

**ENCOURAGING THE NEXT GENERATION TO
VISIT NATIONAL PARKS**

HEARING
BEFORE THE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON NATIONAL PARKS
OF THE
COMMITTEE ON
ENERGY AND NATURAL RESOURCES
UNITED STATES SENATE
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ENCOURAGING THE NEXT GENERATION TO VISIT NATIONAL PARKS

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 27, 2017

U.S. SENATE,
SUBCOMMITTEE ON NATIONAL PARKS,
COMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND NATURAL RESOURCES,
Washington, DC.

The Subcommittee met, pursuant to notice, at 2:07 p.m. in Room SD-366, Dirksen Senate Office Building, Hon. Steve Daines, Chairman of the Subcommittee, presiding.

OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. STEVE DAINES, U.S. SENATOR FROM MONTANA

Senator DAINES [presiding]. The Subcommittee will come to order.

This is the third hearing of the National Parks Subcommittee this Congress, a continuation of the important work of oversight of the National Park Service (NPS).

In collaboration with Ranking Member Hirono, this afternoon's hearing will examine a collection of topics and ideas to attract younger generations to our national parks and how the increasing role of technology supports not only the visitor experience but park operations as well.

Technology is becoming entwined with every aspect of our life, our jobs, our home life, even our outdoor recreation. In fact, I am holding my second, high tech summit in Montana in Missoula which is just 100 miles south of Glacier Park. I will be doing that in early October to highlight and examine the growing role of technology in our lives.

As an avid outdoorsman and spending a lot of time with other hunters and fishermen, how often do we have our iPhones, and we are using that to understand where the public land/private land boundaries are and so forth. It is just ingrained in terms of how we experience the outdoors today.

As we have learned, the NPS Centennial was a banner year with record-setting visitation numbers. What the numbers do not show is that the majority of visitors to national parks, aging Baby Boomers, do not reflect the makeup of the American population. The younger generations, our kids, our grandkids, will eventually assume the leadership and responsibility for our government, our corporations, our businesses and our national parks. That is why it is so important for us not only to engage youth and young adults but to instill a sense of ownership and excitement in these national treasures. The lives of younger generations are much more steeped

in technology than older adults. You all know that. When you need help, you go find an 11-year-old, and they will figure out your iPhone for you. This poses a challenge but an opportunity as well.

One of the things we will explore today is how to knit together technology with the park experience. Less exciting, but equally important, is the role of technology in park operations and how the Park Service plans to keep pace with best business practices as well as customer service.

Something that young and old alike are experiencing, especially after the successful Centennial campaign, is overcrowding in some parks, while other park sites remain fairly undiscovered.

I take great pride in iconic parks like Yellowstone and Glacier. I grew up 90 miles away from Yellowstone National Park and live there today. That is in my home state, but we have some of our lesser known national treasures in Montana—the Grant-Kohrs Ranch National Historic Site just 50 miles north of Yellowstone—and other wonderful sites such as the Little Bighorn Battlefield. Much work remains to be done by the Park Service and the National Park Foundation to better inform the public and to foster visitation, especially for those living nearby, of lesser known but no less interesting sites under the Park Service’s stewardship.

I look forward to hearing from our witnesses on how the National Park Service can capture the imagination and the passion of our youth and future stewards to improve the visitor experience in its now second century.

I will now turn to our Ranking Member, Senator Hirono, for her remarks.

**STATEMENT OF HON. MAZIE K. HIRONO,
U.S. SENATOR FROM HAWAII**

Senator HIRONO. Thank you. I was trying to find my park pass.
[Laughter.]

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and I note you said that we certainly need to encourage young people to visit our parks and not just the Baby Boomers who are all over our parks. As one of the Baby Boomers, I am very proud, along with Senator Angus King, of our park passes. So thank you very much.

Again, last year marked the third year in a row that we saw record visitation at our national parks. In Hawaii, national park visitation was up six percent statewide and almost every park in Hawaii saw increased visitation. However, while America is growing more diverse and urban and younger generations are making up a greater share of the population, these trends are not reflected in visitors to our national parks, as you noted, Mr. Chairman.

From increasing the use of virtual reality through games like Pokémon GO—and I have staff members who tell me they play Pokémon GO—whatever the heck that is.

[Laughter.]

I actually know what that is, okay? Just checking.

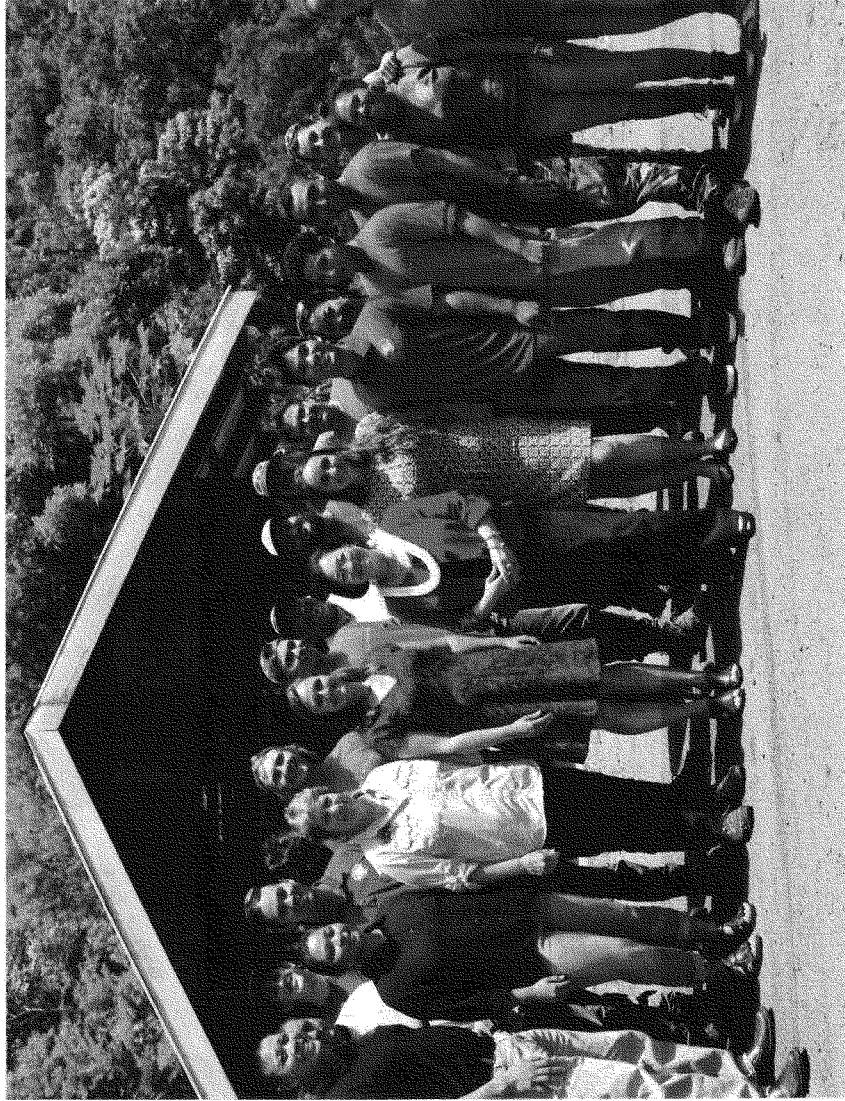
[Laughter.]

To continue support for youth conservation programs, our witnesses today will speak to a wide variety of ways that we can reverse that trend and encourage more young people to visit national parks.

I would like to extend a special welcome to John Leong, who serves as the CEO of Kupu in Hawaii. Over the past 10 years, Kupu has created a pipeline—there is a pipeline—

[Laughter.]

[Photo of students in the Kupu pipeline follows:]



Senator HIRONO. Some of them anyway. I visited with them not very long ago. Kupu has created a pipeline of young people who are engaged in conservation. Kupu's programs have trained over 3,500 of Hawaii's youth to become stewards of our culture and 'aina, or land.

Last month I met up with Kupu interns and AmeriCorps volunteers at Kupu's Makiki Baseyard. They showed me photos from their work restoring wetlands on Oahu and shared personal experiences about how their time in Kupu set the trajectory of their careers. As John will mention, the majority of Kupu graduates go on to pursue careers in forestry and protecting our 'aina.

Kupu is Hawaii's accredited partner in the 21st Century Conservation Service Corps, one of the many programs created by the Obama Administration to engage young people in our national parks. These initiatives also include the Hawaii Island Youth Ranger Program which provides summer employment opportunities for underserved Hawaii students. The Obama Administration also created the Every Kid in a Park Program which gives fourth graders and their families free admission to national parks. And we have a picture of fourth graders lining up to get their free park passes.

[Photo of Sen. Hirono and National Park Service personnel distributing passes for Every Kid in a Park follows:]



It is/was a very popular program which I hope will be continued by this Administration.

Last year I visited Hawaii Volcanoes and Haleakala National Parks with Hawaiian fourth graders, and they were really excited to see active volcanoes on Hawaii Island and plant the native silversword on Maui. We did this planting when we were beaten down by driving rains and 50 degree temperatures at Haleakala.

Many of these efforts are part of the National Park Service Centennial Campaign. I want to make sure that they continue beyond the Centennial anniversary, and this work must be front and center as we move forward.

We also need to invest more in social science and data so that we can measure the success and know whether we are moving closer to our goal, national parks and park visitation that reflects the diversity of our country.

The future of the National Park Service depends upon its ability to engage and reflect the full American community and the full American experience. We must keep pushing to realize the promise of our parks as places for all Americans of every age and background to enjoy for generations to come.

I again want to thank you for holding this hearing today. I think it is really an interesting prospect that what we want to do is to enable these young people who are totally into technology and the social media to not only look around and smell the roses and whatever in our parks but to be able to use technology to enhance their experience.

So I look forward to our witnesses.

Senator DAINES. Thank you, Senator Hirono.

It is now time to hear from our witnesses.

Joining us this afternoon are: Ms. Lena McDowall, Deputy Director for Management and Administration of the National Park Service; Ms. Yennie Fuller, Civil and Social Impact Manager, Niantic; Ms. Angela Fultz Nordstrom, Vice President, NIC Incorporated; Mr. Tim Root, Chief Executive Officer of AccessParks; Mr. John Leong, Chief Executive Officer of Kupu Hawaii; and Mr. Will Shafroth, President and CEO of the National Park Foundation.

I want to thank you for being with us here today. At the end of your testimony we will begin questions. Your full written testimony will be made part of the official hearing record.

Ms. McDowall, would you now proceed?

STATEMENT OF LENA MCDOWALL, DEPUTY DIRECTOR FOR MANAGEMENT AND ADMINISTRATION, NATIONAL PARK SERVICE, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Ms. MCDOWALL. Thank you.

Chairman Daines, Ranking Member Hirono and members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to discuss the National Park Service's efforts to encourage the next generation to visit national parks.

We are engaged in a variety of efforts, including special youth programs, updates to our facilities and IT infrastructure and stronger public-private partnerships to draw younger visitors. Secretary Zinke is committed to improving our national parks by addressing the deferred maintenance backlog and delivering high

quality experiences to all visitors, including children, young adults and families. Since the establishment of the National Park Service in 1916, families and youth groups have been an important focus.

For our Centennial last year, we set an ambitious goal to connect with and create the next generation of park visitors, supporters and advocates. With the National Park Foundation and other partners, we sought new ways to inspire young people to get to know and love their parks. We set an all-time visitation record for the third year in a row with more than 330 million visits.

This year public engagement continues with the theme, Parks 101. We're inviting people to discover lesser known parks and encouraging visitors to enjoy camping, hiking, kayaking and where allowed, hunting and fishing. We're taking steps to respond to current trends in outdoor recreation and heritage tourism.

Recreation.gov, which is the central hub for many types of federal land reservations, will get a new platform in the fall of 2018 with a new contractor. Major upgrades to that system are already underway.

We've also made a number of changes to the Park Service website, NPS.gov. Fifty percent of NPS.gov page views come from mobile devices, so we've transitioned to a mobile responsive design. Through a new application programming interface our data and content is also available to programmers to create apps in the private sector.

Last year we launched a pilot program to test mobile pass sales in seven parks. These allow visitors to save their passes on mobile devices or print them, similar to electronic boarding passes, airline boarding passes. We've been assessing the pilot and look forward to expanding it to other parks and pass types.

Visitors want to be able to use their mobile devices while they visit parks to access the internet and to communicate with each other. Connectivity continues to be a challenge in park areas located far from population centers because of limited bandwidth, fewer cell towers and extreme topography that reduces cell signal distance and quality. Over the last several years some parks have installed consumer-grade signal boosters to help with this problem. We've also increased Wi-Fi access points, and now over 130 parks currently provide access in or near visitor centers and partner facilities. Lake Mead National Recreation Area recently started the first ever concessions contract to provide Wi-Fi at campgrounds with AccessParks.

As part of an effort across all of the Department of the Interior bureaus, we're kicking off an initiative to welcome veterans, active duty members of the military and their families to parks. While still in the early planning stages, ideas include expanding distance learning for students on military bases. One project allows students to visit Channel Island National Park virtually and interact in real time with park staff, including NPS scuba divers.

Our frontline rangers are experimenting with engaging new audiences. We now have several mobile visitor centers which are food truck style vehicles that bring parks to young people at community events, festivals and fairs. Our for-profit and non-profit partners have multiplied our reach and provide many services that cater to millennials.

Concessions partners have been upgrading services and expanding choices in overnight accommodations. Partnerships with non-profit groups also increase our engagement with younger people. NatureBridge, for example, provides residential programs in parks for 30,000 students and teachers for more than 700 schools every year.

In summary, the National Park Service is embarking on a multidisciplinary approach to engaging new audiences. With the efforts of talented and passionate staff and partners and with Secretary Zinke's emphasis on building a national park system for the future, I am confident that we will inspire and engage another generation of Americans in the special places we steward.

Chairman Daines, this concludes my statement. I would be pleased to answer any questions.

[The prepared statement of Ms. McDowall follows:]

STATEMENT OF LENA MCDOWALL, DEPUTY DIRECTOR FOR MANAGEMENT AND ADMINISTRATION, NATIONAL PARK SERVICE, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR, BEFORE THE SENATE ENERGY & NATURAL RESOURCES SUBCOMMITTEE ON NATIONAL PARKS, ON ENCOURAGING THE NEXT GENERATION TO VISIT NATIONAL PARKS.

September 27, 2017

Chairman Daines, Ranking Member Hirono, and members of the subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to discuss the National Park Service's efforts to encourage the next generation to visit national parks. The National Park Service (NPS) is engaged in a variety of efforts, including special youth programs, updates to our facilities and information technology infrastructure, and stronger public-private partnerships, to draw younger visitors and engage the next generation.

Secretary Zinke is committed to improving our national parks by addressing the deferred maintenance backlog and delivering high quality experiences to all visitors, including children, young adults, and families. National park experiences benefit young people in many ways. They provide outdoor challenges that strengthen them physically, cultivate self-reliance and stewardship ethics, teach critical lessons from our country's history, and instill pride in their national parks. Passing along our parks experiences to each succeeding generation all starts with encouraging young people to visit.

A History of Focusing on Youth

Since the establishment of the NPS in 1916, families and youth groups have been an important focus of NPS programs. The forerunner of the popular Junior Ranger program, the Yosemite Junior Nature School, was started in 1930. The NPS and the Boy Scouts of America have enjoyed a partnership since 1916, and the first National Scout Jamboree was hosted on the National Mall in 1937, attracting 25,000 scouts from across the country.

Throughout the 20th century, the NPS developed and applied the principles of heritage interpretation to help visitors of all ages understand the significance of the places they visited. During the 1960s, the NPS created the National Environmental Education Development program to bring school children to parks and increase their awareness of the natural environment. Today, nearly 400 sites offer young visitors opportunities to complete a series of activities during a park visit, share their experience with a park ranger, and receive an official Junior Ranger badge and certificate.

The NPS has long been active in employing American youth to conserve the nation's natural and cultural resources. These efforts offer young people opportunities for job skills development, teach them about conservation, and inspire them to be good stewards. The Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) operated from 1933 to 1942 and employed two million young men in more than 90 national parks across the country, as well as 800 state and local parks. Modeled on the success of the CCC, President Johnson's Jobs Corps program, in which the NPS participated between 1965 and 1969, focused on 16 to 21 year olds.

The CCC legacy continues today through our partnerships with conservation corps organizations, which bring significant resources and employ youth across the country to complete hundreds of individual projects on public lands involving facilities maintenance, visitor services, and resources management. We have increased our use of conservation corps in recent years as part of our intertwined efforts to reduce the maintenance backlog and increase the pipeline of new talent coming into the NPS. These public-private partnerships provide critical assistance in support of the NPS mission in a cost-effective way. We now have cooperative agreements with over 40 conservation corps and other organizations that offer opportunities for youth in our national parks.

Although hard work, these experiences reward participants with lifelong connections to special places and the pride of accomplishment in improving our nation's most treasured places. Secretary Zinke recently celebrated the 101st birthday of the NPS with youth corps members by helping to repair the Rainbow Falls Trail at Great Smoky Mountains National Park.

Centennial Momentum

In the lead up to the NPS centennial in 2016, we set an ambitious goal to guide efforts to celebrate this milestone: "Connect with and create the next generation of park visitors, supporters and advocates." Through a variety of initiatives at every level and with the participation of many partners, including the National Park Foundation, we sought to find new ways to inspire a new generation to get to know--and love--their national parks. We have some measures that suggest success in meeting that ambitious goal. In 2016, we welcomed more than 330 million visitors, setting an all-time visitation record for the third year in a row. This was a 7.7 percent increase over 2015. RV overnight stays in NPS-operated campgrounds were up 12.5 percent, and backcountry overnight stays were up 6.7 percent.

While we do not have data to determine how many of those 330 million visitors were young or first-time visitors, data gathered as part of the *Find Your Park* public engagement campaign suggest that millennials had a high level of awareness around the NPS centennial efforts. Following the first year of the campaign, 1 in 3 millennials were familiar with Find Your Park and the campaign reached more than 15 billion impressions--a metric that measures the number of times people encountered the campaign through traditional print media and advertising, on the radio or social media, and on mobile devices.

This year, the Find Your Park campaign continues with the theme of Parks 101. We are inviting visitors to discover new park experiences, hidden histories, lesser-known parks, trails, and other extraordinary sites throughout the country. We are also encouraging people to learn the basics of outdoor activities like camping, hiking, kayaking, and where allowed, hunting and fishing. And Secretary Zinke recently issued a secretarial order to support and expand outdoor activities by increasing access to outdoor recreation opportunities including hunting and fishing for all Americans.

Critical investments in park infrastructure will continue through the Centennial Challenge Fund created by the National Park Service Centennial Act. It leverages philanthropic support for

signature projects, with priority on deferred maintenance, visitor services facilities, and trail maintenance. These will benefit visitors now and for many years to come.

In 2018, we will be celebrating the 50th anniversary of the National Trails System and the Wild and Scenic Rivers Acts. With federal, state, nonprofit, and private partners, we are inviting the public to discover their own personal connections to thousands of trails and more than 12,000 miles of rivers protected by the Wild & Scenic Rivers System with the *Find Your Way* campaign.

Broadening the Appeal of Parks

The ways people find out about--and visit--parks is changing. In order to meet the needs of new visitors, the NPS is taking steps to respond to current trends in outdoor recreation and heritage tourism. For example, younger people who have grown up with nearly constant access to information through technology are always hungry for new and different experiences. We want to provide what the market calls for: easy access to digital information, and a wide range of affordable, high quality, and unique activities and overnight accommodations.

Visitors want user-friendly trip planning and reservation systems. Recreation.gov is the central hub for many types of national park and other federal land reservations. In 2017, recreation.gov has already seen 37 million sessions, from 19 million users, an increase of over 20 percent from 2016. These sessions have resulted in over 4 million reservations. The NPS has almost 300 reservable facilities and activities across 150 parks, which generate almost \$30 million in net revenue. Beyond standard campground reservations, through recreation.gov, we offer activities such as a lottery for the synchronous firefly event at Great Smoky Mountains, a ranger-led Halloween cave tour at Sequoia National Park, and self-guided snowmobile permits at Yellowstone.

In the fall of 2018, an all-new recreation.gov platform will be launched with a new contractor, and major upgrades are already underway. The new system will be mobile-friendly and offer additional flexibility, allowing park managers to easily add and update the availability of facilities and activities for reservations. Trip-planning features will be improved to enable users to create, reserve, and share itineraries.

