



## Professional Report Series – Number 4

### *Competitive Sourcing, Privatization, and Philanthropy in our National Parks: A Potential Tragedy Of The National Park Commonwealth*

\* \* \* \* \*

#### **Abstract**

Since the first national park, Yellowstone, was set aside 136 years ago, fewer than 400 of more than 80,000 places have been preserved in perpetuity through the extraordinary means of adding them to the National Park System. The parks are not capital assets and not real estate; they are inalienable national treasures held in trust for 281 million Americans and their descendants. Yet sustained efforts are being made to remove them from the commonwealth and put them into private hands.

Today, as in the so-called Gilded Age of the last third of the 19th Century, this commonwealth belonging to all Americans is in danger of being converted to private assets due to sustained efforts to turn over public lands and sites to commercial entities. Efforts are also being made to contract out work normally done by highly-trained and dedicated National Park Service employees and to seek corporate support for park projects and initiatives once funded by the American people as part of their shared heritage.

Therefore, every effort should be made to:

- Assure the perpetual public ownership and stewardship over what is now supposed to be the inalienable national heritage.
- Continue to use the private sector in support of park management, but in ways that absolutely assure protection of the public interest and do not risk subordination of public interest to private interest.
- Because the inalienable national heritage that is in public ownership will never be more than a very small percentage of the total national heritage that needs to be preserved, expand the use of programs that (like the National Register of Historic Places) recognize, encourage, assist, and reward other public and private sector stewardship. Few people realize that the NPS has had statutory authority to do these kinds of things since the Historic Sites Act of 1935, and that this authority has been significantly expanded in numerous laws since 1966.
- Because the era when relatively empty lands can be made into traditional national parks is rapidly coming to a close, the future can be expected to include a variety of new types of NPS units that mix and mingle traditional park management with the programs such as mentioned in the previous bullet. This is not privatization, and it must be applied in ways that do not invite privatization of the inalienable national heritage.

#### **The Coalition**

The Coalition of National Park Service Retirees (CNPSR) is an organization comprised of nearly 700 former National Park Service employees who, collectively, have served almost 20,000 years within the agency in every capacity and at all grades, including a substantial number of former Directors and Deputy Directors, former regional Directors or Deputy Regional Directors, former Associate or

Assistant Directors at the national or regional office level, former Division Chiefs at the national or regional office level, and former Superintendents or Assistant Superintendents.

In our personal lives, we come from the broad spectrum of political affiliations. As park managers, rangers and employees in the National Park Service's many disciplines, however, we devoted our professional lives to a common goal – maintaining and protecting our national parks for the benefit of all Americans, both living and those yet to be born. We remain committed to that goal.

This paper is one of a series on critical issues facing the National Park Service as it enters its second century. A complete listing of all current or planned papers appears at the end of this report.

### **The Author**

The paper was prepared for and with the concurrence of CNPSR by Bill Wade. Bill Wade served as superintendent of Shenandoah National Park from 1988 to 1997 and currently serves as chair of the Executive Council of the Coalition of National Park Service Retirees.

**Introduction and Historic Context** [NOTE, the following is from: Jerry L. Rogers. "This Land is Still Our Land." *Preservation* (Vol. 58, No. 2, March/April 2006).]

The 25 years following the Civil War were derisively called the Gilded Age by Mark Twain. Rampant privatization eventually was slowed by financial panics and the rise of progressivism, but not until the Great Depression did it become widely recognized that unrestrained private exploitation of public resources could be harmful. Private misuse of land led to catastrophic pollution, erosion, and loss of productivity and community in Western mining areas, on homesteaded prairies, and elsewhere.

Within weeks of the carnage at Gettysburg in 1863, a movement was launched to preserve the field of battle in perpetuity. Over the next 53 years a growing number of national parks, battlefields, and monuments gradually coalesced into a generally recognized inalienable heritage belonging to all Americans and to unborn generations. By 1916, when a law created the National Park Service to preserve these places unimpaired forever, they had become ingrained in our nationhood. Today these unique places are under threat from the dangerous and essentially un-American notion that our common national heritage should become the bounty of a few.

