

OPPORTUNITIES TO EXPAND VISITATION AT LESSER-KNOWN NATIONAL PARK SYSTEM UNITS

FIELD HEARING BEFORE THE COMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND NATURAL RESOURCES UNITED STATES SENATE ONE HUNDRED SIXTEENTH CONGRESS

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OPPORTUNITIES TO EXPAND VISITATION AT LESSER-KNOWN NATIONAL PARK SYSTEM UNITS

THURSDAY, AUGUST 8, 2019

U.S. SENATE,
SUBCOMMITTEE ON NATIONAL PARKS,
COMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND NATURAL RESOURCES,
Deer Lodge, Montana.

The Subcommittee met, pursuant to notice, at 10:45 a.m., at the Grant-Kohrs Ranch National Historic Site, Hon. Steve Daines, Chairman of the Subcommittee, presiding.

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

Senator DAINES. The Subcommittee will come to order. So that is what we do in Washington, DC, by the way, when we start a hearing. I sincerely want to thank everybody for coming out here today, for joining us. It is a beautiful day, truly, in Montana, and here in Deer Lodge, especially.

We have not done an exhaustive research on this fun fact, but we do believe this is the first time, at least in the modern history of the United States Senate, that a hearing has been held in a barn, which is kind of fun. As some of you know, I am the Chairman of the National Parks Subcommittee in the United States Senate, which I am honored to have that role, and that is a Subcommittee of the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources of the U.S. Senate.

I want to extend a special appreciation to the staff here at Grant-Kohrs, which has just been wonderful as we have been working to get this setup, including who you just heard from, Superintendent Lavelle, as well as Alan Stewart, the Facilities Manager, and Julie Croglio, Chief of Interpretation and Education, all of whom put in a lot of extra time and hours to make this hearing a possibility. I know that you went above and beyond, and I would really like to thank you for all that you do. It is so appreciated.

Today is a special day, because we have the opportunity to bring the official work of the United States Senate here to Montana. I can tell you there is nothing different, in terms of the way the process works, from a hearing being held on Capitol Hill where everybody is in suits and ties and so forth or being here in a barn in Powell County. There is no difference in terms of the way this process will work. The official weight of this kind of a hearing, the way we will record the testimony, and so forth, is exactly the same as

it would be in Washington, DC, except I would argue, it is a whole lot better out here in a barn. Now I think there are some folks in DC that their concern is, wait, you don't have air conditioning, right?

[Laughter.]

Jacque, you probably heard that concern, right?

Ms. LAVELLE. Yes, that is true.

Senator DAINES. Right. Well, this is why we love to call Montana home, don't we? In terms of even on the warmer days in August, we can have a hearing here in a barn and be pretty comfortable.

I also want to thank staff here that came from Washington, DC, two staff members of the Energy and Natural Resources Committee. Michelle, you see she has got my back. Michelle Lane who is here from Washington, DC, as well as Darla Ripchensky who is here. These are both members of the Committee back in Washington, DC, and thank you for making the trip out here. I have already heard rave reviews from the staff saying, I cannot believe how amazing this place is and I think you may be talked into canceling the return trips to Washington, DC—

[Laughter.]

—which I would not blame you one bit. Well, growing up in Montana like many of us here in this room, spending time outdoors, getting out in the backcountry, whether it is hunting and fishing, that is just what we do and what I did as a kid. Some of you may know I went to kindergarten through college over in Bozeman.

My dad went to the University of Montana for college. In fact, my mom was pregnant with me, put my dad through school, once upon a time, working at the Missoula Merc back in the early '60s. But I was lucky enough to grow up in the shadows of Yellowstone National Park, and our family, like many of you, we back in those days, used to hop in the Griswold station wagon and Dad would load up me and my two sisters and we would get on the road traveling across Montana. We loved to visit parks all over the Western part of the country, but the Montana parks were always home for me as a Bozeman kid, as a Montana kid. But what I learned from that experience and those visits, whether it is a small family road trip, or maybe it is a bus load of folks coming to Big Sky Country from around the U.S. or even overseas. We are seeing increasingly more overseas visitors coming to our parks here in Montana and around the country, and these visitors have a huge economic impact on gateway communities. We know that over 5.5 million people visited national parks in Montana last year. Now, think about that. That is five times our state's population that came to Montana to visit our parks last year. They spent approximately—and I am not sure how we can tally that up easily, but we have made some good guesstimates—approximately \$633 million in local gateway regions which supports over 9,500 jobs and generates over \$880 million in the Montana economy alone.