Our own nps.gov website has been the focus of significant changes, as well. In 2016, we eclipsed 500 million page views by 90 million visitors. The site consistently rates among the top performing sites in the federal government and in the travel and tourism sector. Approximately 50 percent of nps.gov visitation comes from mobile devices, so during our centennial effort, we transitioned nps.gov to a mobile-responsive design that performs better on mobile devices. We also improved trip planning functionality, including new *Things to Do* recommendations.

Through our new Application Programming Interface, data and content from parks and programs can now be shared with third parties interested in creating apps and other innovative products using data from nps.gov. Programmers have access to data including announcements about hazardous or changing conditions at a national park, news releases, special event information, lesson plans, park visitor center and campground geo-locations, operating hours, fees, and other key information.

A new approach to data on nps.gov has also expanded our ability to offer visitors content based on themes that match visitors' interests. NPS.gov now includes more than 100 subject sites, offering visitors the opportunity to explore content on topics as wide ranging as bears, forts, fossils, night skies, pirates, presidents, World War I and World War II. By inviting visitors to explore themes that resonate with them, we can introduce visitors to other NPS parks and programs across the country. With these upgrades to nps.gov, we are now positioned to provide a seamless and integrated NPS experience across nps.gov, mobile apps, social media, and other technologies.

For ten years, the public has been able to place online orders for the traditional, physical version of the America the Beautiful interagency passes and, two years ago, the lifetime recreation passes for seniors and disabled individuals also became available online. In early 2016, NPS launched a pilot program to test a new kind of online pass sales--for park-specific passes only--in seven parks. Our goal was to identify and test technology that could make it easier for visitors to purchase and use park passes, allowing them to save their passes on a mobile device or print them out, similar to the digital infrastructure that airlines use for electronic boarding passes.

Through the pilot of the digital pass program, 25,000 park passes have been sold. Two of the seven parks, Acadia National Park and Sequoia & Kings Canyon National Parks, have made the majority of sales (72 percent and 10 percent, respectively). Sales at Acadia have accounted for approximately 10 percent of the park's total entrance fee receipts and at Sequoia & Kings Canyon, approximately 6 percent. Total sales through the pilot program increased approximately 8 percent from 2016 to 2017. We have been assessing the pilot as it proceeds and have found that we need easier-to-use scanning devices and better methods for validating passes in areas without internet connectivity. We are currently addressing these issues and plan to expand the program to other parks and pass types.

Visitors want to be able to use their mobile devices to share photos and experiences with their friends and family--and they want to take advantage of the many internet-based resources we have developed. Connectivity has also proved critical to protecting public safety during emergencies. Ultimately, we and our partners need connectivity to operate parks more efficiently. Credit card processing and our own business operations software require internet access and, in our busiest parks, increased cellular connectivity would make our internal communications more efficient while also freeing up radio bandwidth for public safety and law enforcement operations.

Two types of connectivity are important within national parks--cellular coverage over larger areas, and WiFi access points in or near our visitor facilities. Cellular coverage continues to be a challenge in large national parks located far from population centers because there are fewer cell towers, and extreme topography reduces cell signal distance and quality. The NPS provides permits to private companies, providing access to towers and other NPS facilities, to install cellular equipment, build new towers, and use new technology. Permit applications and equipment installation are typically driven by the cellular providers' interest in providing connectivity.

Over the last several years, we have been able to increase WiFi access points in parks, with over 130 sites currently providing access in visitor centers and in partner facilities, including concessions. At many visitor centers, the NPS or our partners pay for local internet service and provide it to the public for free. However, not all parks have internet available locally, and we are not able to provide technical support to visitors who have difficulty connecting to the public WiFi.

We are making progress on both cellular coverage and WiFi access. For example, at Chaco Culture National Historical Park, consumer-grade cell signal boosters were installed at the visitor center, campground, and several other areas, improving cell coverage for visitors and quality of life for employees, along with public safety benefits. Cell signal boosters have also been used in specific areas within Gulf Islands National Seashore, Mount Rainier National Park, and Acadia National Park. Lake Mead National Recreation Area recently started the first-ever concessions contract to provide WiFi at campgrounds with AccessParks. These are just a few initial examples. We understand there is much more to do and we look forward to working Congress and the private sector to achieve better, more reliable connectivity in our parks.

We are also delivering innovative opportunities for more young people to connect with national parks virtually. We have live webcams in approximately 50 parks, including places that many people may never have the opportunity to visit in person. Katmai National Park and Preserve's Brooks Falls BearCam in Alaska broadcasts incredible images of brown bears. Last year, 60 million viewers tuned in to the BearCam and 8 million people participated in interactive webchat programs with rangers at Katmai.

Similarly, our *Channel Islands Live* distance learning programs allow students to visit Channel Islands National Park virtually and interact in real time with park staff, including NPS SCUBA divers while they are underwater. We have also provided an annual series of approximately 20 distance learning programs on presidential themes.

Our NPS Kids webpage lists ways for kids to connect with parks and the WebRangers program offers digital experiences that complement on-site programs. WebRangers is designed to give children of all ages across the world, access to more than 70 fun, free games and activities. In 2016, about 550,000 people participated in WebRangers. As with most technology, it gets dated quickly, so we are creating a strategy for the future of the digital Junior Ranger program and how it intersects with the site-based Junior Ranger programs.

Veterans Initiative

As part of an effort across all Department of the Interior bureaus, we are kicking off an initiative focused on welcoming veterans, active duty members of the military, and their families to national parks. While still in the early planning stages, ideas under consideration include creating distance learning opportunities for students on military bases domestically and overseas and linking teachers at military base schools with the Teacher-Ranger-Teacher program. The Teacher-Ranger-Teacher program places teachers in parks during the summer to learn about park resources and develop lesson plans for use in both their classrooms and in the park with students. We are also looking at possible opportunities to engage with military development programs like Junior Reserve Officers' Training Corps for high school students.

Interpretation/Education Innovation

In individual parks across the country, our front-line rangers are experimenting with innovative new methods for engaging with visitors. For example, we now have mobile visitor centers for the Santa Monica Mountains and Golden Gate National Recreation Areas, as well as other parks. With support from partners like the Golden Gate Conservancy, these food-truck-style vehicles, known as Roving Ranger and La Ranger Troca, bring the parks to the people, attending community events, festivals, and fairs. Through these pop-ups beyond park boundaries, we can reach more young people, including those that may not know about national parks, may not be regular visitors, or may not have transportation available to reach a park. In addition, our interpretive rangers and interns in parks and pop-ups use audience-centered interpretation to encourage visitors to be active participants, ask questions, follow their own curiosity, engage directly with national park resources and explore the current social context, while discussing their experiences with other visitors.

Connecting with young people on social media platforms continues to be an area of growth for the NPS as well. Individual national parks and programs are highly visible on social media. We continue to encourage the creation of engaging content that invites more young people and new visitors to connect with, visit, volunteer, and share their parks experiences. More than 300 parks and programs maintain social media accounts, which engage with millions of followers on platforms like Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter. In addition, we are experimenting with other popular platforms like Snapchat. We know that about 30 percent of followers on the national NPS Facebook account are in the age range of 18-35 years old, and we believe that is the case on other platforms as well. We also work with partners, including the National Park Foundation, to feature and amplify the best park content on our national social media channels.

Public-Private Partnerships

There are two principal types of partners--for-profit and non-profit--that multiply our reach and engagement with younger visitors. Strengthening these partnerships is a high priority for the NPS. Our most tightly linked for-profit partners are concessioners, who have provided traditional services such as overnight accommodations, food and beverage, and retail sales in parks for well over 100 years. Along with outfitters and guides operating under commercial use authorizations, our for-profit partners are essential for welcoming visitors to parks. They provide many new and innovative services and programs that cater to millennial visitors and young families. Examples include a gourmet coffee and bike rental shop at the Grand Canyon National Park, great food and outdoor concerts at Cape Cod National Seashore, and partnerships with local schools at Acadia National Park. To enhance opportunities for recreation and visitor enjoyment, Cape Hatteras National Seashore is working with existing partners and seeking new partners to provide services including surfing lessons, guided fishing, educational programs, off-road vehicle driving tours, and guided waterfowl hunting. Two public workshops were recently held to provide information to interested outdoor guides and business owners.

Park concession partners have been working to upgrade and expand choices in overnight accommodation facilities, and to offer healthier, more sustainable food options. These improvements benefit visitors of all ages, and they appeal to millennials in particular. Concessioners have been testing and installing new cabin concepts at Gateway National

Recreation Area, Badlands National Park, and Lassen Volcanic National Park. They have also recently completed impressive renovations at several iconic lodges and cabins at Glacier National Park, as well as Canyon Lodge and Cabins at Yellowstone National Park, to continue providing the traditional lodging options visitors have enjoyed for many generations.

Another type of for-profit partnership involves companies that use a mix of cause-marketing campaigns and philanthropy to support national parks, promoting national parks along with their own brands. Some of these partnerships also result in new opportunities for the public to engage with national parks. For example, Google's Made With Code program allowed youth to create custom emojis on hot chocolate during the events associated with the National Christmas Tree at President's Park and another year allowed them to use code to control the lights on the state and regional holiday trees. American Express partnered with Games for Change to develop the Save the Park game and hosted a Game-Jam for high school and college students to explore how a park-design game could help people engage with parks and with one another.

Partnerships with non-profit groups have also increased our engagement with younger people. For example, NatureBridge provides hands-on residential programs for children and teens. Their multi-day programs take place outdoors, where students are immersed in parks like Yosemite, Golden Gate, Olympic, Santa Monica Mountains, Channel Islands, and Prince William Forest. NatureBridge welcomes more than 700 schools and 30,000 students and teachers each year.

In summary, the NPS is embarking on a multi-disciplinary approach to engaging new audiences in our amazing national parks. With the efforts of the talented and passionate staff of the NPS and our partners, along with Secretary Zinke's emphasis to build a park system for the future, I am confident that these efforts will inspire and engage yet another generation of Americans in the special places that the NPS stewards.

Chairman Daines, this concludes my statement. I would be pleased to answer any questions you or other members of the subcommittee may have.

Senator DAINES. Thank you for your testimony.
Ms. Fuller.

**STATEMENT OF YENNIE SOLHEIM FULLER, CIVIL AND SOCIAL
IMPACT MANAGER, NIANTIC, INC.**

Ms. FULLER. Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Hirono, members of the Subcommittee, my name is Yennie Solheim Fuller and I'm the Civic and Social Impact Manager of Niantic.

On behalf of the dedicated and innovative professionals at Niantic as well as the millions of users who play our games around the world every day, it's an honor to be here to talk about how AR, or augmented reality, can help encourage the next generation to visit and enjoy both our national parks, historic sites and majestic open lands.

While you may not have previously heard about Niantic, I suspect you might know about our games, particularly Pokémon GO. We're proud that Pokémon GO, as well as our earlier AR game, Ingress, have together helped stir the world's attention and imagination and the enormous potential that AR as an educational and exploration tool brings.

More fundamentally, we've been excited at how our games get people moving. Even now, we continue to hear stories about people getting outside, spending times with their friends and family, meeting new people and discovering new places in their communities and across the country, including our national parks and monuments. These stories speak to our core mission, using our technology to get people outside to appreciate the wonders of our worlds.

Through our augmented reality games, Ingress and Pokémon GO, users are encouraged to uncover the stories behind significant locations such as historic buildings, art sculptures and monuments.

Many of those points of interest are in or around our great national parks. That's why it's no surprise that a byproduct of the game's popularity is increased park visitation, including people, young and old, who hadn't previously set foot in a national park.

As we understand, the National Park Service informed your Committee that some of its parks had seen a welcomed increase in visitation because of Pokémon GO. We're heartened to hear of this because it's exactly why we created Ingress and Pokémon GO, to get people outside, to explore and learn about the world around them and to visit the interesting places that they wouldn't have necessarily seen before.

In both Pokémon GO and Ingress, game play is often tied to a notable location. So, for example, a Pokémon GO player, who is playing the game near the Many Glacier Hotel in Glacier, Montana, will learn from the text box that accompanies the game play that the hotel was a part of a network of chalets that were built a day's horseback ride apart. Similar bits of interesting information of history can be found at game play locations in Yellowstone, Haleakala in Hawaii and other national parks and landmarks across our great country.

As an aside, we at Niantic have followed the interest and concern at the recent wildfire at the Glacier National Park, and the loss of the Sperry Chalet, in the Chairman's great State of Montana. We

would be happy to work with you, Mr. Chairman and the National Park Service, to engage with the community in the funding and the rebuilding efforts. In fact, this is something that we've done with our Ingress community before, using the game as an organizing tool to get people to reinvigorate and revitalize their surrounding areas.

While we're excited about the use of our games as a tool to encourage exploration of our national parks, we're also mindful that all of us are really just temporary stewards of this land. For this reason, we created "Operation Clear Field." This is a program that combines Ingress game play with light cleanup in 106 city, state and national parks. Throughout "Operation Clear Field," we've enabled gamers to be able to contribute to the National Park Foundation, and I'm very proud to say that we've collected over \$60,000 for the NPF.

As we continue to offer Ingress and Pokémon GO and as we look ahead to the next additions to and advancements in AR gameplay, we look forward to coming up with the programs that both get the next generation outside to explore and to see the wonder of our national parks and help them see these public lands for what they truly are which is a special place that belongs to all of us.

Mr. Chairman, thank you and your Subcommittee colleagues again for the opportunity to appear today, and I look forward to answering your questions.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Fuller follows:]

TESTIMONY

of

Yennie Solheim Fuller

**Civic and Social Impact Manager
Niantic, Inc.**

before the

**Committee on Energy
Subcommittee on National Parks
United States Senate**

“ENCOURAGING THE NEXT GENERATION TO VISIT NATIONAL PARKS”

September 27th, 2017

Introduction

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Hirono, and Members of the Subcommittee, my name is Yennie Solheim Fuller, and I am Civic and Social Impact Manager of Niantic, Inc., which is headquartered in San Francisco, California. On behalf of the dedicated and innovative professionals at Niantic, as well as the millions of users who play our games around the world every day, it is an honor to be here today to talk about how the core technology we use in our games – Augmented Reality or AR – can help encourage “the next generation” to visit and enjoy our national parks, whether they be serene urban oases, historic sites, or majestic open lands.

While you may not previously have heard anything about Niantic, I suspect you know about our games, particularly Pokémon GO. We at Niantic were surprised and humbled at the extraordinary global response when Pokémon GO launched last year. What we experienced far exceeded our own imaginations. Since July 2016, the app has been downloaded over 750 million times, and is enjoyed by users in this country and countries around the world.

We are particularly proud that Pokémon GO, as well as our earlier AR game, Ingress, have together helped stir the world’s attention and imagination to the enormous potential of AR as an educational and exploration tool. More fundamentally, we’ve been excited at how our games get people moving. Even now, we continue to hear stories about people getting outside, spending time with their friends and family, meeting new people and discovering new places in their communities and across the country, including at our national parks and monuments.

These stories speak to our core mission: to use technology to get people outside to appreciate the wonder of the world around us. In fact, technology, if used smartly, can help bring people to our national parks, particularly young people and others who have not historically been drawn to these amazing, diverse, and dynamic places.

It’s important to clarify just what it is we at Niantic do to enhance, or dare I say augment, the experiences we have outside. Simply put, we use existing mobile technology to add a new dimension to the experience of simply getting out and

about. A brief history of Niantic's mobile apps and games will help illustrate this point:

Niantic's first mobile app, "Field Trip," links to a number of educational databases and uses Global Positioning System technology to deliver historic and other interesting points of knowledge about a user's immediate surroundings. It could be anything ranging from local history, interesting landmarks, and works of art and architecture.

If we were standing in front of the Transamerica Building in San Francisco, Field Trip would show a marker with the origin of our company name: the whaling ship, *Niantic*, which brought fortune-seekers to San Francisco during the California Gold Rush in 1849. Run aground in the harbor and abandoned by its crew, the *Niantic* was converted into a storeship and hotel that would repeatedly catch fire and be rebuilt. As a Field Trip player would learn, today's San Francisco Financial District, located where a harbor once stood, is where the *Niantic* first ran aground, and remnants of the ship were excavated at the foot of the Transamerica Building in 1978. We believe the *Niantic* serves as a wonderful metaphor for hidden stories: The knowledge exists – it just may not be always available or visible to us.

Building off of Field Trip's objective – to help users discover interesting information about places around them – we developed in 2012 our first mobile augmented reality game, Ingress. With Ingress, we combined gaming, walking, and exploring. Today, the Ingress community is amazing, and continues to grow with more than one million active players in 4,000 communities worldwide.

The game is centered largely on Ingress players discovering Portals, which are found in publicly accessible areas. In addition to being important to Ingress gameplay, the Portals also provide interesting information about their locations, such as statues and monuments, unique architecture, outdoor murals, historic buildings, and unique local businesses.

The popularity of Ingress among the gaming community, particularly in Japan, gave rise to the notion of combining the long-cherished Pokémon franchise with maps and AR technology.

As depicted in Pokémon Go, the player – called a “Trainer” – goes out into the world searching for and capturing Pokémon. Through your device – your phone today and perhaps some kind of glasses or other devices in the future – you become the Trainer and can see this fantastical world of Pokémon overlaid on the real world, whether that’s the National Mall here in Washington, Haleakala National Park in Hawaii, or the Many Glacier Hotel in Glacier National Park, Montana.

It’s worth sharing briefly how we decided on the locations of the millions of PokéStops and Gyms, which are markers in the game that correspond to a landmark or other place of interest. Many historical markers and other local landmarks from our first app, Field Trip, became significant game locations in Ingress. When we were developing Pokémon GO, we asked Ingress players to submit ideas for local landmarks they thought would be great additions to Pokémon GO; millions of places were suggested, and a subset of those submissions was added to the existing set of points of interest to populate PokéStops and Gyms in Pokémon GO.

Many of those points of interest are in or around our great national parks. That’s why it’s no surprise that a byproduct of the game’s popularity is increased park visitation, including people, young and old, who hadn’t previously set foot in a national park.

As we understand, the National Park Service informed your Committee that some of its parks had seen a welcomed increase in visitation because of Pokémon GO. We are heartened to hear of this because it’s exactly why we created Ingress and Pokémon GO: To get people outside, to explore and learn about the world around them, and to visit interesting places that they wouldn’t otherwise go see.

Just like Ingress, Pokémon GO provides information about where a PokéStop or Gym is located. For example, a Pokémon GO player who discovers the PokéStop at the Many Glacier Hotel in Glacier, Montana, will learn from the text box that accompanies the PokéStop that the hotel was part of a network of chalets that were built a day’s horseback ride apart, which enabled guests to cross the park’s wild, roadless interior while spending nights in relative comfort and security.

Similar bits of interesting information and history can be found at PokéStops at Yellowstone, Haleakala, and other national parks and landmarks across our great country.

As an aside, we at Niantic have followed with interest and concern the recent wildfire at Glacier National Park, and the loss of the Sperry Chalet, in the Chairman's great state of Montana. Mr. Chairman, we would be happy to work with you, and the National Park Service, to engage with the community in the funding and rebuilding effort. This is something we've done before with Ingress, using the game as a community organizing tool to help people reinvigorate and revitalize areas hit by disasters.

While we are excited about the use of our games as a tool to encourage exploration of our national parks, we are also mindful that all of us are only temporary stewards of this land, which is why we must do our part to help preserve our parks for future generations. For this reason, we created "Operation Clear Field" – a program that combines Ingress game play with light cleanup in 106 city, state, and national parks across the United States. Through "Operation Clear Field," we also enable gamers to contribute to the National Park Foundation (NPF). To date, I'm proud to report we've collected over \$60,000 for the NPF.

As we continue to offer Ingress and Pokémon GO, and as we look ahead to the next additions to and advancements in AR gameplay, we look forward to coming up with other programs that both get "the next generation" to explore the wonder of our national parks and help them see these public lands for what they truly are: special places that belong to all of us.

Mr. Chairman, thank you and your Subcommittee colleagues again for the opportunity to appear before you today. I look forward to answering your questions.

Senator DAINES. Thank you, Ms. Fuller. Thank you for your support of the Sperry Chalet as well, we appreciate it.

Mr. Leong.

**STATEMENT OF JOHN LEONG, CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER,
KUPU**

Mr. LEONG. Aloha, Senator Daines, Ranking Member Hirono and members of the Subcommittee. Thank you for the opportunity to come all the way from Hawaii to share with you folks today.

My name is John Leong. I am the CEO and Co-founder of Kupu. We are a non-profit based out of Hawaii that runs a Youth Corps model where we engage young adults in service around conservation, sustainability, Hawaiian culture and education. I'm also a former board member of the Corps Network which engages about 135 Youth Corps in states all across our country. And I'm also a former Corps member myself as well, too.