The Depression inspired the nation to enact laws to level the economic playing field, protect financial systems, and encourage fair competition. The public estate increased as privately abused lands were repurchased so that harmful practices could be halted and the lands and the ways of life they supported preserved or restored. But memory is short. Today relatively few people are aware that our present national grasslands have been reclaimed by government from farms that had been turned into the "dust bowl" by private owners, or that steep-slope farming created gullied wastelands that have since been restored into the Shenandoah and Great Smoky Mountains national parks.

### The Meaning of National Parks

The national parks and variously named other units of the National Park System are appropriately described in extraordinary terms: icons, crown jewels, best idea, and inalienable heritage. Although valuable in innumerable ways, they must never be considered mere real estate or assets that could be converted to other forms of capital.

As icons, the national parks have come to symbolize the United States as does the flag itself. Few Americans see the cliffs and falls of Yosemite, the wildlife of Yellowstone, the lights and shadows of the Grand Canyon, or the majesty of Mount Rushmore without a stirring feeling that "I belong to this great nation," and "these treasures belong to me." In moments of crisis, as when twice in 1995 the government shut down for lack of appropriations, it is significant that news media explained the situation by focusing on national defense plus three fundamental questions:

- Will the mail be delivered?
- Will the Social Security checks be issued?
- Will the National Parks be open?

So profoundly have the national parks come to symbolize this nation and its people that they are quite literally America the beautiful and the land of the free.

Crown jewels symbolize the majesty of the sovereign; derived in this great democracy not from lineage but from citizenship. The sovereign is the people, and the national

parks are their crown jewels: beautifully displayed, belonging to all, and preserved forever.

More than anything else, the United States of America is itself an idea—that people could govern themselves—that remains as new and fresh today as when first declared in 1776. “The best idea America ever had” is so apt a descriptor for the national parks that the phrase has attained permanence. Best for Americans and best also for the people of other nations whose thousands of parks and protected areas have followed the 1872 model of Yellowstone as the world’s first national park.

#### Privatization of National Parks

Now, as in the first Gilded Age, the commonwealth belonging to all Americans is in danger of being converted to a private asset. Political attitudes are shaped by shallow slogans rather than careful analysis. . Virtue is publicly proclaimed while being privately undermined, as the continuing corporate scandals and instances of political corruption now reveal, and public support for governmental action for the good of all is diminished by the work of well-funded "think tanks."

In 1981, the Libertarian James P. Beckwith Jr., writing for the Cato Institute, laid out a series of privatization protocols in a publication titled *Parks, Property Rights, and the Possibilities of the Private Law*. Beckwith said this in his paper: “The organizing principle of this paper is one of ascending radicalism: from reform through volunteerism and privatization of services to the outright abolition of public ownership and the transfer of the parks to private parties.” He suggested that outright sale of parks was too radical a concept for the short term. He proposed instead an orderly progression that would eventually (in perhaps two or three decades) get to the desired endpoint. [Cato Journal, Vol. 1. No. 2 (Fall 1981)]

Cloaked in a mantle of academic respectability, these creations crank out reports foreordained to undermine support for governmental solutions. Anti-tax crusaders deprive government of the revenue it needs for success, although we are the least taxed of any developed nation, and then advocate repealing programs on false grounds that government has "failed." The public interest, they contend, resides with individuals in pursuit of immediate personal profit. . The public recognizes privatization as a throwback to a pre-1930s, devil-take-the-hindmost approach that works well for big corporations but not for the rest of us; yet such public sentiment cannot prevail unless people pay attention to the welfare of their inalienable heritage.