And while we do know that the majority of these visitors went to Glacier and Yellowstone, we are here today to talk about other parks in our state that also contribute to that number, like Grant-Kohrs. Of the 5.5 million visitors that came to see parks in Montana last year, 26,700 came here to Grant-Kohrs Ranch National

Historic Site. You can see we have a lot of upside potential. That is probably the understatement of the hearing here, I would say. Well that is not a huge number, and though we are going to spend time today talking about what we can do to increase that number, these visitors did contribute \$1.6 million to the local gateway economy here in Deer Lodge as well as supporting 23 jobs and that is a big deal for a rural community in Montana.

Generally speaking, visitation across parts of Montana and across the country has increased over the last decade. We are seeing some trends. I know as I look at the Yellowstone numbers, as Chair of the National Parks Subcommittee, we look at some of these stats, the shoulder season that we always refer to in Montana, that time when Montana cannot quite make up its mind whether it is wintertime or summertime—somebody said the other day that Montana is nine months of winter and three months of hoping for summer. I heard that. But during this shoulder season, is that April–May time period, or in the fall which is sometimes the most glorious times of the year, that September–October–November kind of in between the winter seasons and summer seasons, we are starting to see a lot of international visitors now coming that are filling in what used to be more of a shoulder season downturn. We are starting to level some of that out.

We saw a big spike in visitation as the National Park Service celebrated its Centennial in 2016. Along with an increase of visitors though does come some challenges. When we look at the fact the National Park Service has 419 units of which Grant-Kohrs is one of those, 30 percent of the visitors, about 318 million nationally, went to only 10 of those units.

Now we understand, especially in Montana, that many people have their bucket list of vacation items that might include a trip to Yellowstone, or landing perhaps a nice trout, or a trip to Glacier and driving the Going-to-the-Sun Road, but I think there is room to expand what folks think of that perfect bucket list vacation spot, like showcasing the beauty and the fun of these other park units in Montana and that is what we are here to do today. We are here to take a deeper dive into how we can encourage visitors to stop at lesser-known parks like right here at Grant-Kohrs. Let's talk about who is in the best position to get the word out and what factors into a visitor's decision-making process.

By encouraging visitors to get out and explore all of Montana's great parks, I think we can create truly a win-win situation. First, visitors might find some new favorites exploring places they might not have thought to place on the itinerary before. We can also help surrounding towns and communities continue to benefit from increased visitation. And lastly, we can help spread the visitation between parks which can help with this growing backlog of maintenance on our national parks. One of the bills we are working on right now, one of my highest priorities as the National Parks Subcommittee Chairman, is to address this issue of the maintenance backlog we have. It is nearly \$13 billion in infrastructure backlog, maintenance backlog, and as Angus King—who is the Ranking Member of this Subcommittee and the Senator from Maine, we spend a lot of time together working on national park issues—said,

“Just think about backlog maintenance as debt and we owe it to our national parks to invest in them. They are treasures.”

This is a bill that I hope we can get passed and put on the President's desk yet this Congress. So whether we are pushing legislation to fix this massive maintenance backlog which is impacting your visitation in national parks, called the Restore Our Parks Act, or working to bring awareness to the challenges that gateway communities of parks face, like we did at last year's field hearing in Gardiner. I had a field hearing in Gardiner, Montana, and we looked at the constraints in a place like Gardiner, places like Cooke City, places like West Yellowstone. We are landlocked and we are surrounded by federal lands, yet these communities need to expand, need to be able to provide employee housing, and we are running into some challenges there. But I can tell you the field hearing in Gardiner was not warm.

[Laughter.]

It is cool. But Montana has been a priority of mine since day one in Congress, so I am grateful to be here today. Before we move forward, I would like to remind everyone that this is an official United States Senate hearing. I will briefly introduce each of the witnesses and then each witness will have five minutes to provide their testimony. Following the testimony, I will ask questions, during which time each witness will have up to five minutes to respond. If you have ever watched one of these hearings on C-SPAN—now it is probably a really slow day if you are watching C-SPAN—

[Laughter.]