Youth Corps are playing a pivotal role in a public-private partnership with the government to manage our public lands. It's really exciting because this is a win-win situation in which parks and resources are getting managed in a cost-effective way and it's transforming lives.

We're able to—Kupu has been working with the National Park Service in Hawaii for the last decade, and we've been working with some of the highest-grossing national parks in our country. It's really exciting because our members, along with corps across the country, are doing important work with the national parks, like addressing infrastructure needs, getting into backlog maintenance projects. They're also helping with trail restoration, invasive species removal, native species recovery, wildlife habitat recovery and we're also doing education and outreach with visitors and also getting volunteers engaged in service.

We're able to efficiently and effectively respond to the needs of the government and the national parks because we have operating agreements and partnerships in place. And that's really significant because it saves time and important administrative costs to the government, and we're able to get to these needs quickly.

Also, really exciting about this is that it's not just important work that we're getting done on a day-to-day basis, but we're transforming lives. The work being done to improve our national parks is a vehicle that's helping to unlock the potential in our youth. And it's really allowing them to explore careers in conservation but at the same time they're getting transferable job skills like leadership, communication, teamwork, responsibility, the value of hard work and transferable technical skills that they can take with them throughout life.

It's really exciting because this is helping them to get into meaningful careers. As an example, proposed legislation like the 21st Century Conservation and Service Corps Act will allow young adults who have been Corps members to work in conservation with the national parks and other federal entities after they've finished their term of service.

This will allow—this is exciting because we have Corps members who are former veterans and there also are Corps members living in rural and underserved areas. This gets them access to good pay-

ing, federal jobs, but also conversely, they are able to help the National Park Service to increase diversity in age, gender and ethnicity within the workforce at the parks and hire locally.

What's also really exciting about this as well, too, is that it's helping young adults to find purpose and passion while building skills that makes them marketable in the community.

As Senator Hirono mentioned, we have a high demand for our alumni in the workforce in the conservation sector. Some of our partners have up to 75 percent of their staff being Kupu alumni.

But our alumni are also getting into other private sector industries. This includes areas like technology, energy, conservation, renewable energy, education and even entrepreneurs as well.

In fact, our own Governor's wife, Mrs. Dawn Ige, is a former Youth Corps member who got her start in the national parks at Volcanoes National Park on Hawaii Island. This just goes to show that Corps members can go anywhere in life if they put their mind to it.

What's also exciting is that our work at the national parks creates educational pathways to make our Youth Corps members successful. Through the generous support of AmeriCorps, we were able to provide hundreds of young adults with living allowances, but also close to \$1 million this last year in educational awards. That coupled with partnerships we have with the University of Hawaii and other colleges locally—we're able to make the dream of attaining a higher education more attainable for our young adults, especially those who hadn't thought of going off to higher education.

And what's really exciting about this as well, too, is that this is not just a feel-good type of work, it's getting things done. It's not just a black hole that we're putting money into. Working with corps and the national park is really exciting because we're seeing that as a catalyst that's multiplying every dollar spent. It's creating improved resources; it's helping government to become more efficient; it's helping to improve lives; and it's building stronger communities. Last year alone Kupu's socioeconomic impact was close to \$16.3 million—\$90 million over the last decade. For every dollar we spent, we saw \$3.40 in economic returns. That's a 340 percent return on investment. I think all of us would like to get that in the bank.

What's even more exciting is that our federal funding is only 25 to 30 percent of our budget, which means that we are leveraging every dollar spent and we're multiplying it.

The National Park Service also found that Youth Corps saved them 50 to 80 percent in operating costs where working with Youth Corps nationwide. And this is important because this is not just a good way to spend funds today, but this is a strategic and smart, long-term investment for our country.

If we want to have a resilient and strong America, we need resilient and strong people. And that's what Youth Corps produce. Our young adults work inside the most adverse climates and difficult challenging situations, some of them coming from difficult, personal lives, yet they find a way to persevere and rise above. They're given the skills and the pathways to be successful in life. And what gets me excited is that as they go out and they serve, they realize that

life is not just about themselves, but it's about giving back and making the world around them a better place.

So it's really exciting as we can see and celebrate them, it's not just their individual success that we're celebrating, we're celebrating the significance that brings to their communities, to our country and the world around them as they succeed.

Thank you very much.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Leong follows:]



September 22, 2017

National Park Service Testimony
John Leong

Kupu, meaning “to sprout, grow,” in Hawaiian is a Honolulu-based 501(c)3 non-profit that empowers youth to serve their communities and create a more sustainable and pono Hawai’i. We provide hands-on training programs that educate and mentor young adults (16-24 years in age) to become stewards of our culture and resources, helping them develop a strong connection to the place in which we live. Since 2007, KUPU has risen to meet the increasing demands of natural resource based jobs by training over 3,500 youth in the areas of conservation, sustainability, Hawaiian culture, and education.

Kupu has worked with the National Park Service over the last decade throughout the state of Hawaii. I also have been on a national board of the Corps Network, which is the membership association of 135 other Conservation Corps across the country. Conservation Corps engage young adults and veterans – also known as Corpsmembers - across the country in meaningful work that is cost effective, improves resources, creates career pathways, and are developing the next generation of outdoor stewards, recreationists, and entrepreneurs.

Kupu’s programs have public-private-partnerships with some of the top grossing National Parks in the US. These include Haleakala and Volcanoes National Park. We have seen youth from all walks of life come together for a common purpose of caring for these national treasures. They help to address backlog maintenance, rebuild trails, remove invasive species, restore fish and wildlife habitat, and much more. We are able to efficiently and effectively respond to government needs through this partnership. As an example, we are looking at providing a Kupu member to the new Honouliuli National Monument on Oahu to help address all the permitting and other needs to allow on the ground work to get done that has been deferred for quite some time due to there only being one staff member. Last year, Kupu’s 300+ corps members helped to remove over 20,000 acres by of invasive species and plant over 210,000 native species. They also helped many of the organizations we serve, including the National Park Service, by engaging and leading volunteers and partner organizations. Our corps members led over 10,000 volunteers last year alone.

While the conservation work is important, our corps members are being shaped into responsible, hard working, and effective individuals. They often camp, need to learn survival skills, and also gain in-demand job skills like teamwork and problem solving. They also learn to be entrepreneurial and self-starters. Corps like Kupu provide college credits in addition to a living allowance and through AmeriCorps, we provide educational awards to make higher education or job training more achievable.

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This year we will provide close to \$1 million in education awards in Hawaii, California, and American Samoa. Because of legislation supported by this committee last Congress, corps members can obtain front-line jobs at NPS and other agencies in a non-competitive way for 2 years. The bipartisan 21st Century Conservation Service Corps Act would be another important tool to enable us to engage more youth and veteran Corpsmembers, target more high priority projects, and expand the cost-saving projects we can accomplish with other federal partners.

The ability for NPS to hire local, former corps members they are familiar with is a huge competitive advantage both for these young adults coming from underserved, often rural communities as well as for the National Park. NPS has only 7% of its workforce under 29 years old and 75% are over the age of 40. Kupu is seeing tremendous results in our alums receiving training through their work on public lands and then being hired in related fields in the public and private sector. As an example, Senator Hirono visited our Department of Land and Natural Resources with us last month. There she saw that 30% of the current employees are Kupu alums and there were another 12 full time corps members working with DLNR. Altogether, about 50% of their workforces were either current Kupu corps members or alums! With many agencies anticipating a retiring workforce in the near term, Corps like Kupu along with legislation like the 21st Century Conservation Service Corps Act are a great tool for resource management agencies.

Hawaii's First Lady, Dawn Ige was a corps member at Volcanoes National Park and now is with her husband at the highest level of state government as an example! Corps are important as they provide a hand up, not a hand out. Young adults are gaining important job skills while effectively meeting needs today and they are being prepared for the workforce. We are building a more resilient future for our country by creating resilient people who will be lifelong stewards of our resources and public lands.

Corps add diversity to the National Parks in age, ethnic heritage, and socio-economic capacities. Kupu has also received support through the National Park Service and another Corps, Conservation Legacy, to deploy a AmeriCorps VISTA member in Hawaii with the focus of engaging Native Hawaiian participants within our park. To native communities, parks are not just a place to have recreation, they are also sacred places that are part of their culture and that carry generational heritage and wealth from one generation to the next. We have found that providing meaningful opportunities to not only visit, but work in these sacred areas has helped many of our native young adults to better define their identity and purpose in life— issues I know are a passion of Ranking Member Hirono, and Chairman Daines.

Finally, as you may have seen in my bio, my background is in business. I went to Wharton at the University of Pennsylvania and really appreciated that education. But what challenged me, coming from Hawaii where the aloha spirit is so prevalent, is that what I saw was mostly about getting to the top and individual success. What is exciting to me about corps and the work we do at Kupu is that the work being done rises the tide for America's youth, the parks, the natural resources, and the surrounding community while making economic sense. It is about creating community success that perpetuates for generations to come. There are definite quantitative impacts through the work we are doing in the natural resources.

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We have captured some of the life-changing impact through a national study on corps conducted by Columbia University. Through the metrics derived by this study, we found that last year Kupu had a socio-economic impact of \$16.3 million. To date Kupu has had close to \$90 million in impact over the last decade or a 1:3.4 cost to benefit ratio. For every dollar spent on our programs, we see a 340% ROI to our resources, youth, and larger communities. What's more is that we are able to leverage Federal dollars. Kupu's budget is only about 25% federally funded. We are able to multiply Federal dollars to create a much larger impact. That is money well spent.

Additionally, the projects that Corps accomplish are cost-effective. An independent study commissioned by the National Park Service found a 50-80 percent cost savings in using Corps on projects. The current administration, in its FY18 NPS Budget Justification also stated that Corps helped by them "maintaining its resources in a cost effective manner while providing the participants with developmental job skills training and education." The work we get done is also important – from backlog maintenance, to recreation, to wildfire remediation, and fish and wildlife habitat – these are projects that land managers prioritize.

To understand that by engaging young adults in the National Parks and other agencies, you are getting important conservation work done, creating career pathways, helping young adults to find their purpose and passion in life, and are doing something that has meaningful economic impact, this is a win-win situation. Furthermore, this does not account for the long-term impact created in the lives of youth who may have otherwise not found their purpose or passion. We have seen a tremendous number of young adults who have found the career field they want to pursue like Jon Brito, a young man from a small island called Moloka'i who won the White House Champion of Change award a few years back. Jon went on to college and now is employed in a conservation career. We are also seeing entrepreneurship inspired by work with Kupu. Kupu alumni Justine Espiritu helped to recently launch a new bike share program called "Biki" in Honolulu that is becoming a huge success.

Ladies and Gentlemen, I thank you for hearing my testimony. I hope that you can see my passion for engaging youth in our National Parks and how they really have become a vehicle to positively transform lives, economy, and communities while getting important work done within the parks. I hope that you will continue to support initiatives and legislation that encourage youth and veteran engagement and specifically provide employment opportunities through the work being done in parks and other agencies. Mahalo for all you do for our country and aloha, John.

Senator DAINES. Thank you, Mr. Leong. It is very impressive that your teleprompter was invisible as well.

[Laughter.]

Mr. LEONG. Thank you.

Senator DAINES. Ms. Fultz Nordstrom.

**STATEMENT OF ANGELA FULTZ NORDSTROM,
VICE PRESIDENT, FEDERAL, NIC INC.**

Ms. FULTZ NORDSTROM. Good afternoon, Chairman Daines, Ranking Member Hirono and other members of the Subcommittee.

Thank you for the opportunity to discuss how technology can help enhance the visitor experience and encourage the next generation to enjoy our federal recreational lands and waters.

My name is Angela Fultz Nordstrom. NIC is one of the nation's leading providers of digital government services and secure payment processing solutions. We partner with government agencies to make it faster and easier for citizens and businesses to interact with government.

On a personal note, as a native Montanan who grew up with the jewels of Glacier and Yellowstone, just a quick drive from my home in Fort Benton, I appreciated these tremendous public lands that were available to me. And think about it, back then, every aspect of planning and visiting a national park visit from researching the best time of year to go, to finding the fastest route, to deciding what activities to do while you're there, to purchasing your entry pass, were all done offline without the benefit of today's technology.

Today, when I look at my suburban Nashville kids, who always have a phone in their hands and are looking, or within arm's reach, I wonder how can we ensure that they have that same appreciation and, more importantly, that access and desire to visit their national parks.

In 2015, with the support and urging of many members of this Committee, the National Park Service set out to find ways to engage with the next generation of park visitors by making it easier for them to enter a national park.

In December of that same year, NIC was honored and excited to be one of three companies chosen for the National Park Service ePass pilot program. Just eight weeks later, Acadia National Park became the first national park to accept an electronic park pass using the YourPassNow solution. In March of that same year, Colorado National Monument and Theodore Roosevelt National Park followed.

Today, I'm pleased to share with you more results of the YourPassNow solution as part of the National Park Service model program. Through the guidance of the National Park Service and the leadership in each of the facilities, YourPassNow has expanded to include Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks, Castillo de San Marcos National Monument. Seeing a need to be filled, the U.S. Forest Service also joined the pilot. Today, they use YourPassNow to provide passes and permits for Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area and Wayne National Forest.

With every use of YourPassNow, the National Park Service and Forest Service are making it easier for the next generation to visit public lands. A typical YourPassNow transaction takes about 90

seconds to complete, and it generates a digital bar code that can be kept on a personal mobile device or printed out and placed in a vehicle. It can also be scanned by a park ranger to confirm its validity.

By all accounts, the National Park Service pilot has been a success. In just the first nine months of 2017, passes, the combined passes that have been issued, are over 22,000 across just seven public lands. This is two and a half times greater than the number sold in all of 2016. And the same holds true for the first park, Acadia, which has experienced a 57 percent increase in YourPassNow sales from 2016 to 2017.

But examples of the pilot's success to improve access don't stop there. We've heard from gate entry personnel that YourPassNow is being used by millennials as they enter in the parks. Most recently, YourPassNow was put to the test. The National Park Service announced the price increase of the Lifetime Senior Pass and they, of course, saw a tremendous surge in the amounts that were purchased. In just two weeks, we partnered with the National Park Service to enhance YourPassNow to support the online sales of the America the Beautiful, Lifetime Senior Pass. In just over a month, YourPassNow processed 635,000 Senior Passes, with 90,000 purchased in one day alone.

Mr. Chairman and members of the Subcommittee, the National Park Service ePass pilot program has been a great success. It has worked to encourage the next generation to visit our parks and the agency should be applauded for their vision and leadership. As the results of their pilot demonstrates, current and future generations will use digital park passes to make their access easier. We're excited to partner with the National Park Service as they look for ways to use technology to make it easier for everyone to visit and engage with their public lands.

Thank you for the opportunity to be here today.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Fultz Nordstrom follows:]

Testimony of Angela Fultz Nordstrom
Vice President, Federal
NIC Inc.
www.egov.com

Before the Subcommittee on National Parks of the
Committee on Energy and Natural Resources
United States Senate
September 27, 2017

Oversight Hearing on Encouraging the Next Generation to Visit National Parks.

Good afternoon Chairman Daines, Ranking Member Hirono, and other members of the Subcommittee. Thank you for the opportunity to discuss how technology can help enhance the visitor experience and encourage the next generation to enjoy our federal recreation lands and waters.

My name is Angela Fultz Nordstrom, and I am the Vice President of Federal for NIC. NIC is one of the nation's leading providers of digital government services and secure payment processing solutions. We partner with government agencies to make it faster and easier for citizens and businesses to interact with government. We combine proven technology with innovative contracting methods to deliver digital solutions. These solutions allow agencies to dedicate more time and resources to their missions while minimizing government risk, cost, and oversight requirements. More information about our experience and contracting methods is available at www.egov.com.

I commend the Subcommittee for examining how government can encourage the next generation to visit the National Parks. As a native Montanan who grew up with the jewels of Glacier and Yellowstone National Park just a quick drive away, I appreciated these tremendous public lands that were available to me. And back then, every aspect of planning and visiting a National Park – from researching the best times of year to visit, to finding the fastest driving route, researching in-property activities and purchasing the entry pass – was all done offline, without the benefit of today's technology.

Today, when I look at the suburban Nashville lifestyle of my own children, who always seem to have a phone or tablet in their hand or within arm's reach, I wonder how I can ensure they have the same level of respect and appreciation for our National Parks. I am committed to raising children who will share my sense of awe, responsibility, and stewardship for these incredible places.

In 2015, with the support and urging of many members of this committee, the National Park Service set out to find ways to engage with the next generation of park visitors, by making it easier for them to enter a National Park.

In December of that same year, NIC was honored and excited to be one of three companies chosen for the National Park Service ePass pilot program. Just eight weeks later, Acadia National Park became the first National Park to accept an electronic park

pass using the YourPassNow solution. In March 2016, Colorado National Monument and Theodore Roosevelt National Park followed. Today, I am pleased to share with you the results of the YourPassNow solution, as part of the National Park Service model program.

As members of the committee may recall, the National Park Service ePass pilot came about at the urging of U.S. Senators Angus King and Susan Collins of Maine. Their vision was to make electronic entrance passes available at Acadia National Park. They recognized digital park passes would make it easier for people to visit and enjoy our most treasured places, as well as help the Park Service maximize sales and generate new revenues that could be reinvested in maintaining the properties.

Through the guidance of the National Park Service and the leadership in each facility, YourPassNow has expanded to include Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks and Castillo de San Marcos National Monument. Seeing a need to be filled, the U.S. Forest Service also joined the pilot and entered into an inter-agency agreement with the National Park Service. Today, the U.S. Forest Service uses YourPassNow to provide passes and permits for the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area and Wayne National Forest.

With every use of YourPassNow, the National Park Service and U.S. Forest Service are making it easier for people to visit public lands. A typical YourPassNow transaction takes about 90 seconds to complete, it generates a digital bar code that can be kept on a personal mobile device or printed out and placed in a vehicle. It can also be scanned by a park ranger to confirm its validity.

By all accounts, the National Park Service pilot has been a success and the agencies should be commended for their efforts. The objective of the pilot was to test the premise that people were open to purchasing digital park passes. The answer to this question is *absolutely, yes*. In the first nine months of 2017, the National Park Service and U.S. Forest Service combined have issued nearly 22,000 passes through YourPassNow across seven public lands. This is two and half times greater than the number sold in all of 2016. The same holds true for the first park, Acadia, which has experienced a 57% increase in electronic pass sales from 2016 to 2017.

We also know the National Park Service and U.S. Forest Service have made it easier for the next generation to visit National Parks and public lands. Anecdotally, we have heard from gate entry personnel that those using YourPassNow and presenting digital park passes are younger in age – and includes many Millennials.

Examples of the pilot's success to improve access don't stop there. When the National Park Service announced the price of the Lifetime Senior Pass was increasing, they saw a tremendous surge in purchase requests. Through their leadership, and in just two weeks, YourPassNow was enhanced to support the online sales of the America the Beautiful – Lifetime Senior Pass. In fact, during a 32-day period from July 27 through August 27, YourPassNow processed 635,000 Senior Passes, with 90,000 purchased in one day alone.

We received an email from a couple who purchased a Senior Pass using YourPassNow that really brought it home for me. Sara and Ray Twining, who own a dairy farm in Wellington, Ohio, shared the following with us: "Thank you so much for the opportunity to see some of the great places in America. We recently retired from milking cows for the past 50 years. Our dream has long been to have the freedom to see our country. Thanks for doing your part."

In addition, YourPassNow has also uncovered areas for the National Parks to generate extra revenue. Acadia has shared that the park is generating more revenue in the off season than they have in the past. They believe this increase in off-season revenue is due to visitors purchasing passes through YourPassNow in advance of their travel. We have also heard the park is generating additional revenue from visitors who purchased an electronic pass when they were unable to leave cash or checks when entering through unmanned entrance stations and trailheads.

At NIC, we firmly believe technology can enable and encourage the next generation to make meaningful, lifelong connections with our National Parks. We are proud to partner with the National Park Service and U.S. Forest Service to deliver YourPassNow. This is just one way NIC is using technology to help make outdoor and government operations more efficient and easier to use. In states ranging from Hawaii to Maine, Montana to Wisconsin, we build digital services that make the process of obtaining those camping, hunting, fishing, and park entry permits as easy as sending a text. In addition, these digital transactions reduce the administrative burden for agency staff allowing them to spend more time interacting with visitors and providing essential services that keep our public lands operational. Again, technology goes hand-in-hand with enhancing the experience of our national parks and public lands.

