



The Coalition

TO PROTECT AMERICA'S NATIONAL PARKS

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This is Your Call to Action

The celebration of the National Park Service's Centennial made 2016 a big year for the service. As the transition of power begins in Washington, the NPS's 101st year is going to be incredibly important to the future of America's Best Idea. Old battles will reemerge and new ones will arise. Among the many issues, we must be prepared to stand up for the Antiquities Act, push for a reauthorization of the Land and Water Conservation Fund, and fight energy development that negatively affects our parks.

While we do not yet know what lies ahead, we will be watching closely and readying ourselves for the work that will need to be done. We must be willing to fight for what we stand for but at the same time find common ground with new leadership. Finding opportunities to work together will be key to a successful relationship—one place to start may be on the investment in park infrastructure. The Coalition is committed to expanding our communications and

issues work to adequately defend the service and system in the coming years.

This is your call to action. We need our voices to be heard as an organization and as individuals. Each of you has an opportunity to have an impact in your local communities and in Washington. To increase our impact, our work needs to go beyond just casting a ballot. We have an obligation, as protectors of America's most beautiful and sacred places, to stand up and speak out on the issues facing these places, their visitors, and the park experience.

In 2017, we are committed to providing regular opportunities for our members to engage. Please take part in any way you can—from writing op-eds and calling your representatives to sharing stories on Facebook or making a donation towards the work of the Coalition, there are plenty of ways to get involved and support our work. I look forward to working with all of you to preserve and protect our national parks in the coming year and beyond.



EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
AMY GILBERT

Photograph by Bill Lea



The Hartzog Award Winners

David Brooks and Molly Ross

This award is given annually by the Coalition to an individual who has made significant contributions to the National Park System and Service. This year we have selected David Brooks and Molly Ross.

As a congressional staff member for nearly 30 years, David Brooks has been responsible for shaping some of the most consequential national park and environmental legislation enacted by Congress.

Over the past four years, Molly Ross, former special assistant to the Director of the NPS, prepared all the details, including research, public contact, drafting of the Secretary's Memorandum to the President, and the Presidential Proclamation itself, for 15 new NPS National Monuments.



The 1872 Award Winner

Janet McDonnell

This award is given annually by the Coalition to an individual for their outstanding service and support for the mission of the Coalition. This year, we have selected Janet McDonnell, former NPS historian and Coalition member, for her assistance in presenting our monthly Centennial biography series. In all, 70 biographies were completed.



Coalition Membership Survey Reveals Strengths, Opportunities

Members are the heart of the Coalition to Protect America's National Parks. Our members' voices make up our "Voice of Experience" and contribute to the knowledge, credibility, and effectiveness that define the Coalition.

In 2016, in order to understand our members' experiences, Coalition staff conducted a membership survey comprised of 24 questions to gain feedback about membership satisfaction, satisfaction with Coalition communications, and suggestions for improvement. We were thrilled to receive 265 responses and gain extremely valuable input from our members. Thank you so much to all our members who completed the survey.

Respondents to the membership survey indicated a high overall satisfaction with the Coalition. In fact, 85% of respondents were either "extremely satisfied" or "satisfied" with the Coalition. Additionally, 88% of respondents were either "extremely satisfied" or "satisfied" with the Coalition's monthly brief.

We also learned some areas for improvement from the membership survey. Survey respondents indicated they would like to receive more information about how they can be involved in advocacy. In response to that, Coalition staff will work in

2017 to improve our website and monthly brief to list resources and opportunities for our members to be more involved with and engaged in the Coalition's work. One immediate change can be seen in our January newsletter with the Coalition's "Member Action of the Month." Each month, we will include an action that our members can take in order to further the Coalition's advocacy work.

In 2017, Coalition staff will also focus on recruiting new members. In adding new members, the Coalition's "Voices of Experience" will amplify. Our current members can assist us with this effort by recruiting friends and colleagues to join the Coalition, as well as share information and actions taken by the Coalition on social media sites such as Facebook.

As we move forward into 2017 and as our advocacy and communications capacity increases, we will continue researching and implementing additional actions to improve our membership experience. We will depend on your continued support to grow our capacity.