#### Privatization Initiatives Have Accelerated

Privatizing initiatives grind down the country's places of historical depth, physical beauty, and restorative recreation. In 2005, the House of Representatives' Committee on Resources held a hearing on the advisability of limiting protection of places eligible for the National Register. Subsequently, the committee's chairman included 15 national parks in a list of assets for the Budget Reconciliation Proposal that could be sold to raise revenue. When the suggestion was leaked it disappeared from the bill, and the congressman's staff disavowed the idea as a joke—one that is still with us.

In December, 2005, the House passed the Gateway Communities Cooperation Act, which would make national park resources subject to local interests—even when contrary to the national interest. And the Subcommittee on National Parks held a hearing to examine preservation provisions in the 1916 act that created the National Park Service. No one believes the intention was to strengthen those provisions. During the hearing, the subcommittee chairman said, "For 40 years, the preservationists have really infiltrated the national park system." In fact, preservationists have been the core

of the Service for 90 years, in accordance with the law that threatened by that hearing, in opposition to the despoilers of the nation's birthright.

During this same time, in the Department of the Interior, a political appointee secretly redrafted the policies that guide national park managers. Strong words like "preservation" were replaced by weaker words like "conservation." By twisted logic, any activity permitted in a park would become a "purpose" of the park—bus tours, commercial guide services, and snack bars would be purposes of Gettysburg. Noisy helicopter flights would be a purpose of Grand Canyon. The Petroglyph National Monument road extension that preservationists fought to prevent would be a purpose of the monument.

A revision proposed to the National Park Service's Director's Order 21" which contains the policies guiding certain commercial and philanthropic activities in parks, would have encouraged aggressive courting of corporate donations, offering blatant recognition that would have bordered on the commercial cacophony we now seek to escape by visiting parks and historic sites. Another change asked candidates for midlevel jobs to affirm support for the current political agenda, even though the civil service system was established in 1883 to ensure the nonpolitical hiring of competent professionals.

#### Commercial Activities in National Parks

The private sector can already pursue plenty of opportunities in the parks without plundering them. Park concessionaires provide lodging, food, transportation, and other services under regulations that ensure that the private activity serves rather than counteracts the public interest. National historic and natural landmarks and places listed in the National Register mostly remain in private ownership and in economically productive uses. Recognition, grants, tax breaks, and other incentives help owners be good stewards. Unlike national parks, such places can be capital assets—viable real estate—while also being preserved. This is why the National Register of Historic Places exists.

Commercial activity has always been important to preservation and enjoyment of the national parks. From the beginning the National Park Service has granted contracts, permits, and cooperative agreements for commercial activities in national parks, always carefully guided to assure that the private benefits from those activities clearly served the greater public interest. Commercial activity conducted subordinate to the public interest does not constitute privatization.

In most situations where the public interest is best served by having a historic, natural, scenic, or recreational resource remain deeply engaged in economically productive uses, the resources have not been added to the National Park System but instead have been designated landmarks or listed in the National Register. Honorific status, tax incentives, limited protection, and other inducements encourage or enable private owners to exercise stewardship. This is as it should be. Even more public policies should be developed to encourage private owners of historic, scenic, natural, and recreational places to use the market economy to maximize preservation for both private profit and public benefit. Indeed, in hundreds of thousands of places heritage resources can be private capital assets and can be real estate, and this is the best way to deal with them.

## **Contracting Out – Another Destructive Form of Privatizing**

Another assault on the integrity of the National Park Service and System comes from efforts to contract out jobs and functions, most recently known as the “competitive sourcing” initiative. The President’s Management Agenda, FY2002 provides insight to the mind-set guiding this initiative. In the competitive sourcing section, we see statements such as:

- Nearly half of all federal employees perform tasks that are readily available in the commercial marketplace—tasks like data collection, administrative support, and payroll services. Historically, the government has realized cost savings in a range of 20 to 50 percent when federal and private sector service providers compete to perform these functions. Unfortunately, competition between public and private sources remains an unfulfilled management promise. By rarely subjecting commercial tasks performed by the government to competition, agencies have insulated themselves from the pressures that produce quality service at reasonable cost.
- Competition promotes innovation, efficiency, and greater effectiveness. For many activities, citizens do not care whether the private or public sector provides the service or administers the program. The process of competition provides an imperative for the public sector to focus on continuous improvement and removing roadblocks to greater efficiency.
- By focusing on desired results and outcomes, the objective becomes identifying the most efficient means to accomplish the task.