Mr. Chairman and members of the Subcommittee, the National Park Service ePass pilot program has been a great success, and the agency should be applauded for their vision and leadership. As the results of their pilot demonstrate, current and future generations will use digital park entry passes to make it easier to access public lands. We are excited to support the National Park Service in their next great idea as they look for ways to use technology to make it easier for everyone to engage with federal recreational lands and waterways.

Thank you for the opportunity to discuss this important pilot program. I am happy to answer any questions you may have.

Senator DAINES. Thank you for that Fort Benton wisdom today, too.

Ms. FULTZ NORDSTROM. Absolutely.

[Laughter.]

Senator DAINES. Mr. Rout.

**STATEMENT OF TIM ROUT, CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER,
ACCESSPARKS**

Mr. ROUT. Good afternoon, Chairman Daines, Ranking Member Hirono and members of the Subcommittee, thank you for inviting me to appear before you today.

My name is Tim Rout, CEO of AccessParks. I was asked to testify about attracting younger generations to our National Parks. I will do so based on my experience working and investing in technology startups for almost 20 years, providing broadband Internet coverage to millions of young people, sometimes in very remote locations, and lastly, as a lifetime visitor of the parks.

If I convince you of only one thing in these five minutes is that the next time you see a millennial in the national park, focused on the screen of their phone, you should not view it with disappointment. You will hopefully view their mere presence there and the connectivity they enjoy as a crucial first step in customer engagement and an opportunity to shape their future relationship with the national parks.

First, the problem of lack of broadband connectivity in the parks. Young people today expect to engage with the world through rich online media experiences and expect to be able to create and share their own content, in real time. They are hyperconnected to their networks of friends and family and if they can't share their own impressions as they travel and receive instant feedback, the experience might as well never have happened.

Augmented reality, as you can hear from some of the other witnesses, is the next big evolution in how we will all engage with the world. It is the next big thing.

While the father of the parks, John Muir, can immerse himself in the wilderness for months on end, today's visitors seek a different type of immersive experience. They seek not just scenery, but also information. Augmented reality can provide an information overlay to the physical, showing measurements superimposed on a giant Sequoia tree, reconstructed images of the Grand Canyon's evolution over the millennia and the location of trailheads shown on a landscape. Most of this requires broadband connectivity.

Today, every consumer-facing organization is obsessed with customer engagement, viewing it as essential to their long-term survival; however, most national parks make online engagement all but impossible due to lack of broadband connectivity in highly visited, frontcountry areas. This reduces the park's ability to engage with visitors before, during and after people visit further risking the future of park advocacy. Without the parks at the top of young voter's issues list, the situation absolutely risks the future existence of the parks in their current form.

There are solutions to the connectivity problem. It is possible to streamline the adoption of innovative business models and broad-

band connectivity and to enable media engagement among visitors. We can close the digital gap in the parks, fostering long-term relationships with its patrons. Private sector technologies have already shown us the way.

I'm a spiritual disciple of John Muir but also a pragmatic follower of the first park director, Steven Mather. Director Mather was what we in the tech world would describe as an innovator. He understood the power of engagement to bring future supporters to the parks. Without new visitors who were personally touched by the parks, he knew they would inevitably be eroded. He was not afraid of experimentation or occasional failures. Mather's experiments with attracting visitors included dubious projects such as building a zoo and even a racetrack in the parks.

However, despite some opposition at the time, his enduring successes were in building access infrastructure. Dozens of new roads into the parks such as the awe-inspiring Going-to-the-Sun Road in Glacier National Park, which today allow millions of visitors every year to experience the park. He hired artists to oversee road construction so they blended with the scenery. He also built over 1,600 miles of telephone and telegraph lines into the parks. Broadband access today should also be viewed as access infrastructure, although it does not require digging up the landscape or using taxpayer funds. Today, 100 years later, connectivity has barely progressed beyond Mather's time. Real-time road conditions are still only available by telephone in many parks.

Infrastructure exists today in every park to achieve broadband connectivity in the frontcountry. Solutions include a low footprint combination of pre-existing telecom towers and Wi-Fi technologies, having virtually no negative visual impact for visitors.

At Lake Mead National Recreation Area, my company's public-private partnership is providing broadband Wi-Fi to frontcountry areas within a 250-square mile park that previously had almost no connectivity. Visitors, concessioners and employees have responded with enthusiasm.

Once broadband exists in parks frontcountry, there are untold opportunities to improve the park experience in general. Thousands of smart entrepreneurs and park advocates will use technology proven in the private sector to incentivize use of green, public transportation, reduce congestion, drive visitation to less visited areas and less visited parks, provide multilingual guides, allow crowdfunding of infrastructure, reduce seasonality and deliver real-time park information.

In conclusion, the next time you see a millennial or anyone else for that matter, in a national park looking at their phone, be thankful we've succeeded in luring them there. Then ask yourself how are we ensuring that what they're viewing on that phone is offering a media-rich understanding of the park and how can we engage with them when they leave because advocacy by younger generations is the single most critical factor in national park conservation.

Thank you very much.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Rout follows:]

Tim Rout, Chief Executive Officer, AccessParks

**Statement for the Record
Senate Subcommittee on National Parks**

September 27, 2017

Chairman Daines, ranking member Hirono and members of the subcommittee, thank you for inviting me to appear before you today. I was asked to testify about attracting younger generations to our National Parks. I will do so based on my experience a.) working and investing in technology startups for 20 years, b.) providing broadband Internet coverage to millions of young people, usually in very remote locations, and c.) as a visitor of the parks for over 40 years. Young people today expect to engage with the world through rich online media experiences, and expect to be able to create and share their own content, in real time. Today, most parks make that all but impossible due to lack of broadband connectivity in highly visited frontcountry areas. This reduces the parks' ability to engage with visitors before, during and after people visit, further risking alienating the future of park advocacy. The solution is to streamline the adoption of innovative business models in broadband connectivity and media engagement to close that digital gap in the parks, fostering long term relationships with its patrons.

The Current State of Online Media

Social media has significantly changed the way we interact with others, with the world around us and the way we consume and create content. A few statistics:

- 86% of 18-29 year olds use social media
- 81% of millennials check Twitter at least once per day. Two-thirds of adults do as well.
- 9,000 photos are shared every second on Snapchat
- YouTube reaches more 18-34 year olds than any cable network in the US
- Katy Perry has 94 million Twitter followers. The National Park Service has 457,000
- Blogging on WordPress reaches 409 million people per month

Real-time communication among millennials can occur only in areas with broadband Internet connectivity. Where older generations lived and thought in terms of days or weeks, these young people think and act in real-time, over the Internet, on the order of seconds. They are hyperconnected to their friends and family, wherever they go, and unless an experience is shared with others it was not truly experienced. Traveling to a place with no Wi-Fi would be asking much of these citizens, as this essentially asks them to change how they interact with the world. The parks have an enormous opportunity to lure an increasing number of younger visitors to the outdoors, introducing them to rewarding experiences and eventually enabling them to build long term relationships with the parks.

Travel technology is trending toward educational media and augmented reality, dramatically raising the stakes in broadband internet requirements. Augmented reality is present in an increasing number of mobile apps, offering the parks an incredible opportunity for visitor engagement. One can imagine two layers in the world around us; the visible physical layer and the data layer. Users are increasingly able to view physical landscape through the screen of their mobile phones, witnessing superimposed information about what they are viewing. For example, this technology allows an individual the opportunity to learn the names of peaks and valleys, see measurements next to a Sequoia tree, view reconstructed images of buildings that existed in 1912, or see the location of a trailhead superimposed on a mountain. Above all, millennials crave an immersive experience, rich in information and visual content. Whereas John Muir was able to immerse himself in the wilderness for months at a time without interruption, younger generations choose a different immersive experience. Having limited time, they want to find, experience and share using all technological means available, adding content as they travel. This real-time content can then be shared with friends and families back home, or other nearby visitors. The parks have an opportunity to shape the conversation, and form long term relationships with millennials as never before. One can confidently assume Yosemite Falls offers a more fulfilling experience than Katy Perry tweets, but these young people must first be lured to the parks to understand that.

Digital media has the potential to influence a generation, and to spur funding for park infrastructure for decades in the future. Young taxpayers visiting the parks are our best source of marketing and advocacy. If a millennial sees live, high

definition video of Yellowstone Falls or a campsite in Death Valley it enriches their understanding of travel opportunities. Sharing of this new understanding with their network also influences others to form dynamic relationships with the outdoors. "Cool" is the future of the parks, although that individualized content is something only they can create. Media engagement is only possible with broadband infrastructure that does not currently exist in most parks.

The Problem

Urbanization of the US population increasingly results in young people cut off from a magnificent legacy that they don't realize exists. Job opportunities and attractive technology in urban areas will drive this trend for the foreseeable future, increasing isolation from the wilderness. Millennials spend an average of 9 hours per day on social media, and many don't hear about the parks from their friends on these networks. There has been little opportunity to engage with the national parks in the language they understand.

Having traveled the national parks extensively in an Airstream trailer, lack of broadband connectivity has many times prevented my family from staying in the park for more than a day or two. A growing number of young professionals, up to 30%, are Independent Workers. These are software programmers, "creatives" and even lawyers and doctors who work while traveling. Even the typical office worker has difficulty in today's economy being away from connectivity for a weekend, as employers increasingly expect workers to be available at all times. With improved technology, we have an opportunity to save these people from the cubicle; to introduce them to the outdoors, and then engage with them for a lifetime.

Today the parks are an information black hole; in technical terms of download and upload speeds, little information is allowed in, and even less allowed out. What media content does exist online is typically stored on a mobile device's hard drive, and then uploaded when outside the park. However, millennials expect to communicate in real-time. By the time they have left, many have moved on to the next experience and the media remains locked in the device forever.

Backcountry areas are visited by a tiny fraction of visitors, and will likely be disconnected for some time, as they should be. There are those who would also seek to keep the frontcountry areas of the parks sealed from the outside world.

These park advocates' motivation is certainly coming from a good place; many of us wish the only way to get to Yosemite Valley was still by horseback. In the first few years of the parks' existence organizations were formed to "preserve the primitive" and stop roads from being built in the parks. However, the first National Park Service Director, Stephen Mather, won the argument. Moving forward, he hired artists to oversee road construction ensuring roads would blend in with the scenery. By engaging in savvy marketing and building new access, Director Mather tripled visitation from 1 million to 3 million visitors per year. Few today would prefer that the beautiful scenery along the Going to the Sun Road in Glacier National Park was not available to millions of visitors every year. Broadband connectivity can be viewed as an analogy to Mather's roads, as it allows the same opportunity for impact, bringing a new generation of long term park supporters into the fold. Additionally, this does not require digging up the landscape, or the use of appropriated funds. There exists an opportunity to shape the boundaries and terms of online relationships now, similar to how Mather shaped the physical boundaries of the early parks.

The Solution

Director Mather said that the parks were the schoolroom of Americanism. However, park rangers who act as teachers cannot be everywhere, and especially not outside the parks. Technology can be a virtual park ranger for those who don't have the opportunity to meet one. As we embrace a new era in park interpretation, moving from scenery to information, technology can be used to leverage engagement and park stewardship. Continuing a process that began in the 1930s, an opportunity exists to realize a greater potential for the parks with the technology we have today. Leveraging location based services allows for the resolution of park logistical challenges by implementing efficient use of green public transportation and crowdfunding for infrastructure. Incorporating "Big Data" analytics to manage traffic flow can resolve overcrowding at peak times. Access to information about parks will encourage visitation to less crowded areas. Social media also allows us to see which visitors are experiencing which parks, allowing the parks to tailor engagement and information accordingly.

Millennials want immersive experiences, and they are open to engagement on any media platform. John Muir stayed for months in the wilderness, and had

experiences most of us can only dream about. Today we can understand with increasing depth the massive amount of information and media pertaining to the wilderness. Muir wrote 300 articles and 12 books, all of which are now available with one click, if one has Internet access. Technology will bring more young people, but its greatest benefit is that it will allow every visitor to experience the parks in their own way. Visitors will come away with a deeper understanding of what they have witnessed, more so than any previous generation. Far from diminishing nature, information can be an enriching overlay to the physical. Imagine millions of park evangelists online, talking about what they learned, many of them influencers to millions more.

Infrastructure exists today to achieve broadband connectivity in every park's frontcountry, with no new construction. Solutions include a low-footprint combination of pre-existing telecom towers, wireless microwave and Wi-Fi technologies, having virtually no negative visual impact for visitors. At Lake Mead National Recreation Area, our public-private partnership is providing broadband Wi-Fi to a 250 square mile area that previously had almost no connectivity. Visitors, concessioners and employees have responded with enthusiasm.

Once there is frontcountry connectivity, public-private partnerships can unleash innovation by thousands of smart, passionate entrepreneurs around the country. These entrepreneurs will build innovative solutions; alleviating congestion, providing augmented reality overlays to the physical world, building multilingual guides, driving traffic to less-visited parks, reducing seasonality by building electrical service in frontcountry campgrounds, and any number of other applications we can only speculate about. National Park Service culture should embrace the innovative mindset of Director Mather, as well as the tolerance of failure that innovation requires. Mather's experiments with attracting visitors included failed projects such as building a zoo and even a racetrack in the parks, but also allowed new successful infrastructure such as the Going to the Sun Road and 1,600 miles of telephone/telegraph lines. Today, 100 years later, connectivity has barely progressed beyond Mather's time; real-time road conditions are still only available by those telephone lines in many parks.

I am a spiritual disciple of Muir, but a pragmatic follower of Mather, who understood the power of innovation and engagement to bring future supporters

to the parks. Without new visitors who are touched by the parks they will inevitably be eroded, and parks are one of our most important contributors to a common identity as Americans. Foreign visitors are in awe of the parks as well, understanding that they are a symbol of our democracy. In the parks, we all reach common understanding of what is great in the world, regardless of politics or identity.

John Muir once said that the written word was "a weak instrument for the reality I wish to convey". One must wonder what he would say if he witnessed Instagram's ability to inspire millions with a photo at the touch of a button. Today the parks have new, powerful technology instruments with which to engage Americans, and the opportunity to shape the conversation with millions of future park advocates. All that is required is the will to enable progress and innovation.

Senator DAINES. Thank you, Mr. Rout.
Mr. Shafroth.

**STATEMENT OF WILL SHAFROTH, PRESIDENT & CEO,
NATIONAL PARK FOUNDATION**

Mr. SHAFROTH. Thank you, Chairman Daines, Ranking Member Hirono and members of the Subcommittee. Thank you for holding this important hearing and inviting me to participate.

I'm Will Shafroth, the President and CEO of the National Park Foundation. We are the Congressionally chartered, philanthropic partner of the National Park Service, chartered 50 years ago this December.

As America becomes younger and more diverse connecting the next generation of our national parks and developing in them an appreciation and love of these great places is vital to the park's future.

That's why leading up to last year's Centennial of the National Park Service and continuing through today, the National Park Foundation has been working closely with our partners at the Park Service to develop and execute the Find Your Park public education and engagement campaign. In the spring of 2015 we launched the Find Your Park/Encuentra Tu Parque campaign to engage Americans and encourage them to find their park at one of the 417 national park units located in every state and territory in the United States. The goal was to increase visitation to our parks with a special focus on millennials and diverse audiences. The campaign used earned and donated media, National Park Service with celebrity storytellers, members of Congress, social media influencers and social media channels to spread the word and engage all Americans, but especially millennials because that's how they communicate. The campaign was funded entirely by corporate partners.

By all accounts the Find Your Park campaign was and continues to be a success that's helped drive a record 331 million visits to national parks in 2016, up from 292 million in 2014 before the campaign started. And the Park Service and the Foundation national social media channel followers have increased by 1.8 million people since 2015. Most importantly, one in three millennials reported being familiar with the Find Your Park campaign. That's actually a big move from zero when we started.

Our work to engage the next generation continues with the current iteration of Find Your Park called Parks 101. Lena McDowall said something about this earlier. This effort is designed to spread out visitation that many of our crown jewel parks, many of which you all represent—Yellowstone, Yosemite, Acadia, Rocky Mountain, Glacier, Great Smoky—saw in 2016 and to highlight and promote some of the lesser known parks and stories throughout the National Park System.

As more than one superintendent told us, "Find Your Park, yes, but find somebody else's park. Mine's too crowded." And we heard that a lot. Highlighting lesser known parks that tell interesting stories or compelling places like Hamilton Grange in New York City, Monocacy Battlefield in Maryland and Crater Lake National Park in Oregon provides the opportunity for younger Americans to

find their unique connections to these places which are often close to home.

It's not enough to just promote our national parks and educate people about them, we must also ensure that we are investing in our parks to improve the visitor experience. The Centennial Campaign for America's National Parks, run by the Foundation, began in 2013 with a goal of \$250 million over five years. As of today, the Foundation has raised \$430 million toward a new goal of \$500 million. Working hand-in-hand with the National Park Service, this money is being spent to improve the visitor experience through the rehabilitation and repair of trails, restoration of historic buildings and memorials, protecting special places, connecting young Americans to parks and supporting youth and veteran corps to enhance our parks.

While our experience and fundraising shows that there's not significant philanthropic sport for projects like roads and bridges, donors have supported projects involving restoration of historic buildings and trails and the protection established from the special places. Recent projects include: restoration of parts of the Many Glacier Hotel in Glacier; rehabilitation and reconstruction of the Bierstadt Lake Trail at Rocky Mountain; restoring the Chimney Tops Trail in Great Smokies; supporting Youth Conservation Corps in Mount Rainier and Olympic National Parks; repairing the Middle Emerald Pools in Zion; and even developing, as Senator King knows, a campground at Schoodic Woods in Acadia National Park. We helped facilitate that project.

The Foundation's also dedicating funding to getting young people into parks, many for the first time by providing transportation grants through Every Kid in a Park. To date, we've raised and spent more than \$5.5 million in grants over the last three school years which has allowed more than 500,000 fourth graders to access our national parks and other public lands. These grants have gone to Glacier, Hawaii Volcanoes, Chaco Culture and Petroglyph, Cuyahoga Valley and many dozens of other national parks throughout the system. For many of us our love of parks began in the back of a station wagon, it did for me, during a family vacation on the way to Mesa Verde National Park. Programs to engage young people and their families, like Every Kid in a Park, spark a love of our parks today and in the future.

Our work engaging the next generation did not begin or end with the Centennial. Our work on all our projects and programs continues to do work to identify new opportunities and new partners. This means working even closer with partners, including concessionaires, friends' groups, service corps, volunteer organizations and corporations. It means exploring connectivity in parks to improve the visitor experience through technology for things like Wi-Fi accessibility and education and interpretation platforms. It means utilizing technology and the Park Service staff to bring parks to people, especially our youth. And it means providing more opportunities for volunteers, especially veterans and youth, to invest their time, passion and expertise across the system.

We understand and embrace the importance of engaging the next generation of visitors to experience our national parks. Our work and partnership with the Park Service and so many others has al-

ready yielded great dividends and we look forward to continuing its work with you all.

Thank you very much.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Shafroth follows:]

TESTIMONY OF
WILL SHAFROTH
PRESIDENT & CEO, NATIONAL PARK FOUNDATION
Before the Subcommittee on National Parks
U.S. Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources
September 27, 2017
On “Encouraging the Next Generation to Visit National Parks”

Chairman Daines, Ranking Member Hirono, and Members of the Subcommittee, thank you for holding this hearing on Encouraging the Next Generation to Visit National Parks and inviting me to testify. My name is Will Shafroth and I am the President & CEO of the National Park Foundation, the Congressionally-chartered philanthropic partner of the National Park Service.

Chartered by Congress in 1967, the National Park Foundation was founded on a legacy that began more than a century ago, when private citizens from all walks of life acted to establish and protect our national parks. Today, the National Park Foundation carries on that tradition as the only national charitable nonprofit whose sole mission is to directly support the National Park Service.

As you know, 2016 was the 100th anniversary of the National Park Service. The National Park Service and National Park Foundation worked together hand in hand to take advantage of this ‘once in a lifetime’ opportunity to bring Americans of all ages, races, genders, ethnicities, sexual orientations, and political affiliations together to celebrate the Centennial and look forward to the second century of our national parks.

Part of that effort is the Find Your Park / Encuentra Tu Parque public education and engagement campaign (FindYourPark.com / Encuentra Tu Parque.com), which was designed to inspire all Americans to connect with, enjoy, and support America’s national parks. We focused specifically on the millennial generation who have shown less interest in national parks than other generations.

In its first two and a half years, Find Your Park is showing success – both in connecting all Americans to our parks and in beginning to engage the next generation of park users and supporters. The steady increase in visitation to our parks the past 3 years – to a record 331 million in 2016 – is indication that our collective efforts are working.