Thank you to all our members, and a special thank you to our members who completed the membership survey!

—Submitted by
Susannah Albert-Chandhok

Recommendations to the New Administration

As part of its advocacy mission, the Coalition to Protect America's National Parks prepared recommendations for the incoming presidential administration. These focused on three areas in which our members have unique expertise—funding for park infrastructure and operations, effective leadership and development, and the future of the agency's partnership programs. These recommendations were combined into a report "Investing in Our National Park Service" and sent to the transition team with oversight for the Department of Interior.

Our report noted that funding for both infrastructure and staffing should be a priority for the national parks. Major reinvestments are needed in assets ranging from visitor facilities, water systems, and roadways and bridges to restoring historic properties. And while there might be opportunities for innovative funding approaches, public dollars must be a substantial part of the mix. Just as critical as the billions of dollars needed for deferred maintenance, funding is needed for staffing. The agency has continued to lose positions over the past decades. Additional employees are required to serve and protect visitors, conserve resources, and maintain our future investments.

Renewed emphasis on leadership and employee development is also essential to growing a 21st century workforce. Time and energy must be invested in effective recruitment and training programs. Management needs to understand expectations and be ready to act on employee misconduct. Overall the National Park

Service must make developing the next generation of leaders a priority.

Funding is also needed to support the work of state partners, conservation landowners, and historic preservation organizations. These programs such as the Land and Water Conservation Act, the National Historic Preservation Act, and the National Heritage Areas help to leverage the national park experience in communities across the country.

The Coalition's role to protect national parks and the national park idea is a common responsibility of all of our members. Please consider sharing these recommendations with friends and family, neighbors and colleagues, as well as your elected officials. Read the complete document at www.protectnps.org/investing-in-our-national-park-service-a-proposal-for-the-transition-team

—Submitted by Brenda Barrett

The Coalition focuses on three areas in which our members have unique expertise—funding for park infrastructure and operations, effective leadership and development, and the future of the agency's partnership programs.

Centennial Biography Series Highlights 70 Outstanding Individuals

At the annual Coalition Executive Council meeting in December, 2014, the board discussed how the Coalition could best recognize the employees of the National Park Service in honor of the 100th anniversary of NPS. While we had no doubt that the Service would have a great party, and would get much publicity, we felt that we should play a small role in honoring the Service's most important resource, its employees. So, the idea of the Centennial biography series was hatched. The rules were simple: no current employees would be selected, and we would try to honor many who did great work throughout their National Park Service career, but perhaps were not as well known or recognized.

Janet McDonnell, former NPS historian, and a Coalition member, stepped forward to offer her assistance

in presenting these biographies on a monthly basis. The project started in 2015 and continued through December, 2016. In all, 70 biographies were completed. Janet edited all of them, wrote many of them herself, and while compensated, donated half of her time.

Janet stated that "Telling the rich and often inspiring stories of individuals who have worked for the National Park Service during its 100-year history has been a privilege and pleasure. I have been repeatedly struck by the depth and variety of expertise of these NPS members, their level of commitment, and the substantial contributions that they have made and continue to make."

For her significant contribution to the Coalition on this project, Janet was presented the 2016 1872 Award.

—Submitted by Maureen Finnerty



Photograph by Mike Buchheit

Coalition Celebrates Successful Advocacy Efforts

The Coalition has long established itself as an effective, highly respected national parks advocacy group. We have seen that effective advocacy influences decisions and affects outcomes; and our advocacy efforts contributed to numerous positive results in 2016. Highlights include:

- ***Disaster averted at Grand Canyon National Park***

In March, the Kaibab National Forest (AZ) Supervisor denied a road easement request from the Town of Tusayan, stating there was broad opposition to the proposal. If granted, the easement would have enabled the construction of a massive commercial resort development near the southern boundary of Grand Canyon National Park. The Coalition and other conservation groups strongly opposed granting the easement.

- ***San Bernardino County (CA) decision protects Mojave National Preserve*** In August, the San Bernardino County Board of Supervisors denied key permits for the Soda Mountain Solar project that was proposed to occur less than a mile from Mojave National Preserve. The Coalition stood united with the National Park Service, conservation organizations, and local residents in urging that the permits be denied, citing concerns about potential adverse impacts to the Preserve's scenic beauty, ecological diversity, and related recreational and economic opportunities.