This agenda centers on cost, efficiency and competition. Nowhere do we see any reference to value and benefit.

The pitfalls of a process driven largely by the single dimension of efficiency are many. Dr. R. Bruce Hutton, Professor of Marketing of the University of Denver describes the dangers [*A Competitive Sourcing Strategy for the Intermountain Region: Context Development, 2002*]:

“Because efficiency is such a prominent construct in the competitive sourcing initiative, some time should be spent placing it in an appropriate context. Efficiency can be defined as the choice of alternatives that produces the largest result for a given application of resources. The potential problem for NPS is not in the definition per se, but rather how it is most often operationalized. It has been shown many times over that efficiency does not translate to the greatest benefit for the cost. It usually means the greatest measurable benefit for the greatest measurable cost. Management obsessed with efficiency is one obsessed with measurement. The results can be disastrous. Because economic benefits are typically more easily measured than social benefits, efficiency may drive the organization toward a kind of economic morality and social immorality.

“James Hillman writes that ‘Two insanely dangerous consequences result from raising efficiency to the level of an independent principle. First, it favors short term thinking—no looking ahead or down the line; and it produces insensitive feeling—no looking around at the life values being lived so efficiently. Second, means become ends; that is doing something because the full justification of doing is the doing, regardless of what you do.’ He argues that specialization strips decisions of their ethical context, and undoes breadth of vision and any sense of balance. It is anti-humanistic.

“Efficiency emerges, in practice not as a neutral concept but as one associated with a specific system of values—economic values. It is argued that too much emphasis on organizational efficiency will eventually destroy organizational effectiveness. Putting systems ahead of people gradually destroy the quality of human capital to contribute anything to the organization but rote function. Efficiency is recognized as a legitimate value for the park system, along with the mission driven values of protection and sharing, plus community as representative of the variety of relevant stakeholders associated with parks (e.g., gateway communities, society, Native Americans, etc.)”

We have seen what can happen when organizations, such as Enron and Arthur Andersen, engage in short run efficiency behaviors with disastrous consequences for community. This lack of balance of values destroyed the companies' credibility and ultimately their ability to even function.

We question the wisdom of competitive sourcing if it means money supersedes visitor experiences, resource protection, conservation values, and undermines the reasons for parks, all in the interest of competition and privatizing activities to meet arbitrary numerical targets.

We are fearful that the competitive sourcing initiative, if it continues to be applied to the National Park Service as it is currently constructed, will have similar consequences.

The current effort to implement the competitive sourcing initiative ignores two important considerations:

- First, it ignores the fact that the federal agencies are different from one another. Typically, the expectation is that competitive sourcing must be implemented the same way in the NPS as it is in the Department of Defense and in the Internal Revenue Service. Someone once said that, "nothing is so unequal as the equal treatment of unequals." Dr. Hutton states: "The most effective NPS, and individual parks, must balance the value of efficiency with the other key values of protection, sharing, and community." He goes on to assert, "After all, our forefathers did not create our democracy and the governance process based on efficiency. Markets are certainly meant to be efficient, but they are not meant to be fair or to treat all stakeholders equally. Government, on the other hand, was not designed with efficiency as its primary characteristic. Nor were national parks created with efficiency in mind as the critical component. The role of government and the parks is different, and it was meant to be. The governance structure that was designed to play out democracy in this country was designed to be effective in protecting and balancing those values citizens hold most dear."
- Second, in its attempt to cut costs and reduce the federal workforce, the competitive sourcing initiative ignores other less destructive ways to achieve organizational effectiveness. It focuses on short-term cost reduction while ignoring the long term consequences and the greater question of how best to define and maximize value and benefit.

