



United States Department of the Interior

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
1849 C Street, NW
Washington, DC 20240

August 15, 2022

The Honorable Joe Manchin III
Chairman, Committee on Energy
and Natural Resources
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Mr. Chairman:

On January 18, 2017, the National Park Service (NPS) publicly released the *National Park Service System Plan* (System Plan) which was developed to proactively inform the growth and management of the NPS for the next 20 years. The System Plan identifies gaps in the Nation's protected natural and cultural areas that need to be filled in order to have a collaborative conservation system that fully reflects our Nation's cultural and natural heritage. Because the System Plan was never transmitted to Congress, I would like to take the opportunity now to formally introduce it as a reference for considering the establishment of new park units or other protected areas.

The System Plan identifies important resource and thematic gaps in the National Park System for which opportunities for future preservation, conservation, or interpretation exist. The plan does not specify or recommend individual sites for inclusion in the National Park System but rather opportunities to highlight important resource and thematic gaps. An identified gap does not necessarily mean a new unit is required. Other Federal, State, local, and private entities protect and conserve public land throughout the United States and the plan emphasizes the importance of partnerships, community involvement, and outreach.

The NPS does not, and cannot, protect all of America's important resources and stories within the National Park System. However, the NPS can and should acknowledge critical cultural and natural resource gaps and opportunities and strive to protect those for future generations where feasible. Additional protections can include expanded interpretation of missing themes within existing units; partnering with local conservation groups to use NPS facilities to share those stories; or using technology to highlight missing pieces.

To identify possible cultural and natural resources and values unrepresented in the present National Park System, the System Plan draws on recommendations from both the National Park System Advisory Board, and the results of an internal scoping effort for the plan.

Underrepresented Cultural Resources and Values

A number of historical and cultural topics were identified as being underrepresented, in need of greater emphasis or redundancy, or missing in the present system. These topics, not in any order of priority, include:

- Social organizations history;
- Immigration and migration shape American culture, economy, and society;
- American Indians, Alaska Natives, and Pacific Islanders history;
- Women in American history;
- African American history;
- America's diversity;
- Music and arts;
- History of education;
- History of American industry;
- Prohibition Era;
- Reconstruction Period;
- Science, technology, engineering, and math;
- History of land conservation and environmental awareness; and
- History of U.S. diplomacy.

Underrepresented Natural Resources

Unprotected and underrepresented ecosystems identified in the System Plan, also not in any order of priority, include:

- Freshwater biodiversity hotspots;
- Estuarine environments;
- Marine ecosystems;
- Grasslands;
- Terrestrial ecosystems dependent on maritime climate;
- Coastal ecosystems; and
- High elevation desert.

In addition to the underrepresented ecosystems listed above, other natural resources, systems, and ecological processes are underrepresented in the National Park System. These include habitat corridors, migratory avian stopovers, highly productive ecosystems, dark skies, and geological features.

For additional information on the listed underrepresented themes, see Chapter 3: Potential for Greater Preservation. It should be stressed that the above underrepresented resources and values reflect a point in time, and this list will continue to change as the U.S. population, society, and culture change. For example, since the System Plan was publicly released in 2017, the history of people with disabilities has been identified as an additional historical and cultural topic which is currently underrepresented within the National Park System. Recognizing this need, the NPS launched an online disability history series that covers topics such as NPS sites associated with disability history, profiles of disability leaders, and education resources associated with disability history. This work will continue by developing, in collaboration with the disability community and disability scholars, a handbook to help NPS sites interpret disability history.

A similar letter is being sent to the Honorable John Barrasso, Ranking Member, Committee on Energy and Natural Resources, United States Senate; the Honorable Raúl Grijalva, Chairman, Committee on Natural Resources, U.S. House of Representatives; and the Honorable Bruce Westerman, Ranking Member, Committee on Natural Resources, U.S. House of Representatives.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Charles F. Sams III". The signature is written in dark ink and includes a horizontal line extending to the right from the end of the name.

Charles F. Sams III
Director, National Park Service

Enclosure