—I think the only person who watches C-SPAN is my mom to see if I am there. But if you have watched C-SPAN, you will see we will conduct this hearing the same way. One thing I will be able to do, and I will be asking questions of the witnesses. When they speak, they will have up to five minutes to respond, but because we are not in Washington, we are not going to be too strict with the time although we will try to keep this on time, especially if we can, as we want to try to respect your time as well. Once we finish up with the questions, I will gavel the hearing out, like we do in DC, and one last reminder, as this is an official hearing of the United States Senate, there are no questions from the audience in an official U.S. Senate hearing. Everything said here today will be included in the official record. Thank you for being here to take the official record just like we do in Washington, DC. We appreciate it. So let's move on to the witnesses. It is now time to hear from our witnesses who are sitting down to my right.

Joining us this afternoon are Mr. Palmer “Chip” Jenkins, the Acting Intermountain Regional Director of the National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior, welcome; the Honorable Doug Crachy, Commissioner of Powell County, Montana, thanks for being here commissioner; Ms. Sarah Bannon, Executive Director of the Southwest Region of Montana Office of Tourism and Business Development, welcome; and Ms. Toby O'Rourke, President and CEO of Kampgrounds of America, Inc. You might know that better as KOA.

I want to thank you all for being here with us. At the end your testimony we will begin questions. Your full written testimony will

be made part of this official hearing record. Mr. Jenkins, I would ask you to kick this off. Please, proceed.

STATEMENT OF PALMER “CHIP” JENKINS, ACTING INTER-MOUNTAIN REGIONAL DIRECTOR, NATIONAL PARK SERVICE, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Mr. JENKINS. Thank you, Chairman Daines. Thank you for the opportunity to present the Department of the Interior’s views on the topic of expanding visitation at lesser-known parks. I would like to summarize my statement. The full one is submitted for the record. I would also like to request that Grant-Kohrs Ranch’s Superintendent, Jacque Lavelle, be allowed to assist in answering questions?

Senator DAINES. Without objection.

Mr. JENKINS. Thank you. On a personal note, I have worked for the National Park Service for over two decades, starting as a ranger at North Cascades National Park. I first visited Grant-Kohrs Ranch when I was Superintendent of Fort Clatsop National Memorial, which is a turnaround spot on the Lewis and Clark Trail on the Oregon coast. At the time, we were preparing for the Bicentennial celebration of the Lewis and Clark expedition in the early 2000s.

My wife and my two young sons and I were spending time exploring the Lewis and Clark Trail, one of the lesser-known sites of Montana, and we were spending time working our way through Montana on the trail. We stopped here at Grant-Kohrs on the spur of the moment when we saw the sign and decided to take a break. We thought it was going to be a short stop to make use of the restroom. It actually turned into almost a full day visit. We were captivated by the history of ranching in Montana, the stories of ranch life, the magnitude of operating a ranch. My kids especially enjoyed learning how to rope, lassoing a wooden steer. This was a visit that was fun and educational, but it also helped me as a National Park Service Manager continue to learn about the untapped potential that our lesser-known parks have and what they can offer to visitors.

Each and every unit of the National Park System, no matter its size, location, special features, or number of visitors, contributes to the fabric of American life and offers visitors an opportunity to experience an important aspect of our shared heritage. The National Park Service saw record-breaking visitation in 2016, our Centennial year, when visitation topped 330 million. But visitation growth is varied among parks. Some of the lesser-known parks have had less growth, even a decline in visitation.

The National Park Service has been working in a variety of ways, many in collaboration with partners, to promote lesser-visited parks. Here at Grant-Kohrs, visitation has grown from about 20,000 to 26,000 annually over the last decade. The key to this increase has been building relationships with partners throughout the region, including Powell County, the Chamber of Commerce, and local and regional tourism groups. The park offers unique events such as the annual Pumpkin Sunday event, Haying with Horses, and the Holiday Open House. The park has agreements with the Draft Horse Expo, and it partners with the Rialto Com-

munity Theatre and hosts local community events like last night's Movie with a Ranger and Evenings at the Ranch.

Programs provide visitors with activities in the evenings, but this also encourages people staying in hotels and camping to visit the town and support local restaurants and shops. Nationally we have programs to attract visitors to lesser-visited parks. In 2015, the National Park Service and National Park Foundation launched the public engagement campaign called "Find Your Park" as an initiative for the 2016 Centennial. Find Your Park continues today, through traditional advertising in key markets, digital and social media advertising and special events and programs.