### **Employees of the National Park Service are Different**

Perhaps unlike any other federal agency, many, if not most, of the positions in the NPS are "multi-disciplinary" in nature. This is of necessity, and largely has resulted from the critical staff shortages that have plagued the Service for decades.

In a perfect world, plumbers would plumb, trails laborers would build and fix trails, guides would guide, rescues would be carried out by rescue specialists, structural fires would be suppressed by firemen, and administrative technicians would do technical administrative work. Taken literally, many of these kinds of positions could be performed by federal employees – or not. Such a perfect world does not even come close to describing the situation in the NPS.

In the parks, rarely does an employee perform his or her job, over a period of time, limited to what might be defined in the "Occupational Series" to which he or she is classified. One's position description might quite appropriately portray and classify his or her principal duties as a Maintenance Worker, but in reality up to 30% or more of this employee's time might be spent performing other necessary duties to meet the demands dictated by the conditions in the park at any given time.

For example, in Shenandoah National Park, there are 175 and 225 employees (permanent and temporary), depending on the budget. About half of those are maintenance employees in various occupations. About 30% of those maintenance employees are "red-carded" for wildland fire, and

many would be gone to work on large fires elsewhere on public lands (not always in NPS areas) for significant periods during the fire seasons. Moreover, there are interpreters, resource management and administrative employees similarly qualified and engaged. Maintenance and resource management personnel and others are routinely used in search and rescue operations. The same is true in order to have a skeleton structural fire response capability for places like the Big Meadows Lodge and Skyland. Backcountry patrol rangers routinely do minor trail and campsite maintenance. Maintenance and interpretive employees are often the first to arrive at a motor vehicle accident, and because they are trained in emergency medical techniques, regularly treated victims; and they assist with traffic control. Because of their numbers, their availability and their knowledge of the park, maintenance employees typically answer visitor questions and “interpret” park features more than any other category of employees. Many employees have “collateral duties” required of them to meet agency-dictated functions and committee assignments in areas such as safety, equal opportunity and property management.

Underpaid and over-worked park employees like to say that they are “paid in sunsets.” These dedicated folks often find themselves working long hours for no extra pay, and doing so out of love and dedication to the parks. Supervisors and managers strive, often unsuccessfully, to get employees to work within their schedule. They are there not for the profit; they are there because many of them are the lucky people who love what they do. They are dedicated and passionate about the places where they work. They are there for the resource. They believe they are “on the side of the angels” in carrying out the mission of the NPS.

We defy anyone to tell us how this commitment, dedication, expertise and multi-disciplinary capability can ever be replicated by contracting out. We have tried, and we’ve never been able to have anyone, even the so-called competitive sourcing experts, tell us how you write a contract proposal to capture these factors.

Dr. Hutton acknowledged this special quality in NPS employees:

“Employees are the parks. Employees of parks cannot be considered as simply factors of production, interchangeable and disposable. In much the same way you cannot separate the barber from the haircut, the surgeon from the operation, or the chef from the meal; many park employees are inseparable components of their park. They are part and parcel of the whole. Such jobs deserve careful attention to defining job performance specifications and evaluation criteria, in order not to lose productivity and effectiveness in the name of efficiency.”

### **Effectiveness, Sustainability, Value and Benefit**

Effectiveness, sustainability, value and benefit should be the drivers of organizational performance in the NPS:

- Sustainability – In this context, a definition of “sustainability” put forth by the World Bank is applicable: Sustainability is a process whereby future generations receive as much, or more, capital per capita as the current generation has available.
- Value and benefit – We could (and should) define value and benefit and effectiveness as they apply to the NPS as its ability to maintain a sustainable balance among the numerous values that define parks for the American people in the fulfillment of its mission.
- Effectiveness – Effectiveness is inherently tied to determinants of quality. The criteria used to measure effectiveness are not value-neutral. They are typically based on the values and preferences of individuals.