- ***11th Circuit confirms NPS conservation mandate applies at Big Cypress National Preserve*** In late August

the U.S. Court of Appeals for the 11th Circuit issued an important ruling in a lawsuit filed by conservation groups over the controversial 2011 general management plan for the Preserve's Addition lands. The Coalition filed an amicus curiae brief in the case because of a lower court's erroneous interpretation of the Preserve and Addition Acts as "multiple use" laws, an interpretation that is at odds with the NPS Organic Act's conservation mandate. While the higher court upheld the NPS action based on deference to agency discretion, the court also held that the NPS conservation mandate applies to all units of the National Park System, thus avoiding a dangerous precedent that could have had park system-wide implications.

- ***NPS updated its "9B" oil and gas regulations*** In November, the NPS issued a final rule to update 37-year old regulations governing oil and gas drilling operations occurring in 12 parks whose enabling legislation authorizes such activities. The modernized regulations, which were supported by the Coalition, significantly improve the NPS' ability to protect park resources and values and visitor health and safety. Given the likelihood of increased oil and gas exploration on federal lands in the next few years, completion of the updated 9B regulations before the end of 2016 is fortuitous.

- ***Moose-Wilson Corridor Plan approved at Grand Teton National Park*** In December, the NPS approved

The U.S. Court of Appeals for the 11th Circuit confirmed that the NPS conservation mandate shall apply at Big Cypress National Preserve. The court also held that the NPS conservation mandate applies to all units of the National Park System, thus avoiding a dangerous precedent that could have had park system-wide implications.

Grand Teton National Park's Moose-Wilson Corridor Final Comprehensive Management Plan. State and local officials, as well as local stakeholders, lobbied forcefully for the NPS to increase the footprint of infrastructure along the corridor for many reasons even though expanded use would adversely impact wildlife, such as grizzly bears. The park's final decision provides a cautious approach to managing the corridor that will ensure the protection of wildlife habitat, an outcome urged by the Coalition and other park advocates.

• ***NPS Centennial Legislation passes*** Leading up to the 100th anniversary of the creation of the National Park Service in 1916, the Chair of the Coalition served as a member of the National Park System Advisory Board's Centennial Advisory Committee. Through this process, the Coalition provided advice on planning for the NPS Centennial and collaborated extensively with other organizations in support of Centennial legislation. Finally, in December, Congress passed the bi-partisan National Park Service Centennial Act, which authorizes a variety of significant NPS fundraising opportunities. It also provides clear authority and direction for NPS interpretation and education programs, thus establishing education as an important part of the NPS mission.

• ***The Antiquities Act of 1906 remains intact*** Like many Presidents before him, President Obama used

his presidential authority under the Antiquities Act to designate a number of new national monuments (24 to be exact) during his terms in office. Despite the general popularity of these actions, key members of Congress have repeatedly pushed legislation that would weaken the authority of future Presidents to designate national monuments. During the past two years, the Coalition has spoken out on multiple occasions in opposition to such legislation. Our efforts have included letters to Congress, op-eds, and visits to Capitol Hill for face-to-face advocacy. While the Antiquities Act remains intact for now, we cannot rest on this issue, as threats to the Act are expected to be even greater in 2017.

• ***Influencing "tightening" of amendment to 36 CFR regarding gathering of certain plants and plant parts by Federally recognized Indian Tribes for Traditional Purposes*** In August, 2015, NPS proposed amendments to park regulations that would authorize removal of plants as described above. The Coalition prepared comprehensive review and comment urging much greater clarification of many vague provisions along with basic objections to the legal authority of the proposed regulations. While the final regulation, issued in August, 2016, provided broad new authorities for such collection, it was more clearly set forth in terms of procedural requirements and overall restrictions consistent with recommendations by the Coalition.

