
ADVOCACY TOOLKIT

Coalition to Protect America's National Parks



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I. Why Advocacy?

Every year, Congress makes decisions that impact our national parks and public lands and these decisions impact you. Public lands are under attack and we need your help to reach out to members of Congress and advocate for the continued protection of these irreplaceable resources.

The Coalition to Protect America's National Parks has an unparalleled understanding of the National Park Service and the issues confronting it. Our organization is made up of over 1,600 retired, current, and former NPS employees and volunteers representing all levels and job disciplines of the agency, including many of its most senior managers. On average, Coalition members have worked for over 30 years for the NPS. We understand the inner workings of park and agency management, and the ramifications law and policy have on park protection, operations, visitors, and communities. We are the non-partisan "Voices of Experience" for park-related matters.

However, we depend on our members and supporters to help us advocate on behalf of our national parks – policymakers want to hear from constituents. In advocacy, there is truly strength in numbers, so the Coalition is continuously seeking to expand and enhance our reach and impact. We need advocates like you to help advance the issues that directly impact national parks and public lands across the country.

II. Become An Advocate

As a constituent, you are the ideal advocate for our parks. You are uniquely suited to convey to your members of Congress how essential your national parks and public lands are in your community. You have the power to educate members about the economic and social impacts that these parks bring to your community throughout the year. Without your help, your member of Congress may not realize the ability of national parks to support jobs, improve health, provide a sanctuary for our natural and cultural resources, and engage our future generations in the great outdoors. We want to make it easy for you to take action, to build relationships with your representatives' offices, and help preserve America's Best Idea for future generations.

It may sound intimidating but becoming an advocate is easy. It's as simple as making a phone call or tweeting a short message to your Senator. We've put together some resources that will walk you through the advocacy process. Listed below are three easy ways to get in touch with your Members of Congress. Be sure to check out the Appendix at the end, which will provide some background and talking points on topics that are particularly timely and important.

Step 1: Contact Information

House of Representatives

Locate your representative:

<https://www.house.gov/representatives/find-your-representative>

Contact Information:

<https://www.house.gov/representatives>

Senate

Locate your state senator:

https://www.senate.gov/general/contact_information/senators_cfm.cfm

Search by state and click on the link for contact information



Step 2: Get in Touch

1. Make a Phone Call

Calling your senator or representative's office in Washington, D.C. is the most effective way to ensure that your voice is heard. Don't be surprised when your Senator or Representative does not personally answer the phone– they rely on their staff to field calls and talk to constituents. They'll pass along your message.

If you don't know your representative's or senator's D.C. phone number, call the U.S. Capitol switchboard at (202) 224-3121, and ask to be connected.

Here are some tips to keep in mind before you make the call:

1. Introduce yourself and include where you are from.
2. Make the phone call personal and mention your experience as a former NPS employee and Coalition member.
3. Ask your Member of Congress to take action. Be clear.
4. Be polite and honest.
5. Thank the person you are speaking to for their time.

2. Send an Email

Although House and Senate offices receive hundreds or thousands of calls, emails or letters on a particular topic, each one is counted and has the potential to make a difference. When a Member of Congress is undecided, the number of communications his/her office receives for or against an issue often contributes to how he/she ultimately votes.

Once you've identified your elected officials, visit their individual websites for an email address. When drafting your email, keep the following tips in mind:

1. Include your name and address at the top of the email.
2. Make sure your message is personal. Mention your experience working in national parks and as a Coalition member.
3. Be clear about your position and what you'd like to happen.
4. Be honest and polite.
5. Avoid email attachments.
6. Proofread your e-mail before sending.

3. Use Social Media

Twitter is a particularly effective tool to reach out to your elected representatives. Nearly every Member of Congress has a Twitter account, and they use it frequently to keep in touch with their constituents and follow the day's trending stories.

Here are a few tips:

1. Keep in mind that you only have 280 characters so make sure your message is clear and concise.
2. Make sure to use relevant hashtags.
3. Remember to tweet at your Member of Congress using their Twitter handle. Use the @ symbol, then follow with their Twitter handle (often their first and last name, as in @SherrodBrown). You can find your legislators' Twitter handles by checking these lists at the sites below:

House of Representatives

<https://twitter.com/cspan/lists/members-of-congress/members?lang=en>

Senate

<https://twitter.com/cspan/lists/senators/members?lang=en>

4. Write a Letter to the Editor or an Op-ed

Letters to the editor are usually written in direct response to an article or editorial. They are printed on the editorial page, a popular page with readers which is helpful for reaching out into the community. Letters to the editor are also more likely to get published than an op-ed and can be published in a quicker turnaround time.

An op-ed is an article devoted to commentary, feature articles, and opinions. Authors are not officially affiliated with the newspaper and can range from state legislators to local citizens. Op-eds must be approved by several layers of editorial staff, and are often scheduled in advance. It is longer than a letter to the editor and generally appears on a newspaper's opinion page.