NPF’s work with NPS over the last several years has also focused on capitalizing on philanthropic enthusiasm for our parks as part of our Centennial Campaign for America’s National Parks. Launched in February 2016 with an initial goal of \$350 million, the campaign has raised \$429 million to date towards a goal of \$500 million.

Find Your Park/Encuentra Tu Parque

In April 2015, NPF and NPS kicked off the Find Your Park/Encuentra Tu Parque public education and engagement campaign. Fully funded by corporate partners, the campaign utilized those partnerships, earned and donated media, NPS and celebrity storytellers, members of Congress, social media, and other technology to engage Americans with their parks and spread the knowledge that there are 417 parks located in every state and territory in the United States, from iconic parks such as Acadia, Glacier, Yellowstone, Rocky Mountain, Great Smoky Mountains, Cuyahoga Valley, Denali, and Mt. Rainier, to the smaller historic and cultural sites in our own communities. The goal of Find Your Park was to increase visitation to our national parks with a special focus on millennials and diverse audiences. As America becomes younger and more diverse, we must engage the next generation to visit, love, and support our parks for these special places to survive and thrive for another century.

The campaign has been a resounding success not only measured by the record visitation to our parks but by the 15 billion views of Find Your Park social media content, including 885,000 uses of the Find Your Park hashtag and 76,300 Find Your Park stories submitted by the public, including members of Congress. These personal stories showcase the inspiration for and importance of an individual finding their park and have helped spread the movement's message around the country and the world. NPS and NPF social media followers increased by 1.8 million people across both organizations' national accounts. These channels in and of themselves can help attract visitors – the best of them share stunning pictures as well as important information about visiting parks and upcoming events like meetups and tours.

Importantly, one in three millennials – our target audience – reported being familiar with the Find Your Park campaign and 83% said they are somewhat or very likely to visit a national park.

We also have corporate partners – including premier partners American Express, Budweiser, Subaru, REI Co-op, Humana, Disney; as well as national partners Coca-Cola and Coleman – that were willing to fund and participate in the campaign through various activations to engage and connect people around our parks. The campaign also worked with partners like the out-of-home advertising industry that donated billboard, bus stop, and other spaces for Find Your Park and Encuentra Tu Parque content.

Parks 101

The success of Find Your Park and the broader increase in visitation has been both a success and a challenge to the National Park Service. The increase in visitors has affected the most well-known parks – Yosemite, Yellowstone, Glacier, Grand Canyon, Rocky Mountain, and Acadia to name a few – and has led to traffic congestion and greater demand on already strained infrastructure. As more than one park superintendent has said: Find Your Park, but find someone else's park because mine is very overcrowded.

To spread out the increase in visitors, the Foundation has recently launched the next iteration of the Find Your Park campaign – Parks 101 – to coincide with the 101st birthday of the National Park Service. This series is designed to highlight some of the lesser-known parks in the system as well as stories and experiences. So far in 2017 we've enlisted *Hamilton: An American Musical* star Jordan Fisher to feature both Channel Islands National Park and Hamilton Grange National Memorial, which along with the hit Broadway show has helped inspire visitation to this memorial; Navy veteran and Paralympian Brad Snyder's exploration of Maryland's Monocacy National Battlefield earned coverage in *The Washington Post*; Olympian Dominique Dawes' visit to monuments around DC was featured on WTOP Radio; TV stars Rutina Wesley and Dawn Lyen-Gardner highlighted New Orleans Jazz National Historical Park and Jean Lafitte National Historical Park and Preserve; and country music star Dierks Bentley's love for incredible places like Crater Lake National Park was featured in *People* magazine.

By highlighting some of our less visited national parks, Parks 101 is designed to spread visitation throughout the system while also showcasing parks that are closer to population areas, and having the added benefit of inspiring younger and more diverse visitors to our national parks.

Centennial Campaign for America's National Parks

In addition to working to increase and diversify park visitation through Find Your Park, we've sought to capitalize on increased philanthropic enthusiasm for our parks by raising money to support key programs and projects throughout the system.

In February 2016 we launched the most ambitious fundraising campaign in our history – the Centennial Campaign for America's National Parks – with a goal of \$350 million. I'm proud to share that to date we've raised \$429 million for our parks towards a new goal of \$500 million. The campaign is scheduled to last through the end of 2018.

This money has been spent with an eye toward improving the visitor experience through the rehabilitation and repair of trails and facilities, protecting and restoring wildlife habitat, connecting 4th graders and their families to parks, and supporting the work of youth and veterans corps to enhance our parks.

Infrastructure

The Foundation has found that donors are enthusiastic about projects in National Parks that rehabilitate, repair, and build trails as well as restoring historic buildings and Memorials – like the Lincoln Memorial and Washington Monument.

A few projects include:

- \$150,000 to restore the helical staircase and replicate and install the original light fixtures at the historic Many Glacier Hotel; and
- nearly \$80,000 to support the 21st Century Conservation Corps working on reconstruction of the iconic and highly trafficked Hidden Lake Trail at Logan Pass in **Glacier National Park**
- \$174,050 for 60 young people to rehabilitate and reconstruct the Bierstadt Lake Trail in **Rocky Mountain National Park**
- \$64,000 to rehabilitate, stabilize, and preserve the important Palmer House; and
- \$160,000 in partnership with Friends of the Great Smokies, to rehabilitate the Chimney Tops Trail in **Great Smoky Mountains National Park**
- \$2,000,000 to support youth conservation corps at **Mount Rainier National Park** and **Olympic National Park** for the next ten years
- \$18.5 million for the rehabilitation and restoration of and expanded public space at **The Lincoln Memorial**
- \$12.35 million for the full restoration of **Arlington House, The Robert E. Lee Memorial**
- \$5.3 million to renovate and rehabilitate the **Marine Corps War Memorial (Iwo Jima)**
- \$3 million to renovate the elevator at the **Washington Monument**

Every Kid in a Park

Engaging the next generation to visit our parks is a long-term effort and benefits from reaching young people at an early age to spark lifelong connections. Many of today's park visitors have memories of riding in the back of a station wagon during a family trip to national parks. It's vital that we make efforts to forge the same connections with current and future generations today.

Transportation is one of the greatest barriers facing young people accessing our parks. That's why the Foundation has focused significant funding on transportation grants including in our support for the Every Kid in a Park (EKIP) program. In support of the EKIP program, NPF has provided \$5.5 million in grants to provide transportation for more than 500,000 4th graders from Title I and other underserved schools around the country to access national parks and other public lands. Importantly, based on surveys of our grantees, many of the children are visiting national parks and public lands for the first time.

We've also allocated resources to focus cities – Baltimore, Cleveland, Los Angeles, Miami, St. Louis, St. Paul, and Seattle – which allows parks to collaborate and leverage capacity with their surrounding communities to get more 4th graders into parks and onto public lands.

This program has proven very popular as evidenced by members of Congress participating in field trips at parks and the bipartisan legislation introduced in both the

Senate and House to codify the program – by Subcommittee members Senators Alexander and Heinrich here in the Senate.

For example, we've granted:

- \$390,000 to support **Cuyahoga Valley National Park's** work to connect all 4th graders in Cleveland Public Schools and parts of Akron Public Schools.
- \$60,000 to connect Alaska youth to their national parks and public lands including **Klondike Gold Rush National Historical Park, Gates of the Arctic National Park and Preserve, Glacier Bay National Park and Preserve, Tongass National Forest and Kobuk Valley National Park**, among others.
- \$64,380 to connect Hawaiian youth with **Hawaii Volcanoes National Park, Ala Kahakai National Historic Trail, Kaloko-Honokohau National Historical Park, and WWII Valor in the Pacific National Monument**.
- \$10,000 to **Keweenaw National Historical Park** to transport 700 fourth graders from 22 rural schools in Upper Michigan to the park's Calumet Unit in 2018 for its Copper TRACES program.
- \$10,840 to **Pictured Rocks National Lakeshore** to connect 1,100 fourth graders from three school districts in the Upper Peninsula to the park and surrounding public lands. Students will enjoy hands-on activities aligned to Michigan State Academic Standards.
- \$10,000 to **River Raisin National Battlefield Park** to connect 4,500 Wayne County fourth graders to the park for immersive living history stations exploring the War of 1812. The park will also work with Youth Connection of Detroit to offer summer kayaking experiences for underserved inner-city youth.
- \$10,000 to **Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore** to connect 1,000 Traverse Bay Area Intermediate School District fourth graders to the park for its Winter Snowshoe Experience program.
- \$9,000 to **Chaco Culture National Historical Park** which connected 100 Pueblo youth to the site for an overnight camping trip during the 2015-2016 school year.
- \$2,850 to **Petroglyph National Monument** to connect 60 Isleta Elementary School students to the park as well as to El Malpais National Monument and Chaco Culture National Historical Park.

This is the type of program that can engage the next generation of visitors and spark a lifelong love of our parks.

Standing Up New Parks & Protecting Inholdings

Along with providing funding to existing parks, we have helped stand up some of the new parks established in the last few years. The National Park Service has an important role to play in telling the story – good and bad – of America. In the past several years we've raised money to support:

- \$8 million for **Pullman National Monument**
- \$1 million for **Stonewall National Monument**

- \$1 million for **Belmont-Paul Women's Equality National Monument**

We've also worked to protect valuable inholdings. For example, in 2016 we worked with the Grand Teton National Park Foundation to raise \$23 million, matched with \$23 million from NPS's allocation from LWCF, to protect the 640-acre Antelope Flats parcel with Grand Teton National Park. This parcel was under threat of development, which would have ruined not only the pristineness of the park but also altered wildlife migration routes. That \$46 million raised for this project went directly to Wyoming state schools.

Centennial Legislation

Last year Congress, thanks to the work and leadership of several on this subcommittee including Senator Portman, Chairman Murkowski and Ranking Member Cantwell, passed the National Park Service Centennial Act.

There were several key provisions of this legislation that will help connect the next generation to our parks including increasing the amount of money that can be spent on the Volunteers in Parks program and giving preferential hiring to volunteers and veterans.

Additionally, the legislation dedicates funding to an endowment that NPF will manage, the very successful \$1:\$1 Centennial Challenge matching program, and for the first time, authorizes NPF to receive annual appropriations.

This money will be spent on key projects and programs throughout the National Park System that are designed to improve the visitor experience like trail rehabilitation and restoration, and to initiate and grow programs that connect people to parks.

Looking Ahead

Our work on engaging the next generation and inspiring all Americans to visit our parks did not begin with the 2016 National Park Service Centennial and did not end in the wake of this milestone. NPF's efforts continue on all of our existing projects and programs like Every Kid in a Park, raising and granting out philanthropic dollars for key projects and programs, and Find Your Park/Encuentra Tu Parque/Parks 101.

But given all that we've accomplished in our partnership with NPS and our commitment to ensuring the next generation not only visits but loves our parks, we're currently planning new projects and programs to ensure that happens.

This means working even closer with partners including Friends Groups, concessionaires, volunteer organizations, service corps, and others to accomplish our common goals to improve and enhance infrastructure. It also includes exploring connectivity and technology in parks to enhance the visitor experience through innovation, including reservation systems, fee collection, and education and interpretation platforms.

Despite our best efforts, not everyone will be able to visit parks. Fortunately, technology and the multitalented staff throughout the park system have the ability to bring the amazing stories of our national parks to all Americans and especially our youth.

We must provide more opportunities for volunteers including veterans to invest their time, passion, and expertise across the National Park System. Such opportunities spark connections to our parks and transform one-time volunteers into lifelong national park supporters while also tackling key deferred maintenance projects.

Conclusion

The National Park Foundation understands the importance of engaging with and ensuring that the next generation of visitors experience the wonder of our national parks. Our work in partnership with the National Park Service to achieve this goal has already begun and has yielded dividends. We look forward to continuing this work and remain committed to seeing it through.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Senator DAINES. Thank you for your testimony, Mr. Shafroth. My experience was also a station wagon. It looked a lot like the Griswold's.

Mr. SHAFROTH. Yes.

[Laughter.]

Senator DAINES. I am going to start with questioning from Senator Alexander.

Senator ALEXANDER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for your courtesy.

Thanks to all of you. This is very interesting to me, and I thank you for your suggestions.

Let me express a couple of concerns and let me ask you just to respond to them in the time that I have, Mr. Rout and Ms. McDowall, particularly. Two concerns.

First, I remember going through the Grand Canyon when the only form of communication was the telephone booth in the middle. I was Governor at the time. I spent two weeks. It was a nice experience, not to be weaned away from instant contact with the rest of the world.

I remember when I was fishing/camping in Canada when it didn't have an internet and the difference it is today when my staff can get a hold of me, you know, instantly with whatever the current atrocity of the day is in Washington, DC.

I remember being dropped off at the top of the Great Smoky Mountains as a 15-year-old walking through the snow knowing that I was on my own and nobody could find me. I was really—it was really an experience away from everybody else.

So, one set of concerns I have has to do with the purpose of having some places in America where you can retreat and not have the place completely interconnected. I know technology is a wonderful thing, but I am among those Senators who do not want to see cell phones on airplanes because I do not want to be sitting next to somebody flying for five hours while they tell me their innermost secrets over the phone.

Give me an idea about how you combine that or how you separate that? I mean, do you think of Boundary Waters Canoe Area as a place where you allow less things to happen and Voyagers right next to it as the place where there might be more connectivity?

And then let me go to what I think is an easier problem to solve and that is the visual part. I have a hang-up about having spent a century in America creating great vistas in the West and then we came along and littered it with these giant wind turbines as if it were some environmental advantage. Let's put them to the side. We also went to Yellowstone and put a cell tower up right next to the geyser. And I worked with the Congressman from Chattanooga to stop a 150-foot cell tower on Missionary Ridge. The next thing I knew they were adding a 180-foot cell tower right at the entrance of the Great Smoky Mountains National Park.

A big part of what is wonderful about our parks and our great American outdoors is the visual experience. So what can we do to avoid massively intruding on this infrastructure in a way that destroys the beauty of our national parks? I know we have had to build roads. I know we have had to put in telephone lines, but

what can we do about those two things: the individual experience being destroyed because of suddenly everybody is connected, and then the visual experience of viewscapes and landscapes?

Mr. Rout, let me start with you.

Mr. ROUT. Certainly. Thank you for the questions, Senator. And you're right to ask those questions. I think they're on a lot of people's minds.

I can only express my opinions given my background in technology and my background in the parks. I share your love of the backcountry. I spend most of my time in the backcountry and so does my family. I also wish you could only access Yosemite Valley by horseback. But 98 percent of the folks who visit the parks, as my understanding, is they don't go to the backcountry. They're mainly in the frontcountry.

So I should be clear about what we do or what my company does. We focus exclusively on frontcountry areas where they do have roads, restrooms. They have a deli that will make you a turkey sandwich. There are all sorts of modern comforts of home in these areas already. So that would be the first point that I would make. And we can make this infrastructure blend with the surroundings, as I referred to Director Mathers' efforts with the roads. Going-to-the-Sun Road was overseen, the construction was overseen, by artists. So we can do that.

Senator ALEXANDER. Well, give me an example of what you could do about cell towers because I had a Congressman working with me.

Mr. ROUT. Yup.

Senator ALEXANDER. We did not do a very good job of doing anything about a big, ugly cell tower at the entrance to the Great Smoky Mountains National Park where a million people come through every day. What are you doing about that?

Mr. ROUT. Well, first of all, I believe providing broadband to the frontcountry areas does not require building new cell towers. Right off the bat. My personal belief is that cell towers, when they are built, should be built away from frontcountry areas, out of sight, if they are going to be built at all.

But what I do is more Wi-Fi which can be considered more of a laser focus in the frontcountry areas. We don't build a huge tower and light up an entire park like a light bulb. We're much more focused. We hide Wi-Fi radios where nobody can see them and we provide that broadband only where people sleep, for the most part, or where they congregate in great numbers. So, it can be hidden.

And if, you know, people always have the option of turning their phones off, as I do many times. And I hope, I would hope, that more people do, if that's what their desire is, but I think that you have to follow the customer.

And these days, if you're looking for visitor engagement with millions of new visitors to the parks, the younger millennials, you have to bring them to the parks and communicate to them in the language that they understand.

Senator ALEXANDER. Yes. My time is up.

Mr. ROUT. Yup.

Senator ALEXANDER. I appreciate your response, and I thank the Chairman for his courtesy.

Mr. ROUT. Yup.

Senator ALEXANDER. Ms. McDowall, maybe you can give me a written response to that at some point.

Ms. MCDOWALL. Yes.

Senator ALEXANDER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Senator DAINES. Thank you, Senator Alexander.

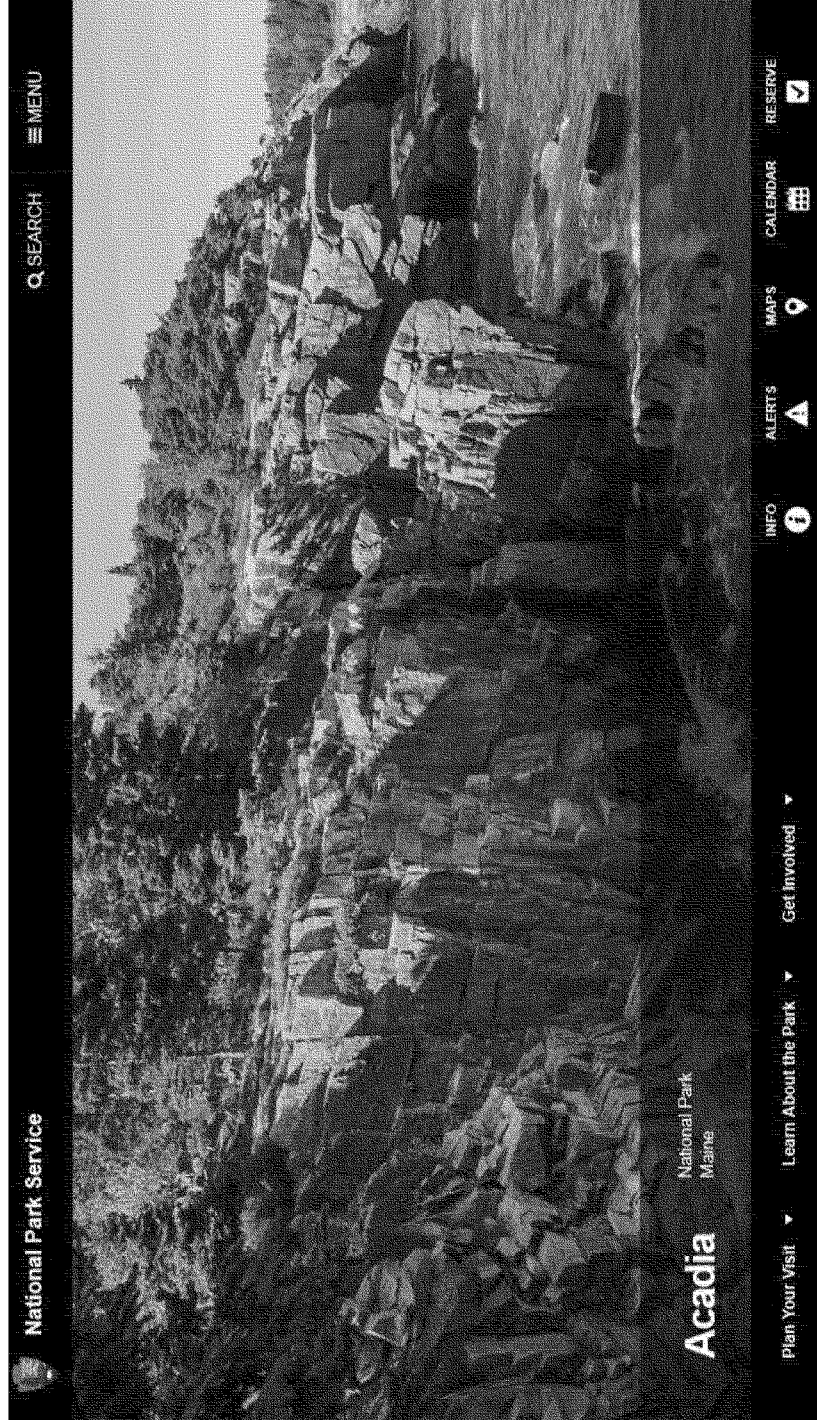
Ranking Member Hirono.

Senator HIRONO. I would like to yield to Senator King.

Senator KING. Thank you. Thank you for the courtesy, Senator.

First, Ms. McDowall, I want to convey through you, my compliments and thanks to the thousands of National Park Service personnel there.