—Submitted by Doug Morris & Mike Murray

Dream of Park Institute of America Becomes Reality at Duke

On March 3, 2016, after nearly 10 years of thinking, talking, searching, and hoping, a dream came true for many of us who spent our careers working in national parks. The Coalition to Protect America's National Parks announced the establishment of the Park Institute of America in collaboration with the Nicholas School of the Environment at Duke University. The institute evolved from the interest and commitment of the nearly 1,200 volunteers who have been employed by the National Park Service and deeply understand the value of parks.

The Park Institute of America, while located at Duke University, will be an independent non-profit. Its location in Durham will allow the leveraging of the university's leadership in environmental research and education circles.

The goal of the institute is to disseminate information about the immense value and contributions of parks, large landscapes, historic sites and districts, heritage areas, and similar lands. It will share the work being done by others through partnerships. The membership of the Coalition will be a tremendous resource to the institute.

The institute has secured 501(c)(3) non-profit status. It is incorporated in the state of North Carolina and has secured business and charitable licenses. Articles of incorporation and by-laws are in place. Eight of the 20 board members have been appointed. A major fund raising initiative will be launched early this year.

—Submitted by Maureen Finnerty



Photograph by Jake Davis

Coalition Faces Crucial Challenges Ahead

A number of proposed Congressional actions and other threats to park resources that were avoided or otherwise put behind us in 2016 will likely reappear in 2017, with an increased likelihood of being enacted under the new administration. These issues will require our continued attention and include the following:

Legislation to amend the Antiquities Act Key Members of Congress have made it clear that they intend to limit the authority of future Presidents to designate national monuments under the Act by requiring Congressional and State approval of any such proposals. The Act in its current form has served the nation's conservation goals well

for the past 110 years and we will continue to oppose any significant weakening of the authority of the U.S. President under the Act to designate national monuments.

Legislation to amend (and reauthorize) the Land and Water Conservation Fund During the past two years the Coalition has spoken out on multiple occasions in support of reauthorization of the Land and Water Conservation Fund. During the same time, despite the fund's long history of providing for the conservation of federal, state, and local lands, Congress failed to reauthorize the fund. It appears the incoming Congress is intent on weakening the federal funding provisions of the Act before reauthorizing the fund. This



would be a major blow to the NPS's ability to acquire private inholdings within established park boundaries in order to complete parks as authorized and planned. The continued availability of federal land and water conservation funds are essential for this purpose.

Weakening of Clean Air and Clean Water protections

In recent years, the Coalition has provided strong support for the EPA's Clean Water Rule, which helps protect water quality in rivers and streams flowing through parks. The Coalition has also supported the EPA's proposed revision of the Regional Haze Rule, which would provide stronger and more consistent protection of the air quality in parks downwind of major sources of air pollution.

Impacts of increased energy development and infrastructure construction near or adjacent to parks In recent years, the Coalition has been very involved in commenting on proposed energy development projects on public lands adjacent to national parks. This includes advocating for the BLM to prepare Master Leasing Plans to better manage and minimize the impacts of oil and gas leasing on public lands near western national parks; opposing the construction of large alternative energy facilities on the boundaries of several California desert

parks; opposing the construction of a new oil refinery just three miles from the boundary of Theodore Roosevelt National Park; and opposing the construction of massive powerline transmission towers within view of historic Jamestown. Under the new administration, it is highly likely that there will be increased oil and gas development and increased construction of energy transmission infrastructure near or even within or through national parks.

Wildlife protection in Grand Teton and Yellowstone National Parks Several unresolved issues threaten the protection of iconic wildlife in and around Grand Teton and Yellowstone national parks. First is the proposed delisting of the Yellowstone grizzly bear, which would open the door for state-managed grizzly bear hunting around both parks. The threat to wildlife is exacerbated at Grand Teton National Park by a 2014 NPS decision to no longer enforce its longstanding prohibition on hunting on private inholdings within the park. The Coalition is on record as opposing the proposed delisting of the Yellowstone grizzly bear. And we have voiced strong concerns about the NPS decision to allow hunting on private inholdings within Grand Teton National Park.

—Submitted by Doug Morris and Mike Murray



**The Coalition to Protect
America's National Parks**

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Thank You!

A special thank you to the following members who helped the Coalition this year on our issue work, represented the Coalition at events around the country, and wrote Centennial biographies:

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