A few tips:

1. Research submission deadlines and guidelines.
2. Identify yourself as a Coalition member and clarify your expertise as a former NPS employee.
3. Be clear, concise, and include a call to action at the end.
3. Be persistent and follow-up after submission.

III. About The Coalition

The Coalition to Protect America's National Parks is a reliable, respected, and effective advocate for achievement of the mission and goals of the National Park Service. Recognized as the Voice of Experience, the Coalition's membership includes over 1,600 retired, current, and former NPS employees and volunteers representing all levels and job disciplines of the agency.

In pursuit of its vision, the Coalition studies, educates, speaks, and acts for the preservation and protection of the National Park System and mission-related programs of the NPS. The Coalition is an active and respectful partner with the NPS and other like-minded organizations.

Goals

- Protect and defend units of the National Park System.
- Support the work of NPS employees.
- Instill public understanding and appreciation of the origins, purpose, and ideals of the National Park Service and System.
- Initiate or engage in activities that will contribute to, or educate others about, the significant role of the National Park System in a healthy planet.
- Develop alliances and engage in collaboration in support of the National Park Service and System.
- Underscore the economic benefits of the National Park System.

IV. Appendix

LWCF Talking Points

The LWCF is financed by revenues from off-shore oil and gas drilling. It was created by Congress with the simple promise to give something back to the country in exchange for allowing this drilling. It costs not a penny of state or federal tax dollars, while providing billions of dollars to enhance and protect the recreational quality of life for Americans since its creation in 1964.

State and national parks will lose many millions of dollars if the Fund is not reauthorized. After 53 successful years that have allowed the acquisition of many of our national park lands, as well as the creation of numerous recreational opportunities in thousands of local communities throughout the country, it is critical that the LWCF be permanently reauthorized.

In fiscal year 2018, every state, ours included, received some of the \$124 million appropriated from the LWCF to use to support state and local parks, develop trail systems, and provide a broad variety of recreational opportunities such as baseball fields, swimming pools, picnic areas and children's playgrounds.

Equally important, the LWCF supports the strategic acquisition of long-identified inholdings within national parks, allowing for the protection of significant natural, historic, and cultural resources while contributing to more cost-effective park management.

Sample Scripts for LWCF Advocacy

Phone Call

“Good morning. My name is [Ann Smith] and I’m a constituent who lives in [Cleveland, Ohio]. Please let [Senator Brown] know that I’m a supporter of the Land and Water Conservation Fund and would like the [Senator] to vote to reauthorize and fully fund the LWCF. I am a member of the Coalition to Protect America's National Parks and a retired park ranger who has worked at [Cuyahoga National Park]. I know the impact the LWCF has made at [Cuyahoga]. Funds from the LWCF helped [return over 300 acres of land, once a sports arena, to its natural state as part of the national park]. My family and I recreate in this park most weekends. I strongly urge the [Senator] to cast [his] vote to reauthorize and fully fund the LWCF, and keep these parks and public lands safe for our future generations. Thank you for your time.



Email

Your Name

Your Address

Your Phone Number

Dear [Senator Brown],

My name is [Ann Smith] and I live in [Cleveland, Ohio]. I am writing today to express my support for the Land and Water Conservation Fund and urge you to vote to reauthorize and fully fund the LWCF.

I live near [Cuyahoga National Park] and as a former park ranger and member of the Coalition to Protect America's National Parks, I know how critically important the LWCF has been to this park, and others across the country. Here in [Cleveland, the LWCF helped Cuyahoga add over 300 acres of land to its boundary and return it to its natural state].

If the LWCF is not fully funded and reauthorized, I'm afraid that [Cuyahoga] and other national parks and public lands will suffer. Not only did I spend years working in national parks, my family still enjoys visiting them often. I want my children's children to be able to enjoy these incredible national treasures for years to come.

I hope we as a country can continue to protect the lands and resources that have given us so much, and preserve them for future generations. Please vote to reauthorize and fully fund the LWCF.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Your Name

Tweets

-- Congress must #SaveLWCF. America's natural areas, water resources and cultural heritage have never been more at risk. We need reauthorization and full and dedicated funding to #ProtectOurParks and #ProtectOurPublicLands

-- The clock has run out! [@SherrodBrown] and members of Congress, please act immediately to #SaveLWCF and provide full, dedicated funding. #ProtectOurParks #ProtectOurPublicLands

-- Every dollar diverted away from LWCF = places we love being lost forever. I am asking all members of Congress, including [@SherrodBrown] fully fund and reauthorize the LWCF #SaveLWCF #ProtectOurParks



Contact Us

Want to learn more? Questions about advocacy?
Give us a call at **202-758-3036** or send an email to
editor@protectnps.org

You can also find more information about the
Coalition at:

www.ProtectNPS.org

[Facebook/protectNPS](https://www.facebook.com/protectNPS)

[Twitter @protectnps](https://twitter.com/protectnps)

[Instagram/protectnps](https://www.instagram.com/protectnps)

[LinkedIn - Coalition to Protect America's National
Parks](#)