For years, the NPS has been recognized, and admired, as having nationally and internationally renowned experts in a number of fields, such as archaeology (including underwater archaeology), cave management, search and rescue, wildland fire management, and in many other disciplines. Where do these experts come from? They start in many of the positions that under the competitive

sourcing initiative could be contracted out to the private sector. They develop their expertise as they advance upwards in their chosen occupations. What happens if competitive sourcing reduces this level of expertise in the NPS, as it inevitably would?

Many of the positions – especially those in the sciences and resource management – that are targeted for competitive sourcing serve as the “eyes and ears” of park managers in their efforts to carry out the mission to “...conserve the scenery and the natural and historic objects and the wildlife therein and to provide for the enjoyment of the same in such manner and by such means as will leave them unimpaired for the future generations.” Such positions are essential for managers to achieve “situation awareness” – the ability to perceive what is happening in the parks, the ability to comprehend the importance of what is happening, and the ability to predict the future outcome of those happenings. Can we rely on contractors, who are unlikely to have either the levels of expertise or the mission commitment to provide such critical situation awareness?

So, the costs of the competitive sourcing go far, far beyond just the expenses of the studies and the contract administration. The costs of the loss of the institutional capacity of the NPS to maintain a sustainable “critical mass” of expert, highly committed employees and the loss of volunteer contributions, among other casualties, are likely to be unrecoverable and far more damaging to the organization’s ability to effectively meet its mission mandate and maintain the public’s respect and support.

As earlier stated, the National Park Service is not against contracting out as one method of improving organizational effectiveness. It has engaged in significant contracting out over the years, and continues to do so even without the pressures of the recent competitive sourcing initiatives.

### **Philanthropy – Where is the Tipping Point from Benefit to Cost?**

The National Park Service has a long and enduring history of benefitting from philanthropy. Several NPS units owe their establishment to philanthropic efforts to acquire lands now included in the parks. Through the years, the American public has enthusiastically donated to parks they care about, through donation boxes in the parks or through a variety of “friends” groups.

Recently, there have been increased efforts by the National Park Service, primarily through the National Park Foundation<sup>1</sup> to seek large donations from commercial organizations. Additionally, there has been an escalating emphasis on philanthropy, most notably related to the matching fund provision of the proposed Centennial Challenge Initiative touted by the Bush administration.

This escalating emphasis on philanthropy corresponds with the diminishing appropriations to fund operations and construction in the National Park System. In the years between 2000 and 2008, there has been a double-digit reduction in appropriations, taking inflation into account. Some elected officials, Members of Congress, and “partner” organizations have elected to attempt to overcome this burgeoning deficit by raising private money from “philanthropic” organizations.

Whereas in the past, philanthropic dollars were generally sought and used to provide the “margin of excellence” in terms of NPS operations, now in many instances they are sought and used to provide for the “basis for survival” for some parks and the programs in some parks.

Mentioned earlier, to entice more givers NPS leadership attempted, in 2005, to significantly dilute the “Director’s Orders” (specific NPS policy) related to “Donations and Fundraising.” The proposed revisions would have considerably increased the leverage that donors had over decisions in national parks, especially related to donor recognition and decisions on the uses of funds; and would have placed park superintendents much more obviously in a fundraising role. Fortunately, the most

---

<sup>1</sup> Established in 1967 and chartered by Congress as the only national charitable partner of America’s National Parks, NPF raises private funds, makes grants and develops partnerships to support the National Park Service.

damaging parts of the proposed policy revision were overcome and the current version, while not ideal, is acceptable. Nevertheless, incremental movement toward making private money a more significant part of park management and operations has been accomplished.