[Photo of Acadia National Park website follows:]



Senator KING. They are the face of the parks, and they are wonderful. Everywhere I have been in parks all over the country, in the West, in the East, it is the people and their passion, as well as the grandeur of the site, that engages people. I saw my kids just light up when we were down at Kitty Hawk and out West at Bryce and Grand Canyon. So, please convey that. We cannot lose sight of how important those people are.

I just want to make a point of how excited I am about the pass program. I can tell you exactly how long it takes, some of you may have noticed I was typing away at the beginning of the hearing. It takes almost exactly the length of a Steve Daines speech to download a park pass.

[Laughter.]

Because that is what I did. I downloaded a park pass while the Chairman was making his introduction, and it is a pass to Acadia. I guess I am obligated to go up there this weekend because I paid for it.

[Laughter.]

But I do have one minor, technical nitpick. When you finish the process, you get the bar code and the pass. You ought to have a button that says add to Apple Wallet or add to wallet so you just touch it and it goes because then otherwise you have to put it in your photos and remember where it is. That's just one little extra technical step that, I think, would make it handier, again, using the model of the airplane passes.

I think Senator Lamar Alexander raises a really serious question about how we make it accessible and engaging, this experience, while at the same time not harming or diminishing the experience. The same thing goes with our very popular national parks, where there are so many people that that, in itself, diminishes the experience.

We have to think about how to promote parks in off times of the year, parts of the park that may be less well known so everybody at Acadia doesn't go to the top of Cadillac Mountain on the same day. For example, at the Grand Canyon, everybody doesn't go to the South Rim. Perhaps we can find ways to move people to the North Rim.

I commend all of you for the good thinking that you are doing and hope that we can continue to—we have a business in Maine and over every door it says, think of yourself as the customer. I have always thought that is an awfully good way to think about these things. What are the people who are coming to experience this looking for? How do we give them connectivity when and where they need it without having the phone out on the trail looking at Half Dome? As a camera, yes. As a conversation tool, maybe not.

But I certainly appreciate what you are doing and hope that the Park Service will continue.

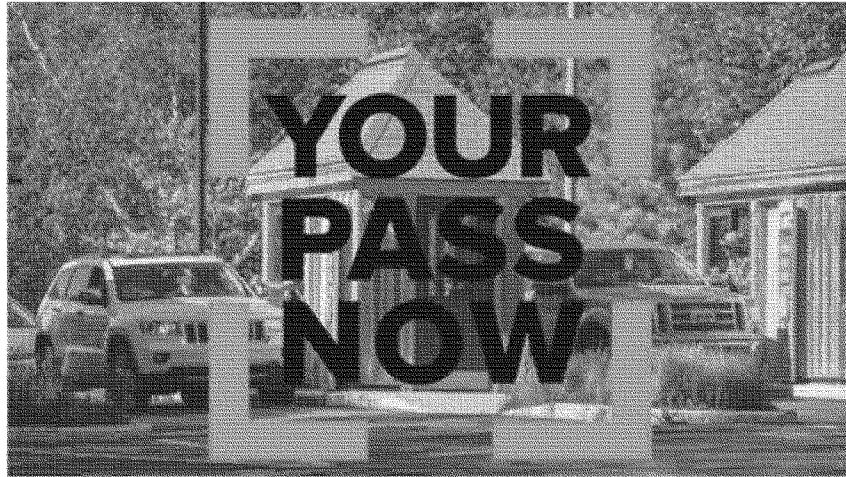
Do you have plans to expand what is now a pilot program with the mobile passes?

Ms. MCDOWALL. We do have plans to expand. We're looking at some of our larger parks next that have the more sophisticated point of sale systems and have good connectivity at the entrance stations. And then we'll be moving to expand beyond that during

the course of the next year as we upgrade point of sale systems in other parks.

Senator KING. One of the reasons I was so pushy about this with Secretary Jewell was I think we are leaving money on the table in at least some national parks from people that are willing and want to buy passes but it is awkward where you get them, how you get them, whether you really need them.

[Photo of online YourPassNow follows:]



Buy and print your pass online ›

Avoid the lines and buy your weekly or annual pass online before you visit!

Senator KING. This is a way that people who are staying in a hotel nearby the park can say, "How do I get a pass? Oh, it's right here." So I believe it also can be a significant revenue producer for the parks.

Ms. MCDOWALL. Yes, I think the Park Service would agree with that. There are places where there may not be an entrance station. We, maybe, have had an iron ranger in the past where someone was supposed to put something in a box. It's much easier for them to get a pass ahead of time, particularly since a lot of visitors are now planning their trips and wanting to make a lot of their arrangements before they arrive. So we are finding that to be useful.

Senator KING. Well, thank you for all your work.

I want to also thank the Foundation, because you all do just incredible work and, as you say, without taxpayer money. It is wonderful the promotion that you do. So my compliments and let me put it in my wallet and then we've got it made.

[Laughter.]

Thank you all very much.

Senator DAINES. Thank you, Senator King.

It is only fitting we start with our two Governors here with the questioning. I know they share respective passions for our national parks.

Thank you, Senator King.

I must say, too, as I heard Senator Alexander talk about the mixed emotions he has about improving connectivity in the parks, I share that. As much as I love technology, you know, I was in the cloud computing business for 12 years, I am a backcountry guy at heart. And one thing I enjoy sometimes when taking my children to our national park is the fact their phones don't work.

[Laughter.]

But I also see the incredible potential and the value of technology as we go forward.

I have seen how technology can transform lives and transform economies, transform experiences, so I think we need to embrace it and carefully and thoughtfully think about where we go next and how it can attract younger visitors. I recognize sometimes we could be accused of being Luddites if we don't think of where this next generation is at and how we engage them and bring them into our parks and how important that is. How we can diversify the populations of our national parks by embracing technology.

Emergency communication is very important, so we see what goes on in our parks.

Visitor passes and even dealing with deferred maintenance. The fact that we are doing some highway construction, visitors know that immediately and can reroute in real time. That makes a lot of sense.

And we want to protect the unique characteristic, the pristine character of our national parks. How do we do that without taking away what we all value about our parks?

But I think at the end of the day without access to reliable, broadband services where it makes sense, many of the programs, the services that we talk about today will be very difficult to implement.

Let me start with a question probably for Mr. Rout. What do you think are some solutions to overcoming the infrastructure barriers that we have today to expand fixed broadband and wireless networks into the Park Service, where it makes sense?

Mr. ROUT. Thank you for the question, Senator.

So, in terms of infrastructure, for what we do, we usually don't require any new infrastructure in any of the parks. In our mind, the existing infrastructure is perfectly sufficient for bringing broadband Wi-Fi to the frontcountry areas, the most visited areas. That's not to say that we don't use a cell tower if it's available, as a relay station, but the vast majority of the time we do not need new construction.

It seems to me that in some cases where towers have had to go up, not necessarily for our business, but for others, perhaps, the reason they exist in the frontcountry areas, where everybody can see them, as was Senator Alexander's point, at Old Faithful, is ironically because you're not allowed to install those towers on wilderness area. You're only allowed to install them in previously developed areas. They could easily have hidden the tower up on a hill somewhere, you know, hidden by trees, or not completely hidden, but where nobody could see them.

So, I think that's the ironic part about constructing new towers. But as I said, that's not really our business.

But in terms of bringing infrastructure to all the parks, there are some that will be profitable and there will be some that will be unprofitable for an internet service provider. I think the important thing is to view everything on a regional basis and to allow a provider to have, not only the most profitable, but also a responsibility to cover the least profitable, most remote areas of a park or the most remote parks in that region. If folks are allowed to cherry-pick the best ones, nobody will ever choose to go to the more remote ones.

That has been my experience, was my experience, in our last venture with the military and that's how the military did it, was a strategic regional approach that ensured that everybody was covered, no matter where they were.

Senator DAINES. Thank you.

I want to shift gears and talk about how we build better diversity in terms of visitor population to our parks.

Ms. McDowall, the Park Service had record visitation, congratulations, during its Centennial in 2016. We love our national parks, and you could see it.

I go to Yellowstone Park a lot because it is very close by to my home town and where, oftentimes, it is a take-off point for backcountry trips.

More and more people are visiting the parks, but a study by the 2015 Outdoor Foundation found that 75 percent of Americans who participate in outdoor activities are Caucasian. What is the Park Service doing to bring in a more diverse group of individuals?

Ms. MCDOWALL. Thank you for that question. There are quite a few things that the Park Service is doing.

One, you saw a lot of those efforts during our Centennial effort, and I'm sure that the Park Foundation would be able to speak to some of this as well. A lot of the marketing efforts and social media

outreach and events that the Park Service did during our Centennial were geared toward different populations that had not been traditional park visitors in the past. The Park Service feels like we got a lot of exposure with those communities and we are hoping that it does translate into more park visits and into, you know, future enthusiasts for parks, from groups that have not traditionally been big park visitors. So that's on the marketing side of the house.

I think on getting actual visitors into parks and having those deeper experiences that continue over a lifetime, a lot of the youth programs that we have been engaged in are efforts that, I think, are going to bear fruit in the future. If you look at some of the demographics of the Park Service compared to some of the groups that we work with, like the Student Conservation Association, for example. I think the Park Service, as you mentioned, is, you know, 70, 80 percent Caucasian when you look at our employees. But the Student Conservation Association, when you look at their participants and some of the Park Service youth programs, they have a much higher percentage of diverse participants than we would see, necessarily, in our own employee base. Those programs are great feeders for the Park Service in getting employees for the future.

I, myself, came out of a Park Service internship program 15 years ago. And I think those are opportunities, not only to connect with folks who might have had experiences growing up in parks, which I did, but also individuals who that might be their absolute first exposure to parks. And a lot of people get hooked. We have programs like that all over the country in parks everywhere. We've got national agreements. We have individual relationships that parks have with organizations and those are, that's probably one of the biggest areas where the Park Service focuses.

The other thing that we've been doing is making sure that we are telling stories that reflect a wide variety of experiences to cover the entire American experience as a way to attract more individuals to parks, that they see their story reflected into the places that we're protecting and the stories that we're telling.

So, I think there are a lot of things that are happening that we are very hopeful are going to be successful.

Senator DAINES. Thank you, Ms. McDowall.

Time flies when you are talking about National Parks.

Ranking Member Hirono.

Senator HIRONO. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Ms. McDowall's testimony indicated that only seven percent of the National Park Service workforce is under 29 years of age while 75 percent are over the age of 40—nothing wrong with that. But it just goes to show that we need to have, develop, a cadre of young people who will want to go into service. So this leads me to my question for Mr. Leong.

Kupu has been very successful in engaging youth and achieving the dual goals of stronger communities and stronger national parks, and you noted in your testimony that many of your participants go on to do jobs or to work in those fields.

Can you tell a story about a person who, after being with the Corps, changed his or her life or career goals? And what is it about your program that engenders that kind of change?

Mr. LEONG. Thank you for the question, Senator Hirono.

That's a great question. I think that what today's discussion has been circling around is engaging people in the outdoors. And I think there's a beautiful duality here in that we're meeting Secretary Zinke's goals to make the parks more user friendly through engaging infrastructure and technological experiences, but at the same time it's about getting young adults out there as well too. And there's something that's beautiful to have the wilderness in our souls and we can get out and connected and also giving back and making a difference.

I think that, to answer your question, Senator, it's that opportunity to get out there and to realize that they have the potential to give back and make a difference that really helps to open up eyes.

We've had young adults on Hawaii Island that just barely graduated. One young man, in particular, that comes to mind, just finished up in Haleakala and was not sure where he wanted to go. He became part of our program and he got a chance to work in a variety of different locations across the island, including in the national parks. What was really exciting about that is he was a hunter and a fisherman all of his life but didn't think that he could qualify to go off to college and he was going to work at the gas station afterwards. I think what was really neat is that being out there he was able to show some of his crewmates, one of them who was heading off to Stanford, about the natural resources, how the trails work, how to look for invasive pigs, what things, what signs in the forest to look for, for healthy forests. It was just really exciting that that empowered him. It was an equalizer for him. It was exciting to see that this young man, not only did he finish up our program, but then because of this, it encouraged him to go off to community college and now he's employed at the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. So it's really exciting. And the person that went off to Stanford is working at the Department of Land and Natural Resources. It's really neat because, I think, it's an empowerment opportunity as these young adults are getting out there.

As Ms. McDowall said, it gives them that opportunity to give back, to get a chance to get outside, but also realize their potential as well, too.

Senator HIRONO. How do you keep track of where they go, what they do, after they leave your Corps experience?

Mr. LEONG. It's basically through surveys, and we try to keep in touch. And we use technology for that. We also use technology to keep people engaged on social media. So, not that we get 100 percent response rates, but we do try our best through email, social media and other areas to get surveys.

It's exciting we're seeing that. We do a five-year survey once they finish our program, and what we've found is that there's high levels of engagement even five years afterwards. Eighty to 90 percent of them are still engaged in a related field or education area. They're engaged in service and they care about these issues and they become lifelong advocates for the outdoors.

Senator HIRONO. Which leads me to a question for Ms. McDowall.

Does the Park Service track the youth once they participate in a youth program to see if they do go on to related work arenas?

Ms. MCDOWALL. Some of the individual programs do track. We don't have a method to track all interns and all participants in youth programs across the service. Some of the smaller centralized programs that have fewer participants, it's easier for us to follow up with those individuals to see where they end up. But unfortunately, no, we don't have something that covers all participants across all of our programs.

Senator HIRONO. Maybe that is something that can be encouraged, just as Kupu follows up.

I know that one of the goals is to have a more diverse group of people going to the national parks, so I know you are doing outreach efforts along those lines. How do you keep track of whether these, your outreach efforts, are succeeding? Do you have a way to determine who comes to the parks by demographics?

Ms. MCDOWALL. We are still working on the best way to do that.

The last comprehensive demographic survey the Park Service did was in 2008–2009, so the data we do have is fairly old. The Park Service is finalizing plans for a pilot that would allow us to start tracking that information on a more regular basis.

We would agree that having more information about who our visitors are would be helpful for management, for programming, for a wide variety of things. We just don't have it in the way that we would want it yet.

Senator HIRONO. Is there a timeframe for when you will be able to obtain that kind of information to inform your decisions?

Ms. MCDOWALL. So, I don't have the timeline for when that new pilot will start. I do know that we are doing another comprehensive study in 2018, so we will be updating the data from 2008 but it will be based on the older survey model.

Senator HIRONO. I commend you for that.

I also want to add, my time is up, but I wanted to thank the Foundation for all that you all do because I have met with Foundation people in Hawaii and they are a very committed group of people. So, as we say in Hawaii, Mahalo Nui Loa.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Senator DAINES. Thank you, Ranking Member Hirono.

Senator Heinrich.

Senator HEINRICH. I want to start by thanking the Chair and the Ranking Member for having this hearing, because I think it has been a really thoughtful discussion about a number of the things that we face to keep our parks as relevant for all Americans, as they should be. I thought the conversation around technology, in particular, is something we need to be grappling with now.

I got a chance to spend some time with my boys in Grand Teton and Yellowstone National Parks this summer for a few days. My boys took this picture of a mother grizzly bear and cubs. They were not as dangerously close, Senator Daines, as they look in the photo.

[Laughter.]

It was actually through my spotting scope, but I think that is an example of an appropriate use. Had they been playing Clash of Clans and ignoring the grizzly bear, I think, that is the kind of technology use that we all worry about in those situations.

I have been very impressed with the conversation with our colleagues in getting at how do we really get at that balance.

I think the issues that we are facing with workforce and making parks relevant to the entirety of our population, the things that Ms. McDowall has said, that Mr. Leong has said, I think, are really important in informing us of where we should be making investments right now.

I was actually an AmeriCorps member with the Fish and Wildlife Service back in the 1990s. And one of the things I am excited about, and it is very consistent with what I heard from you, Mr. Leong, is how more recently I have seen these AmeriCorps service groups where we have Pueblo youth doing restoration in a place like Bandelier National Monument and making connections to their own culture that were never, never, made before or getting to visit Chaco Culture National Historical Park for the very first time in their lives.

That I see as an enormous opportunity to diversify our workforce going forward because that is the feeder for turning the switch to say, you could have an entire career in natural resource management and to see whether it is a native Hawaiian or a native American realize they have a whole skill set that they didn't realize was incredibly valuable, is a great opportunity.

I think we need to recognize sometimes these AmeriCorps programs and other service corps programs become a target in Washington, and they leverage so much value to our parks. We need to preserve that.

I want to ask Mr. Shafroth, because the National Park Foundation has done such a great job of leveraging millions of dollars of private funding to do a number of different things, I wanted to ask you about Every Kid in a Park program because that has become, really, a hallmark experience for American youth in their fourth-grade year. I was really proud to join Senator Alexander, who was just with us, to introduce the Every Kid Outdoors Act to try and make sure that that program continues.

Given that the Park Foundation's transportation grants for Every Kid in the Park have generally brought students to parks and public lands within driving distance of their home, do you see a role for that program in increasing visitation to some of our lesser known units?

Mr. SHAFROTH. Thank you, Senator Heinrich. That's a good question.

Yes, I do. In fact, it's our attempt to, kind of, marry some of these different programs. We talked about the Parks 101 program which is, in fact, both to educate people about and get them to go to these lesser known parks to spread out the visitation, number one. But also, equally importantly, to have people appreciate the amazing stories that these smaller and lesser known parks have.

And so, yes. In fact, in many cases. For example, in Utah we recently received a \$1 million grant from the Echols Foundation to work to get Salt Lake City, mostly Title I school kids, out to the diversity of places within a three-hour drive of Salt Lake City.

So it could be an all-day effort or it could be a weekend kind of thing to focus mostly on elementary age kids, but also junior high and high school kids, depending upon where they are. But recognizing that every place that we want to go isn't necessarily within a short drive.

Senator HEINRICH. Right.

Mr. SHAFROTH. And so, we've got to diversify those offerings.

Senator HEINRICH. Related to that, Ms. McDowall, I understand that while Every Kid in a Park has been extended for 2017–2018, the Department of the Interior intends to phase it out the following school year. Is that accurate, or do you have plans for Every Kid in a Park for the 2018 and 2019 school years?

Ms. MCDOWALL. So the Department has not made a decision on whether to continue the Every Kid in a Park program. It is undertaking a larger evaluation model, not a formal review but a look at all of the various youth programs that we have going on in the Department and evaluating them against the various funding priorities, things like deferred maintenance and some of the IT infrastructure issues we talked about. All of these things can help with getting new audiences in the parks and getting youth into parks. And it's a matter of deciding which ones make the most sense, given the priority.

Senator HEINRICH. Well, I would just deeply encourage you to continue that program, because these fourth-graders are the future of our parks.

Senator DAINES. Thank you, Senator Heinrich. I commend you on practicing safe selfies with your boys.

[Laughter.]

That is something we see when we enter our national parks in Yellowstone because those bison can sometimes look rather tame. And it turns out, they are not always when you get too close to them.

Ms. Nordstrom, I want to chat with you for a moment about the difficulties that you have encountered, if any, when implementing the online park pass system. Anytime you do a pilot program there are great learnings, having been in the software business for 12 years, you decode the break/fix cycle here to continue to make improvements in the next generation. Maybe you could talk a little bit about the challenges you encounter, connectivity, where do you see the program going in the future, and perhaps, how it can be used to address traffic challenges?

Ms. FULTZ NORDSTROM. Thank you, Senator Daines.

So, yes, absolutely. Anytime I think a government engages in a new program, and through our 25 years of working with government agencies, we find that we look for where we can take advantage of a quick success and then continue to build on those challenges which we like to call "enhancements."

And I think that that's what we found with the YourPassNow program is that in addressing things like with Acadia, for example, when that solution first deployed we had the opportunity that the park rangers could scan the device, or scan the pass with their device, to ensure its validity. One of the things that we noted is that the actual scanning devices that they were using sometimes didn't work as well as they needed them to. They needed to be more fluid.

So, NIC through our private—public-private partnership and the way that we believe that digital government services work best, is we continue to enhance those services to meet the needs. And that's what we've seen as we've deployed across all of the different

pilot locations is that each park has a unique need and each of those can be addressed.

I think the opportunity becomes, as the expansion continues, the opportunity becomes how do we use that data to also enhance the experience of the parks themselves to manage those visitors?

We're collecting great data on behalf of the National Park Service. For example, when you purchase your pass you choose a time period that you're going to be there. That gives the park rangers and the park managers an opportunity to think about and look and use that data to their advantage for entry opportunities.

I think there's more steps to come. We're just at the very beginning, but we're excited about what the future could hold.

