



## Safeguard the Public's Voice in National Park Decisions

Civic engagement and public participation are foundational to the National Park Service's mission and essential to the transparent, responsible stewardship of America's natural and cultural heritage. The NPS' [long-standing commitment](#) to collaboration with stakeholders reflects a fundamental belief: preserving our most treasured places requires active, inclusive partnerships with the public. But recent administrative actions are eroding this principle. By weakening environmental reviews, limiting public and Tribal input, and fast-tracking industrial projects near park boundaries, the administration is undermining decades of legal safeguards and public trust. We've seen firsthand that without proper safeguards, mining and energy development [near national parks](#) leads to significant harm to park resources and surrounding landscapes

For more than 50 years, the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) has protected America's public lands and national parks. This crucial law gives people a voice in how their public lands are used, ensuring that impacts to our air, water and wildlife are properly considered before development projects move forward. The American public overwhelmingly supports protecting these treasured places, and the good news is, we don't have to choose between energy progress and park preservation. With responsible planning and oversight, we can meet our energy needs while ensuring national parks remain protected for generations to come.

### What's Happening

The administration is fast-tracking its energy dominance agenda through executive orders that prioritize rapid development at the expense of environmental protection and public input. These actions weaken safeguards, reduce transparency and threaten public lands, including national parks.

- **National Energy Emergency:** The administration is advancing its [energy dominance agenda](#) by invoking a [National Energy Emergency](#) through a presidential Executive Order. These measures explicitly acknowledge they meet only the "minimum requirements" of applicable law. Additionally, a related Executive Order accelerates mineral production on federal lands.
- **NEPA Rollbacks:** The administration [issued an Interim Final Rule](#) rolling back government-wide NEPA regulations, with a final rule expected soon, which has since prompted the Department of the Interior to [revise and weaken](#) their own environmental review procedures.
- **Expediting Reviews:** The Department of the Interior has imposed [dramatically expedited review](#) timelines for reviewing energy and critical mineral projects on federal lands. Under this directive, Environmental Assessments must be completed in just 14 days, and Environmental Impact Statements in only 28 days, with a mere 10 days for public comment. Compliance with historic preservation laws, including consultation with Tribal communities on culturally significant sites, may be cut to as little as 7 days.

- **Expanding Development:** The recently passed “Big Beautiful Bill” Act [mandates expanded leasing and drilling](#) on public lands, including areas near iconic parks like Arches, putting natural and historic resources, air and water quality, and visitor experience at serious risk.
- **Funding Cuts:** The [administration’s FY26 budget proposal](#) would eliminate the Heritage Partnership Program and slash funding for the Historic Preservation Fund by 93%, effectively defunding support for state and tribal historic preservation offices across the country.

## Why it Matters

Critical minerals [shouldn't come at the expensive of our national parks](#) and surrounding landscapes. With more than 200 million acres of public land already open to oil and gas leasing, and only 12 million acres actively producing, there is no demand driving the expanded access.

- More than 1,300 mine claims exist within the boundaries of units managed by the National Park Service.
- Nationwide, more than 490,000 mining claims are currently held on federal public lands – a 27% increase since 2019. Over 120,000 of claims are located within just 30 miles of a national park or national monument.
- Twelve park units have active non-federal oil and gas operations, and 30 others hold non-federal mineral rights.

Fast-tracked reviews and weakened environmental safeguards put both parks and the public’s voice at risk. Bedrock laws that guarantee transparency, public input and science-based decision-making are vital to protecting the natural and cultural resources that [Americans value deeply](#). Our national parks are treasured for their wild, unspoiled character. Development near them must be done responsibly to preserve these values for future generations.

## Call to Action

Congress must protect the public’s voice in decisions that shape the future of our national parks. Lawmakers should reject any efforts—legislative or administrative—to shorten public comment periods or weaken environmental and cultural resource review processes under NEPA and National Historic Preservation Act. Appropriations bills must include clear protections that block federal funding for these harmful rollbacks.

Congress must also ensure strong oversight of major proposals impacting national park landscapes and fully fund state and tribal historic preservation offices in FY26 funding. These offices are key partners in safeguarding our cultural heritage and upholding transparent, accountable decision-making.