While the status and outlook of the Centennial Challenge Initiative is uncertain at this time, to the extent that it succeeds, even in part, there are undesirable consequences:

- That there IS a tipping point from benefit to cost is a certainty and not a hypothetical proposition. The need is to know where that point is and to avoid drawing dangerously near it.
- The tipping point may be defined as the point where philanthropy becomes the basis for survival rather than a margin of excellence. When volunteers become essential to work properly done by employees, or when donations replace rather than supplement appropriated funds, the line has been crossed.
- Little, if any, private money comes without at least implied strings attached. The “quid pro quo” can, in various ways, bring pressure to bear on management decisions in the parks, providing the givers with disproportionate leverage that isn’t always in the best interests of park resources, visitors, or the United States.
- The provision that requires a matching donation from a private “partner” for any project or program funded with appropriated dollars will short-circuit the NPS process for establishing priorities for funding needs. Some projects or programs – sometimes not those which deserve the highest priorities in the Service – are more attractive to private funders and therefore will be easier to approve under the Challenge. More partners are likely to jump at the opportunities to help fund new visitor centers (resulting in splashy ribbon-cutting ceremonies and media coverage) than will come forward to help fund the replacement of a decrepit sewer system in a park, even though this need may be much greater than is the new visitor center.

**Summary** [From: Jerry L. Rogers. “This Land is Still Our Land.” *Preservation* (Vol. 58, No. 2, March/April 2006).]

Since the first national park, Yellowstone, was set aside 136 years ago, fewer than 400 of more than 80,000 places have been preserved in perpetuity through the extraordinary means of adding them to the National Park System. The parks are not capital assets and not real estate; they are inalienable national treasures held in trust for 281 million Americans and their descendants.

As we now know, privatization began stealthily: Park budgets were severely constricted; volunteers replaced professional employees; specialists were threatened with replacement by generalized counterparts from the private sector; research conclusions contrary to commercial interests were denounced and restudied. We have reached the stage where national interests in the parks could soon be subordinated to those of businesses. Philanthropy may soon be accepted in return for advertising in the parks or other favors. Strong, clear policy is being exchanged for weaker, less precise language easier to get around. And finally, a powerful congressional committee chairman “jokes” about selling off the parks. Alarm bells should be going off in every part of the country.

Near the end of a lifetime of preserving special places, John Muir reluctantly concluded that “nothing dollarable is safe, however guarded.” The subject is far broader than national parks, but it cannot successfully be addressed without starting with the parks. We must reestablish the nation on an enlightened course for preservation and the sensible use and enjoyment of our national treasures.

Half a century ago, few would have imagined the priority we now give to space exploration, medicine, and airline travel; the same attention can be given to

landscapes, history, architecture, archaeology, and culture in general. Why not use the 100th birthday of the National Park Service in 2016 not just to fend off the takers, but also to launch a century of real historic and environmental preservation?

## **Recommendations**

Among the most significant consequences of privatizing in the National Park Service and the National Park System are:

- National Parks become less “national.”
- National Parks, part of the public commonwealth, become less “public.”
- National Park Service staff are less committed to the mission of the NPS and to public service, and more committed to their specialties and their contractor employers.
- Rampant mediocrity.
- The original mission of the NPS is subverted and fundraising and marketing become priorities.