Senator DAINES. Thank you.

I think trying to find ways to accelerate the entrance process would be greatly appreciated. I go in and out of Yellowstone a lot. You have a fast pass line and maybe some folks like to talk to the ranger and get the maps and have the conversation. Others want to get in there as quickly as possible. Maybe having that choice would be a great enhancement.

I wanted to just come back to this. I think we have had a thoughtful discussion today about how do we maintain the—why do we go to the national parks in the first place—the outdoor experience, the solitude, seeing wildlife and amazing vistas. At the same time, technology is an incredible asset, but perhaps sometimes a liability and maybe, Mr. Shafroth, just think about our values there. How do we, when you think about in the Foundation, you know, there are tradeoffs here as we look at it and just maybe expand, your expanded views would be appreciated.

Mr. SHAFROTH. In terms of the values of our—the technology versus the solitude? It was interesting, I was listening to Senator Alexander and I actually go to Voyagers National Park, each of the last seven years, and so I know what he is talking about. And we actually have to paddle six miles to find one bar, but we know if we are willing to work for 45 minutes—

Senator DAINES. You mean a bar on your cell phone?

Mr. SHAFROTH. A bar on my cell phone.

Senator DAINES. Okay, I was—

Mr. SHAFROTH. I'm sorry.

[Laughter.]

Senator DAINES. Yes. In Montana, you have to paddle that far, not only to find a bar, but I get it. No, it's a technology discussion. There we go. Yes.

Mr. SHAFROTH. We portage our bar with us.

Senator DAINES. Yes, I got it. Right.

Mr. SHAFROTH. But we have one bar on the cell phone. It's about a 45-minute paddle to get to that.

Senator DAINES. Yes.

Mr. SHAFROTH. We have to work for it, and I appreciate what he's saying because we don't want to have overly accessible, too much access.

And I think Mr. Rout agrees. He and I have had a chance to talk about this is that, but around the visitor's centers, around the parking lots and even having some ways to have a relay station on the trails so you can get an update on options when you're out

there. That does not really interfere with your experience and frankly, more importantly, other people's experience of cell phone chatter or people on their phones the whole time.

So I think that there's a balance here that we have to find and I think, you know, our, the non-profit community working with the Park Service and private or entities could find that balance.

Senator DAINES. Thank you.

Ms. Fuller, could you tell me more about how we could leverage technology to tackle some of the services challenges?

Ms. FULLER. That's a great question, Senator.

So when you're asking about services are you specifically talking about the services that we provide people when they come into the parks?

Senator DAINES. Yes.

Ms. FULLER. Okay.

So we do a lot of things with our various schemes that we create, but our main focus is telling the stories about locations in places where people wouldn't necessarily see them. And what we're really excited about is that we've attracted a huge variety of people. As I mentioned in my testimony, people young and old, people from urban areas and rural areas. I really think finding ways to partner across government lines, private lines, public lines and looking at ways that all of us can work together in order to find solutions to bring more community members into these parks is so important because each of us has an experience that's unique, but we don't have one solution.

And we've had a lot of success working with various cities across the country recently. We've worked with cities in North Carolina, Ohio, California and are looking at Pennsylvania now to basically help funnel people into the cities.

There's been a couple of different city events where the cities have closed down several miles of the downtown in order to encourage people to come and explore different neighborhoods. We've invited our players to come and participate in that, highlighting the history and the interesting monuments in that area.

We've seen pretty extreme success with that. And it gets us really excited because all of a sudden there are people from all different walks of life coming together to explore a location. I think that, specifically, would be ideal in the National Park Service.

Senator DAINES. Alright, thank you.

Ranking Member Hirono.

Senator HIRONO. Thank you.

Ms. McDowall, over the past five years the Park System has lost 11 percent of its staff while at the same time struggling to accommodate a 19 percent increase in visitation on average across the system. As Mr. Shafroth mentions in his testimony, some parks are overwhelmed with interest in visitation. We also know that the President's Fiscal Year 2018 budget proposes a 13 percent cut to the Park Service's overall budget and an 11 percent cut to the visitor services line. How has the loss in park staff, coupled with such budgetary constraints, impacted the Park Service's ability to provide high quality programs and initiatives to engage the next generation of visitors?

Ms. MCDOWALL. So what the Park Service is doing to address issues like not having enough frontline rangers is looking for other places within our organization that we can find savings to apply that, those dollars, to those types of positions.

For example, finding efficiencies in some of our back office functions, you know, can we spend less on human resources and contracting and some of our back-facing functions in order to apply those funds to more forward, visitor-facing functions of the Park Service? And we do feel we have opportunities there.

Senator HIRONO. I think you mentioned in your earlier testimony that you are reviewing all of the programs that you have regarding youth and that you may have to make some decisions.

What would be the factors that you would take into consideration as to which programs are important enough to constitute or continue because you will probably have to make those decisions. I don't know that you are going to be able to find enough savings in your back office operations. So what are the factors that you would apply in making those decisions?

Ms. MCDOWALL. I think you look at things like the number of youth you impact with a particular program. You know, what is the bang for the buck on a particular program, for example. We might focus there and, when you're making choices, you know, the same kinds of decisions we make when we're looking at whether to put money into a particular facility over another. Is it a facility that meets a wide variety of visitor needs? Is it a facility that with perhaps less money you can make a big difference? Those are the types of things that we look at.

Senator HIRONO. I would also be concerned about the Park Service's prioritization of supporting smaller project partnerships, for example, Kupu, in Hawaii and other similar kinds of programs in smaller, rural areas or what have you because I would hate to have those programs be sacrificed in favor of larger programs.

Ms. MCDOWALL. Right, and that is a very good point.

When we make those decisions we're often not making them across the entire Park Service because you're right, it wouldn't be fair to compare a Yellowstone to a Pu'u honua or something like that. That park is making decisions using those types of criteria at that park. They are having to make choices at the park level. It's not the Washington office making decisions on behalf of those individual parks.

Senator HIRONO. I had earlier requested of one of the other people who testified from your Department for a list of all of the youth programs that you are reviewing and, to date, I don't believe that we have received such a list. So I would like to renew that request.

Ms. MCDOWALL. Okay.

Senator HIRONO. Because I think that these programs are really important as we talk about trying to expand the reach, and particularly to make sure that people who may normally not come to the parks, do come.

Ms. Fultz Nordstrom, I know that your company currently provides online purchasing of passes for a small number of National Park Services and Forest Service units. Have you discussed with the Park Service expanding this program to more parks? Are there more parks interested in utilizing the online system? And is your

goal to have this feature available for all National Park Service units that collect visitor fees?

Ms. FULTZ NORDSTROM. Thank you for the question, Senator Hirono.

Yes, we have discussed expansion. As part of the delivery of the solution we feel an important part is to actually market the solution as well. We're helping the parks themselves with the creation of marketing materials. That, of course, gains attention by the other park superintendents.

So over the course of the last 14 months, we have had conversations with Yellowstone, with Glacier, and they have expressed a great interest. Most recently, the National Park Service has looked at, as Ms. McDowall said, expanding this to those locations that have the point of sale and so the Castillo expansion that we talked about is that first step. In October I know that they're looking at visiting and looking at expansion into the Grand Canyon, Yosemite, Yellowstone, Glacier, Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore, Fort Pulaski National Monument.

Senator HIRONO. Is this available in any of the Hawaii parks?

Ms. FULTZ NORDSTROM. Today, Senator, it is not; however, we'd be happy to—

Senator HIRONO. Think about it.

[Laughter.]

Ms. FULTZ NORDSTROM. We'd be happy to expand.

Senator HIRONO. Come to Hawaii and check it out.

Ms. FULTZ NORDSTROM. Was just there. Would love to come again. Thank you.

Senator HIRONO. I know my time is up, but the other thing is that if there are any efforts to reach out to international visitors to come to our parks. Is that something that you all are looking at doing?

Ms. MCDOWALL. I don't have the answer to that question, but we can provide it.

Senator HIRONO. Thank you.

Senator DAINES. I brought the Chinese Ambassador to Yellowstone Park a week and a half ago. We did all we could here to promote our National Parks with an important, growing demographic, in terms of tourism.

Thank you, Ranking Member Hirono.

I want to thank the witnesses for their time and their testimony today. If there are no more questions for today, members may also submit follow-up written questions for the record. The hearing record will be open for two weeks.

This hearing is adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 3:30 p.m. the hearing was adjourned.]

APPENDIX MATERIAL SUBMITTED

U.S. Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources
Subcommittee on National Parks
September 27, 2017 Hearing: *Encouraging the Next Generation to Visit National Parks*
Questions for the Record Submitted to Ms. Lena McDowall

Question from Chairman Lisa Murkowski

Question: Has the National Park Service done any surveys or studies of visitors and/or employees on their opinions of the necessity and desirability of connectivity in parks?

Response: The National Park Service (NPS) has not conducted visitor or employee studies specifically and solely focused on the necessity and desirability of connectivity in parks, but individual park visitor studies and surveys have sometimes included questions about the importance and quality of making/receiving cell phone calls while visiting the park. Additionally, we also receive comments for and against expanding connectivity in parks in responses to open-ended questions in surveys and on visitor satisfaction comment cards.

Questions from Senator Lamar Alexander

Question 1: Many National Park visitors would like to remain connected to the internet during their park visits. However, the infrastructure necessary to provide cell phone service and internet access could impact the scenery and enjoyment of the parks. How can we bring internet access to the millions of visitors that would like to stay connected while visiting our National Parks without destroying the beautiful landscapes of our nation's greatest treasure?

Response: New communications technology is becoming smaller and better able to broadcast signals farther, and designers are making it blend into existing buildings and infrastructure more seamlessly. By working collaboratively with providers to install the best new technology that is least visually obtrusive, minimize construction of new towers, and increase co-location of equipment, we should be able to increase internet access for visitors while continuing to protect national park landscapes.

Question 2: As technology is integrated into our National Parks, it is important that we work to preserve our National Parks for the benefit of all visitors. How can we recognize the balance between the benefits – like safety – and the harms – like disturbing the quiet wilderness – of increased cell phone use in National Parks?

Response: Searching for balance between the benefits of connectivity and benefits of maintaining undisturbed areas is a continuous process. We know many visitors want to be connected everywhere, while other visitors seek a break from the electronic world when they visit parks. The Park Service is dedicated to working with visitors and stakeholders to find a workable solution.

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 Questions for the Record Submitted to Ms. Lena McDowall

Questions from Senator Mazie Hirono

Question 1: Does the National Park Service have any partnerships that focus on encouraging international visitors to come to our parks? For example, I know that there are years where the US partners with another country for a travel year, like how this year is the US-India travel year. Does the Park Service engage with any of these initiatives to increase visitor diversity?

Response: The NPS works with a wide array of partners to promote and facilitate international visitation to national parks. Key actions include an ongoing and collaborative relationship with Brand USA, the tourism marketing organization for the United States; a consistent presence at travel industry trade shows to meet with international tour operators; providing content and information to state and local tourism offices to support international marketing efforts; and coordinating with other federal agencies on issues of policy through the inter-agency tourism policy council. The NPS has supported country-to-country initiatives and participates in related forums, such as a recent US-China Tourism Leaders summit sponsored by Brand USA. Lastly, national parks provide information in foreign languages to improve the visitor experience.

Question 2: We are beginning the third year of the Every Kid in a Park (EKIP) initiative. I know that the program has been successful in attracting fourth graders and their families to national parks. I also know from today's testimony that the Park Service has a number of other programs and initiatives centered on youth engagement.

How do EKIP and these other programs and initiatives fit into a larger vision of the future of the NPS? What is the Park Service's big-picture strategy to engage the next generation in parks? How will the Park Service measure success and monitor improvement in these endeavors?

Response: Our approach is based on a "ladder of engagement" to make connections with youth at different points throughout their early years. Efforts such as the popular Junior Ranger program, Every Kid in a Park, YMCA and Boy/Girl Scouts, and Parks as Classrooms often provide a child's first connection to parks and public lands. High school and college youth programs such as Youth Conservation Corps, Student Conservation Association Internships, and many other local-level programs provide a more immersive experience, while various Corps programs post-graduation provide job skills training and also a pipeline to careers in public service.

While we have no comprehensive, systematic measures of success in engaging youth, we are aiming to conduct robust evaluations of individual programs and we are working on better metrics. For many programs and initiatives that involve partnerships with non-profit organizations, our partners measure and evaluate the programs and provide reports that describe successes and make recommendations for improvements. For example, the Historically Black Colleges and Universities Internship program annual report provides

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results of pre-internship and post-internship questions related to training outcomes and interest in the NPS, as well as testimonials about the impact of participation in the program.

Question 3: One of the conclusions in the last NPS study on visitor demographics was that more effort was needed to ensure that interpretive programming reflects the cultural experiences and history of all Americans, particularly those that have been traditionally underrepresented in national parks.

How has the Park Service worked since then to expand the range of stories told at national parks? How successful have these efforts been?

Response: In recent years, the NPS has collaborated with underserved audiences to identify and expand the stories told in national parks. Our interpretive philosophy has evolved to include community and visitor-created content which more holistically and inclusively tells the stories of all Americans. Creation of new NPS units such as the Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad National Historical Park, Stonewall National Monument, Cesar E. Chavez National Monument, Reconstruction Era National Monument have aided in recognizing histories of groups new to the National Park System.

Question 4: During a July 19, 2017 National Parks Subcommittee legislative hearing, I asked the National Park Service to provide the Committee with a list of all of the youth programs that the service is reviewing, and what the Service is focusing on during that review. I also asked how the Service engages with other federal agencies, like the Department of Education, and non-federal entities like the Corps network that would have an interest in enhancing these youth programs. I am requesting again that the Service provide this information to the committee.

Response: The Department of the Interior submitted the list of youth programs to the committee on October 12, 2017 as part of the responses to the Questions for the Record from the July 19, 2017 hearing.

The NPS engages primarily with other bureaus in the Department of the Interior, the Corporation for National and Community Service, the U.S. Forest Service, and National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). When engaging with the Forest Service, it is typically in areas where parks and national forests are in close proximity and we share resources and youth participants.

Our interaction with the Corporation for National and Community Service is primarily through our non-profit youth serving service and conservation corps through participant enrollment in the Americorps Education Grants Program. The NPS has entered into interagency agreements with NOAA to support some of their scientific internship

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programs that utilize service and conservation corps with which the NPS has existing cooperative agreements.

The Corps Network is a primary non-federal partner for youth engagement programs. The NPS coordinates natural and cultural resource conservation project opportunities with the Corp Network's one hundred plus member organizations.

The NPS collaborates with the National Environmental Education and Training Foundation on two youth projects: Hands on the Land and Tribal Schools Science Technology Engineering and Mathematics.

**U.S. Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources
Subcommittee on National Parks
September 27, 2017 Hearing: *Encouraging the Next Generation to Visit National Parks*
Questions for the Record Submitted to Ms. Yennie Fuller**

Questions from Chairman Lisa Murkowski

Question 1: Can you explain how platforms such as Niantic's can help the National Park Service connect new and younger visitors to lesser known and/or nearby parks? How can your technology help to disperse crowds during peak visitation?

Technology, when used smartly, can help bring people to our national parks, particularly young people and others who have not historically been drawn to these amazing, diverse, and dynamic places. Augmented Reality (AR) games like Field Trip, Ingress, and Pokémon GO engage young visitors by providing them with educational content about historical points of interest as part of gameplay. That is why our games help get people outside, explore and learn about the world around them, and visit interesting places that they would not otherwise go see. Furthermore, games like Pokémon GO engage young people where they are – on their cell phones. Augmented reality games like Pokémon GO can also help attract people to lesser known parks by drawing users to lesser-trafficked areas through strategic placement of gameplay locations.

Question 2: Can you envision new products – or different versions of augmented reality technology that could be tailored toward public lands and parks?

Pokémon GO, as well as Niantic's other games, Field Trip and Ingress, demonstrate the enormous potential of augmented reality as an educational and exploration tool. They show the power of Augmented Reality (AR) to motivate people to get moving and discover new places in their communities and across the country, including at our national parks and monuments. The potential possibilities of AR are seemingly endless and there are countless ways AR can be tailored toward increasing visitation and raising awareness of public lands and parks.

Tim Rout, Chief Executive Officer, AccessParks

**Statement for the Record
Answers to Subcommittee Questions
Senate Subcommittee on National Parks**

October 17, 2017

Chairman Daines, ranking member Hirono and members of the subcommittee, thank you for inviting me to appear before you on September 27, 2017. I was asked to respond to the following questions, and respectfully submit the following responses:

Question 1: How does your technology work in the parks? Does it require any new cell towers or infrastructure?

Answer: The AccessParks technologies have been optimized over the past 12 years to leverage existing infrastructure in frontcountry locations, and to visually blend with the environment. It does not require construction of new cellular towers. Our designs have used existing structures in the parks for mounting of small Wi-Fi radios, providing fiber-type speeds to the most remote frontcountry locations. These radios have a range of only a few hundred feet, and are located in densely visited areas such as lodging, frontcountry campgrounds, RV parks, visitor centers and restaurants. Our techniques for placement ensure the equipment is minimally visible to visitors, unless one knows to look for them. We also have extensive experience complying with State Historical Preservation Offices (SHPO) requirements on historical buildings.

In rare cases in the past we have constructed solar-powered wireless relay stations that are able to bring service to extremely remote locations where no connectivity of any kind exists, but this has been the rare exception. When used, these pole-mount installations have been solely used in frontcountry areas, on “previously developed” land. The backcountry is not the focus of the Wi-Fi service, and there is no requirement for new infrastructure in those areas.

Several cellular telecom providers propose building new towers in both backcountry and frontcountry locations. In our opinion, the need for construction

of new cellular towers in the parks is usually unnecessary for providing broadband in frontcountry areas. While cellular towers might provide for enhanced safety along roadways and backcountry through voice calling they do not contribute significantly to broadband internet access in most frontcountry areas. Our technologies for Wi-Fi do allow targeted provision of broadband to specific areas, and also allow HD-quality voice communication. Due to lack of wireless spectrum cellular providers have historically been unable to keep up with demand for wireless data, and use “Wi-Fi offload” and “Hotspot 2.0” methods to leverage Wi-Fi networks such as ours. It is anticipated that once our systems are in place, the vast majority of data and voice usage in the frontcountry will transit the Wi-Fi, both from direct Wi-Fi customers and through offload for cellular carriers.

It is also important to note that cellular carriers, for all the infrastructure they are allowed in parks, operate autonomously from the parks; they do not allow others to mount equipment on their towers, do not contribute a percentage of their revenue to the NPS, and they do not allow the park to share in their customer engagement. We propose a more targeted public-private deployment of broadband, in partnership with the parks, providing franchise fees to contribute to park operating costs.

Question 2: How can your pilot model save the National Park Service (and other land management agencies) from infrastructure costs and operating costs?

Answer: Our solution is entirely self-funded through private capital, with return on investment achieved through below-market fees for service. The design, installation and ongoing operation of the service is our responsibility, with no funds required from the government. It is through over a decade of trial and error that we have honed technologies, algorithms and methodologies to achieve effective and efficient solutions, and the savings are passed on to the consumer.

In addition to broadband coverage in remote areas, our firm has proprietary technologies that will allow the parks to take advantage of the latest “Internet of Things” applications across hundreds of square miles. This technology is similar to that being used in Smart Cities today, and include visitor/traffic management, public safety communications, automated fee collection, utility monitoring/management, hospitality management and point-of-sale for retail locations, among others. These technologies offer the opportunity to save

significant resources for the NPS, as well as increase park revenue from fees and donations.

Question 3: Once the results of the pilot program are observed and analyzed, what are your recommendations on how the National Park Service should implement this model throughout the park system?

Answer: The pilot program at Lake Mead offered a strenuous test of our broadband technologies and methodologies for service to the parks. It required provision of broadband Wi-Fi in frontcountry areas across 250 square miles of challenging terrain; nine campgrounds, five RV parks, marinas with over 2,000 slips, commercial Internet for concessioners and broadband for underserved nearby communities. However, we have only begun to explore the potential of our proprietary wireless technologies for large parks, and we continue to innovate with business models that benefit visitors, the parks and concessioners. Some of these applications may not yield commercially viable business applications, and others will require several iterations to find those that provide maximum benefit to all stakeholders. Our team will be risking only private capital as a “technology incubator” to further this innovation, at no cost to the government.

