APPL supports reauthorization of the Federal Land Transaction Facilitation Act of 2000 (FLTFA) which authorizes the Bureau of Land Management, The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the National Park Service and the U.S. Forest Service to use the proceeds from sales of certain BLM lands to acquire in holdings within designated areas or adjacent tracts that feature exceptional resources. FLTFA provides a balanced approach for conservation and economic development, complements the federal Land and Water Conservation Fund and leverages federal and non-federal funds. It conserves land without using appropriated money or adversely impacting the federal budget. In the last few years this program has successfully funded nearly \$34.5 million in projects, protecting over 9,000 acres throughout the west.

Climate Change and Public Lands

“Without the promise of a stable climate, the history, heritage, wilderness and beauty preserved by America’s public lands are at risk.”

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, May, 1999

Forces that are altering the climate of our planet are jeopardizing America’s national parks, forests, seashores, wildlife refuges, and monuments. These lands belong to all of us as a public trust and were intended for use by generations to come.

APPL applauds the President-elect’s commitment to reduce dependence on fossil fuels, diversify our energy sources, reduce energy consumption, invest in a clean energy economy, and create new “green” jobs. This puts America on a path to slow the growth of greenhouse gas emissions, and -- as the science supports -- to stop, and then reverse that growth.

APPL supports development and enactment of air/climate change legislation that includes dedicated funding to address the impacts of global warming on America's public lands and natural resources. This should include support for programs and projects on public lands that reduce the environmental impact of park operations, model environmental leadership and best practices, and engage partners, communities, and visitors in shared environmental stewardship. Our nation’s public lands should be models of excellence that all can look to for lessons in green design, educational outreach, and sustainability.