Therefore, every effort should be made to:

- Whatever happens, assure the perpetual public ownership and stewardship over what is now supposed to be the inalienable national heritage.
- Continue to use the private sector in support of park management, but in ways that absolutely assure protection of the public interest and do not risk subordination of public interest to private interest.
- Because the inalienable national heritage that is in public ownership will never be more than a very small percentage of the total national heritage that needs to be preserved, expand the use of programs that (like the National Register of Historic Places) recognize, encourage, assist, and reward other public and private sector stewardship. Few people realize that the NPS has had statutory authority to do these kinds of things since the Historic Sites Act of 1935, and that this authority has been significantly expanded in numerous laws since 1966.
- Because the era when relatively empty lands can be made into traditional national parks is rapidly coming to a close, the future can be expected to include a variety of new types of NPS units that mix and mingle traditional park management with the programs such as mentioned in the previous bullet. This is not privatization, and it must be applied in ways that do not invite privatization of the inalienable national heritage.
- A combination of federal, state, local, and maybe tribal subsidies, tax incentives, and technical assistance should be employed to enable private property owners to preserve their natural, cultural, scenic, and recreational resources; allow public access; provide interpretation; etc.

## **This Series Of Papers**

The imminent arrival of the centennial of the National Park Service's birth, which will occur in 2016, has led to reflection on its past, evaluation of its successes and failures, and discussion of its future goals and priorities – both within the agency and among its many friends and supporters.

As an organization containing more professional experience and knowledge than any comparable entity anywhere in the country, we believe that we are uniquely placed to offer our professional perspectives on the array of issues that are and will be discussed over coming months and years.

This series of papers offers our professional evaluation of the key issues that the agency is now facing or will be dealing with in coming years. Current papers in the series, either completed or in development, include the following. Others may be added:

- Report 1        *America's Crown Jewels: The National Park System* – A paper on the philosophic and legislative foundation of the NPS and an evaluation of the need for more effective national engagement in protecting parks.
  
- Report 2        *The National Parks Centennial Commission* – An evaluation of the commission and recommendations on how it should work, what its goals should be, and what issues it should focus on.
  
- Report 3        *The National Park Centennial Institute* – A paper that explores the need and concept for a formalized academic institute to study a wide variety of park-related issues in order to inform and educate agency staff and political leaders and better manage our parks in a new century.
  
- Report 4        *Competitive Sourcing, Privatization, and Philanthropy in our National Parks* – A paper on these key issues and the bearing they have on the agency and its efforts to attain its goals.
  
- Report 5        *The Future of Entrance Fees and Their Connection to Visitation* – An examination of the problem of over reliance on entrance and user fees and the potential fees have to “price publics out of their parks.”
  
- Report 6        *Reasserting International Environmental and Park Leadership* – This paper looks at the reasons why the NPS has lost its standing as an international leader in parks and what needs to be done to become a more effective member of the international parks community.
  
- Report 7        *A Renaissance of Park Interpretation and Education Reaffirms the Mission of the National Park Service* – A paper that looks at the present dire straits of the NPS interpretive and education program and calls for a “renaissance’ and a renewal of excellence in our on-site and off-site educational programs.
  
- Report 8        *Toward A Second Century Of Excellence For The National Park System* – This paper presents a ten-point vision of the attributes that the National Park Service needs to have by the time its centennial arrives on August 25, 2016. It also outlines qualities that must be sought and fostered in its leaders for it to retain its integrity, serve the public and meet its goals, and identifies core values that underlie “principled leadership.”

- Report 9      *It Is Not A Matter Of Money – It Is A Matter of Priorities* – This paper exposes the budgetary quagmire the National Park Service finds itself in and discusses ways out of the situation. It also presents a 15 year review and analysis of NPS budgets and compares the Clinton and Bush administration’s budgets.
- Report 10     *The Renewal of the Park Ranger Profession* – A review of the present state of the park ranger profession, which is increasingly called upon to specialize in the narrow niche of law enforcement, and how it might be reformed to better serve the agency in the future.
- Report 11     *Global Climate Change Creates New Park Environments and New Organizational Challenges for Park Science Programs* – This paper looks at the coming changes to our national and global ecosystems and impacts upon society and where our national parks can serve as effective barometers of global change.
- Report 12     *Reassessing the Development Footprint in our Parks* – This paper looks at the planning, development and construction process in the parks, examining the lessons learned from the first century of park development and how they need to be reconsidered for the second century.