Based on our pilot success at Lake Mead NRA we propose an expanded regional pilot, with more diverse environments in which to test our technologies and business models for broadband applications. A regional pilot would ensure that both large and small parks are included in the same project, with more profitable areas compensating for those that are more expensive to cover and less profitable. It would also allow for testing and demonstration of new methodologies for:

- Driving visitation to less-visited parks, and alleviating congestion at the larger ones
- Using the latest marketing techniques and technologies to incentivize younger generations to visit the parks
- For the first time, allow parks to engage with visitors before, during and after their visits
- Integration of frontcountry technology with other applications such as Recreation.gov
- Decrease maintenance resource requirements

- Monitor and manage traffic flow across parks that have higher visitation

No two parks are the same in their geographical and operating challenges, but they all have a need for more broadband connectivity. This will bring a younger and more diverse set of visitors to the parks. We look forward to continuing our successful partnership with the NPS, collaborating on innovative public-private models for improving visitor experience, improving infrastructure and increasing revenue for public lands.

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Subcommittee on National Parks
September 27, 2017 Hearing: *Encouraging the Next Generation to Visit National Parks*
Question for the Record Submitted to Mr. Will Shafroth

Question from Chairman Lisa Murkowski

Question: Is there data available that can tell you if any significant numbers of visitors are opposed to connectivity in parks?

Answer:

While this question continues to be examined by the National Park Service (NPS) and Congress, and debated in the media more broadly, we are not aware of any quantitative data which suggests that significant numbers of visitors are opposed to connectivity in parks.

The National Park Foundation (NPF) appreciates that many visitors seek out national parks as refuges from technology's increasing presence in our lives. NPF also recognizes the importance of offering greater connectivity in national parks, not only as a matter of public safety, but also as a matter of necessity as we strive to encourage younger, more plugged-in generations to visit and support these places.

While incorporating technology, including connectivity, into our parks must be done in a balanced manner, doing so holds great potential for enhancing the visitor experience. Be it a digital trail map with real-time updates, or an online interpretive guide, innovative offerings can be made available to visitors interested in a more connected experience, while respecting those who enjoy our parks for their solitude. Technology is an essential tool in engaging younger and more diverse audiences, whether that is promoting parks through new technologies like NPF and NPS' recent Parks 101 virtual "360" video touring Channel Island National Park, or spreading the Find Your Park / Encuentra Tu Parque message through social media.

As NPS continues to assess how it can expand cellular coverage and WiFi offerings at national park visitor centers and other facilities, it is important to continue discussions around the appropriate role technology in our parks. NPF looks forward to working with NPS and other partners to support greater connectivity in our parks in a balanced way, as doing is vital to enhancing visitor experiences while inspiring the next generation of national park stewards.



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Statement for the Record of
The American Society of Civil Engineers
on
“Encouraging the Next Generation to Visit National Parks”
United States Senate
Committee on Energy & Natural Resources Subcommittee on
National Parks
September 27, 2017

Introduction

The American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE)¹ appreciates the opportunity to submit our views on the critical importance of funding infrastructure at our nation's public and national parks. We also want to thank the U.S. Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources Subcommittee on National Parks for holding a hearing on this urgent and timely matter.

Well-maintained public parks and public lands are critical drivers of our nation's economy, as well as a source of water for the 180 million people in over 68,000 communities who receive their drinking water from national forests and grasslands that capture and filter it. Despite the growing popularity of public parks and lands, chronic underfunding of our parks infrastructure continues to plague the system, threatening both safety of these infrastructure systems and the ability to meet the demand of a growing population.

ASCE's 2017 Infrastructure Report Card

Infrastructure is the foundation that connects the nation's businesses, communities, and people, serves as the backbone to the U.S. economy, and is vital to the nation's public health and welfare. Every four years, ASCE publishes the *Infrastructure Report Card*, which grades the nation's 16 major infrastructure categories using a simple A to F school report card format. The Report Card examines the current infrastructure needs and conditions, assigning grades and making recommendations to raise them.

In March, ASCE released its *2017 Infrastructure Report Card*², giving the nation's overall infrastructure a grade of "D+;" public parks also received a grade of "D+." From supporting industries such as lodging and restaurants, to providing clean water to homes, to giving citizens the opportunity to partake in recreational activities, the lands, historical parks, cultural sites, monuments, battlefields, and recreational areas under the jurisdiction of the National Park Service, U.S. Forest Service, and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers play important roles in American life. Significant and strategic investments from all levels of government and the private sector are long overdue and much-needed to close the growing National Parks deferred maintenance backlog of \$12 billion.

¹ ASCE was founded in 1852 and is the country's oldest national civil engineering organization. It represents more than 150,000 civil engineers individually in private practice, government, industry, and academia who are dedicated to the advancement of the science and profession of civil engineering. ASCE is a non-profit educational and professional society organized under Part 1.501(c) (3) of the Internal Revenue Code. www.asce.org.

² <https://www.infrastructurereportcard.org/>

Investment Shortfalls Total Billions of Dollars

The National Park Service's (NPS) 2016 centennial anniversary generated a new wave of excitement for our nation's public parks. A record-breaking 331 million people spent an estimated \$18.4 billion in local gateway regions while visiting National Parks in 2016, a 7 percent increase in the number of visitors compared to 2015. The 2016 visitor spending supported a total of 318,000 thousand jobs and generated \$34.9 billion for the U.S. economy³.

Unfortunately, investments in our public and national parks' infrastructure remains woefully inadequate, and the NPS now has a deferred maintenance backlog of nearly \$12 billion, which includes \$6 billion for roads, bridges, tunnels, and parking lots and \$6 billion for non-transportation related projects such as eroding trails, visitor facilities, and water and electrical systems. The NPS manages more than 75,000 constructed assets, and over 41,000 of them – more than half – are in need of repair.

This summer, the House Committee on Appropriations' Fiscal Year 2018 Interior and Environment spending bill allocated \$2.9 billion for the NPS, a decrease of \$64 million from FY17 enacted levels. President Trump's FY18 budget request included \$2.6 billion for the NPS, including terminating over 1,200 full time employees – a total decrease of \$296 million from FY17 enacted levels.

Solutions

Fortunately, Congress has provided some federal funding options that – if robustly appropriated – could help close the funding gap needed for parks infrastructure. The nation's two most recent federal transportation bills, the Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century Act (MAP 21) and the Fixing America's Surface Transportation (FAST) Act, include funding to supplement the deferred maintenance budget through the Federal Lands Transportation Program (FLTP). The NPS receives an annual sum through this program for a total investment of \$85 million. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the Bureau of Land Management, the Bureau of Reclamation, and other independent federal agencies with natural resource and land management responsibilities compete for an additional \$120 million available through the FLTP.

Federal funding, however, is not the only solution. In December 2016, Congress passed the National Park Service Centennial Act, which establishes the National Park Centennial Challenge Fund. This fund requires a one-to-one match of federal and private funds; directs the National Parks Foundation to create an endowment; and focuses fund investment on an identified list of signature projects and programs eligible for funding while prioritizing deferred maintenance, physical improvements to visitor services facilities, and trail maintenance.

³ <https://www.nps.gov/subjects/socialscience/vse.htm>

Earlier this month, ASCE was proud to sign on as a supporting organization of the National Park Service Legacy Act, a bill that has bipartisan support in both the House and the Senate (H.R. 2584, S. 751). This legislation would establish a federal fund to reduce the deferred maintenance infrastructure backlog at our National Parks and would be financed using existing revenues the government collects in royalties from the onshore and offshore production of oil, gas, coal, and other mineral operations. The bill also promotes public-private partnerships by allowing the NPS to accept qualified private donations.

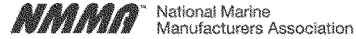
ASCE believes that our nation's elected leaders need to act quickly to address the growing gap in national parks and public parks infrastructure investment. Our recommendations include:

1. Charge appropriate user fees at the local, state, and federal levels and allow those agencies to use all collected user fees to support maintenance, operations, and enhancements to their park systems.
2. Encourage communities who benefit economically from parks and public lands investment to also invest in their maintenance.
3. Reauthorize and fully fund the Land and Water Conservation Fund to support acquisition of land and easements at the federal, state, and local levels.
4. Increase appropriations for the National Park Service, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the U.S. Forest Service, and other federal providers of recreational facilities to address maintenance backlogs.
5. Leverage partnerships between the National Park Service and other recreation facilities operators and private groups to better utilize facilities and compensate for usage.
6. Enact legislation to permit the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to retain all collected recreation fees for use at its facilities.
7. Renegotiate franchise fees with concessionaires of park and recreation facilities to increase return to support operation and maintenance of facilities.
8. Conservation and recreation advocates should collaborate and cooperate to benefit public interest in both conservation and recreation.

Access to and investment in our public parks remains a bedrock of American society and a critical category within ASCE's *2017 Infrastructure Report Card*. As President Theodore Roosevelt – the founder of the U.S. Forest Service and often referred to as the father of public lands conservation – said “There is a delight in the hardy life of the open. There are no words that can tell the hidden spirit of the wilderness that can reveal its mystery, its melancholy and its charm. The nation behaves well if it treats the natural

resources as assets which it must turn over to the next generation increased and not impaired in value.”

ASCE believes our nation must prioritize the deferred maintenance investment needs of our public parks. Strategic, robust, and sustained investments in these parks infrastructure systems from a variety of sources must be made quickly if we hope to close the growing funding gap. We thank you for holding this hearing and for bringing attention to this critical matter, and we look forward to working with you to find solutions to our national and public parks infrastructure investment needs.



September 26, 2017

The Honorable Steve Daines
 Chairman
 Subcommittee on National Parks
 Environment and Natural Resources Committee
 304 Dirksen Senate Office Building
 Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Mazie Hirono
 Ranking Member
 Subcommittee on National Parks
 Environment and Natural Resources Committee
 304 Dirksen Senate Office Building
 Washington, DC 20510

Submitted electronically

Chairman Daines and Ranking Member Hirono:

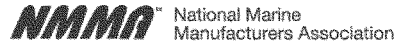
On behalf of the National Marine Manufacturers Association (NMMA), please accept this letter for the record regarding the September 27, 2017 hearing entitled "Encouraging the Next Generation to Visit National Parks".

By way of background, NMMA is the leading recreational marine industry trade association in North America, representing 1,400 boat, engine, and accessory manufacturers. NMMA members collectively produce more than 80 percent of the recreational marine products sold in the United States with a total economic impact of \$121.5 billion annually. The U.S. marine manufacturing industry is comprised of nearly 35,000 businesses that provide over 650,000 jobs.

We greatly appreciate the Committee's interest in pursuing new ideas for attracting younger visitors to our nation's National Parks. The long term viability of the National Park System is directly tied to ensuring the next generation appreciates and visits what is a beloved American treasure.

Interestingly, the preferences of millennials and younger Americans are similar to other generations when it comes to experiencing the outdoors. With an estimated 142 million Americans who went boating last year, NMMA has ideas for your consideration to increase not just younger visitors to our public lands and waters, but visitors across all generations:

1. The availability and reliability of Wi-Fi access in our National Parks is critical. While some might believe Wi-Fi is the antithesis of being in the great outdoors, the fact of the matter is it's how millions of Americans experience nature. From downloading maps to sharing photos and updates of their adventures on social media,—WiFi can spur interest in experiencing our National Parks.
2. Ensuring visitors to our public lands and waters have a variety of outdoor equipment available to rent will enhance their experience. Specifically, the ability to rent a powerboat, sailboat, rowboat, canoe, kayak, or paddleboard provides new ways for millennials to enjoy our National Parks.



3. Guided experiences, in the form of an in-person or virtual guide can improve visitors' National Park experience. Whether on land or in water, guided experiences can provide valuable information from conservation tips to boating safety to historical facts. The more open, accessible and available we make our National Parks, the more visitors will come to explore and enjoy our public lands and waters.
4. Many of the facilities in the National Park System are in need of repairs and updates. While visitors flock to National Parks because of the beauty of the outdoors, ensuring that basic amenities such as parking lots, restrooms, concessionary facilities, and visitor centers are available and modernized is important to the overall visitor experience.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this letter for the record, and for the Committee's work in ensuring our National Parks are accessible and enjoyable for the next generation of visitors.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if we can help you or your staff better understand issues that impact the recreational boating industry. If your staff have further questions, they can also feel free to contact Mike Pasko (NMMA's Director of Federal Government Affairs), at mpasko@nmma.org or 202-737-9760.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Thom Dammrich", written in a cursive style.

Thom Dammrich
President
National Marine Manufacturers Association



Statement for the Record

Anthony M. Reardon

National President, National Treasury Employees Union

For the

U. S. Senate

Committee on Energy and Natural Resources

Subcommittee on National Parks

Encouraging the Next Generation to Visit National Parks

September 27, 2017

Chairman Daines and Ranking Member Hirono,

Thank you for the opportunity to share our thoughts on encouraging the next generation to visit our nation's National Parks. As National President of the National Treasury Employee Union (NTEU), I represent over 150,000 federal employees in 31 different agencies, including the National Park Service (NPS).

NTEU appreciates your subcommittee tackling the problem of attracting millennials to the National Parks. We want to make sure that every generation can view the majesty of our country's spectacular natural beauty. We would caution, however, that funds are already stretched thin in all current NPS functions that threaten the millennial -- and all generation's— visitor experience. Recent budgets indicate that the Park Service will suffer some diminution of funds in Fiscal Year (FY) 18. Rather than seek costly contracts with firms that believe they can attract the next generation, we believe there are talented personnel already in the Park Service that can produce a vision of what's needed. Here are some of the ideas we have heard from our younger members:

- Consider offering entrance discounts in new ways. Park fees at most places are steep. Let the younger generation in for free to see what they're missing, such as by having a free day once a month, or consider piloting other types and methods of entrance discounts to younger visitors mirrored on current discounts available to seniors;
- Launch a social media campaign where people are given the opportunity to weigh in with what they like about a certain park, and what offerings would most attract them as visitors, including Wi-Fi availability options. The key to such a campaign is that it should be genuine – no gimmicks, and no outright advertising schemes.

Since FY 2011, the NPS workforce has decreased by more than 11 percent, at a time when visitors to the parks have increased by 17 percent. As one of our chapter leaders put it, "We've gone from doing more with less, to doing less with less." As you may be aware, maintenance is currently deferred because there are no available funds, which greatly impacts the visiting public's ability to both frequent and to enjoy our parks, regardless of age.

In fact, a smaller FY 18 NPS budget would have additional, negative tangible impacts on the visiting public that include: reduced hours of park operations; reduced Visitor Center hours; closing some Visitor Centers at parks that have multiple Centers; fewer ranger-led talks; decreased ability to conduct Search and Rescue operations for lost or injured visitors; increased maintenance backlogs leading to accidents in areas where sidewalks and other structures may go without repair or replacement; and, forced overtime for maintenance staff during the summer months because of serious staff shortages. Many parks have already implemented strategies to reduce costs, and many other parks cannot achieve additional savings because they do not have periods of lower visitation or a way to limit public access. Congress should keep these current realities in mind as final deliberations are made concerning FY 18 funding levels.

Given this, it clearly makes sense to introduce new initiatives for attracting various groups with the budget in mind. On behalf of NTEU's NPS members, I would like to point out that it is essential to not overlook ideas from the current workforce in tackling NPS challenges, including the needs and wants of the millennial generation. It will continue to be the case that the most important part of a visit to a National Park is the stunning setting and the interaction of the Park Rangers with visitors. I appreciate the opportunity to share our views to ensure the viability of our nation's parks.



Encouraging the Next Generation to Visit National Parks

**Subcommittee on National Parks oversight hearing
Wednesday, September 27, 2017; 366 Dirksen Senate Office Building**

Senator Steve Daines, Chairman, Subcommittee on National Parks
Senator Mazie Hirono, Ranking Member, Ranking Member, Subcommittee on National Parks

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member and members of the subcommittee, for calling this hearing today and highlighting the important role of National Parks to the next generation. Outdoor Industry Association, and our supporting 501(c)3 not-for-profit, Outdoor Foundation, have been working on this issue for a decade and we appreciate the attention to this key issue for our industry.

Outdoor Industry Association (OIA) is the national trade association for suppliers, manufacturers and retailers in the \$887 billion outdoor recreation industry, with more than 1200 members nationwide. The outdoor industry supports more than 7.6 million American jobs and makes other significant contributions toward the goal of healthy communities and healthy economies across the United States. The Outdoor Foundation is a not-for-profit 501(c)3 established by Outdoor Industry Association to inspire and grow future generations of outdoor enthusiasts.

The Outdoor Foundation 2016 Participation Report shows that outdoor recreation participation grew, adding 1.6 million participants from 2015 to 2016. The report also shows that half of all Americans participated in at least one outdoor recreational activity in 2016. That equates to 144 million participants, who went on a total of 11 billion outdoor outings. However, the Participation Report also found that while there were more overall participants compared to 2015, these participants engaged in fewer activities. Total outdoor outings fell from 11.7 billion excursions in 2015 to 11.0 billion in 2016. These are the fewest outings since 2010.

Our country is facing a health crisis—an obesity epidemic, with one in three children growing up overweight or obese, diabetes and other preventable diseases costing the health care system trillions (4.2 trillion by 2020 in fact), a growing prevalence of attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), soldiers coming back from war with traumatic brain injuries (TBI) and posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and what our industry recognizes as the alarming development of nature deficit disorder, a term coined by Richard Louv in his 2005 book, *Last Child in the Woods*. Inactivity is on the rise with eight to 18 year olds spending seven and a half hours in front of a screen everyday with little to no time outside playing. Adding to this challenge is the increasing cost of participating in traditional sports leagues and programs.

Our studies have found that the biggest motivator for outdoor participation was getting exercise. Data shows that adults who were introduced to the outdoors as children were more likely to participate in outdoor activities during adulthood than those who were not exposed to the outdoors as children. In fact, 37 percent of adults who were introduced to the outdoors during childhood grew up to enjoy

outdoor activities as adults. Only 16 percent of adults who do not currently participate in any outdoor activities had outdoor experiences as children.

What is intuitive to us, and most likely to many on the committee, is that being in nature is good for us. Not only does introducing children to the outdoors have a lasting impact, but they grow up healthier, happier and do better in school when they spend time playing outside.

Programs like Every Kid in a Park provide a pathway to the parks that makes it easy on families, community groups, and schools to get fourth graders to a nearby national park or public land unit. Still, transportation and other costs could prevent some students from having a potentially life-changing park experience. This is why last year the Outdoor Foundation joined with OIA to launch the Parks4Kids campaign that was supported by hundreds of outdoor industry companies and raised \$75,000 for local projects connecting kids to parks.

Another program that is successful at providing youth with outdoor experiences through the public-private partnership model is the National Park Service (NPS) Challenge Cost-Share Program. Outdoor Foundation acts as the fiscal manager for the Challenge Cost Share Program on behalf of the NPS. Over the last four years, the 72 projects funded have been led by local nonprofit organizations committed to activating diverse populations and their communities in the outdoors and creating connections to local national park sites. In 2017 alone, more than 15,000 young people were impacted. Among the projects supported by the Challenge Cost Share Program, youth paddled Arkansas' Buffalo River, discovered the story of Harriet Tubman, and found inspiration amid Joshua Tree's majestic landscapes. The 1:1 match required by Challenge Cost Share recipients is exactly the public-private commitment needed to ensure generations to come are able to experience our treasured national parks. These matching funds result in greater financial leverage of taxpayer dollars and lead to an increased impact and reach. In addition to the financial support, the invaluable relationships developed between local nonprofits, NPS partners, and young people will pay dividends for years to come.

In the continuum of building a lifelong love of our nation's national parks, introduction at a young age through programs like Every Kid in a Park are essential. The next step is personal self-discovery, which is why the Outdoor Foundation, in partnership with the NPS, launched the Outdoor Nation Campus Outdoor Ambassador program, a college-based effort to increase the connections between young adults, outdoor recreation and national parks. The Outdoor Nation Campus Outdoor Ambassador Program empowers college students to spearhead initiatives that connect college campus communities to local and national park sites while increasing participation in outdoor recreation—it's all about play in the parks as the foundation for building a lifelong relationship with national parks. Each ambassador was challenged to develop and implement a year-round activation strategy that engages his or her campus and community in outdoor recreation, focusing on national parks and close-to-home opportunities. The 23 selected ambassadors are organizing and implementing at least six outdoor experiences throughout the academic year that establish an enduring connection between NPS sites, colleges and student leaders. Recruitment for 2017-18 academic year begins in October 2017.

Time and time again across the country, when leaders invest in outdoor recreation and our natural heritage that is found in national parks and on other public lands, the result is healthier communities and healthier economies and a healthier next generation. Together, and with your help, we must invest in the outdoors—today, tomorrow and for generations to come.

Sincerely,



Jessica Wahl
Government Affairs Manager
Outdoor Industry Association

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