Another Centennial initiative was the Every Kid in a Park program, now called Every Kid Outdoors. This program provides free passes to parks and public lands to fourth graders and their families. For smaller sites that do not charge entrance fees, the significance of the program has been the associated help for providing transportation and programming for nonprofit partner organizations. This is a successful initiative that has introduced a lot of fourth graders and their families to national parks. Yet another program that began in the Centennial is Community Volunteer Ambassadors. These are youth volunteers who help with volunteer programs that introduce people to the parks. At least 20 percent of these Ambassadors are placed in lesser-visited parks.

The National Park Service has also made great strides in increasing the visibility of lesser-visited parks through digital and social media. Our websites are regularly updated with trip suggestions, thematic itineraries and other tools to guide people to park experiences based on interests and activities. It is a great way for potential park visitors to discover experiences available at parks they may never have heard of.

We hope to continue to build on all these efforts to make more visitors aware of the lesser-known parks and these National Park Service gems. Mr. Chairman, this concludes my statement. Superintendent Lavelle and I would be pleased to answer any questions you have.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Jenkins follows:]

**STATEMENT OF PALMER “CHIP” JENKINS, ACTING INTERMOUNTAIN
REGIONAL DIRECTOR, NATIONAL PARK SERVICE, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE
INTERIOR, BEFORE THE SENATE ENERGY & NATURAL RESOURCES
SUBCOMMITTEE ON NATIONAL PARKS, REGARDING OPPORTUNITIES TO
EXPAND VISITATION AT LESSER-KNOWN PARKS.**

AUGUST 8, 2019

Chairman Daines, thank you for the opportunity to provide the Department of the Interior’s views on the topic of opportunities to expand visitation at lesser-known parks. Each and every unit of the National Park System--no matter its size, location, special features, or number of visitors--contributes to the fabric of American life and offers visitors an opportunity to experience an important aspect of our shared heritage. We appreciate the committee’s interest in shining a light on the parks that receive less visitation by holding this hearing at one of Montana’s lesser-visited parks, Grant-Kohrs Ranch National Historic Site.

The National Park Service manages a remarkable collection of places representing the richness and diversity of American history, heritage, culture, and natural resources. The National Park System’s 419 park units protect iconic landmarks such as Devils Tower National Monument; stunning landscapes such as those found in Glacier and Yellowstone National Parks; and unique flora and fauna from the rainforests in Olympic National Park to undersea reefs in the Virgin Islands. These parks also protect historic landscapes such as Civil War battlefields and World War II internment sites; sites of invention and ingenuity, such as Thomas Edison’s laboratory and the Wright Brothers’ workshops; monuments to great leaders such as George Washington, Abraham Lincoln, and Martin Luther King, Jr.; and priceless archeological sites in the Southwest and elsewhere in the country. Beyond the 419 units, the National Park Service also manages wild and scenic rivers and national scenic and historic trails (most of these rivers and trails are not counted as units), and assists with numerous preservation, conservation, and recreation activities throughout our country.

Park Visitation Trends

Visitation to units of the National Park System reached 318 million in 2018, an increase of about 16% from a decade ago, with especially notable increases over the last five years. But within that system-wide increase, there is great variation among individual parks. Visitation has increased steeply to some of the most famous parks in the country. Arches, Zion, Glacier, Acadia, and Yellowstone National Parks, for example, have all experienced significant double-digit percentage increases in growth in visitation over the last decade or so – 30%, 50%, even 60% increases. Other parks have seen notable but more modest increases – 10% to 20%. And still other parks have experienced relatively flat or even declining visitation.

Several factors have likely contributed to the recent spike in visitation to certain national parks. The continuing economic expansion since the 2007-2008 recession suggests that people have more means for travel. International visitation to the United States has increased significantly

over the last decade, and survey data suggests that over one-third of overseas travelers to the United States include a visit to a national park or monument in their trip. Additionally, the National Park Service celebrated its 100th birthday in 2016, and the commemoration, with numerous promotional and celebratory events and programs from a large community of partners, likely helped drive the surge of visitors in 2016 and 2017, when visitation topped 330 million annually.

Social media is playing an important role as well. It is easier now more than ever for travelers to share inspirational photos of their journeys, prompting their followers to seek out iconic vistas, views, and unique experiences themselves. This has actually become a challenging trend in some places as previously obscure parks experience a sudden swarm of visitation.

The U.S. travel sector includes over two billion domestic person-trips, plus 80 million international visitors, annually. In a sector so large, several different trends have emerged simultaneously. On one hand, air travel continues to grow rapidly, as it has for the last three decades, encouraging a “hub-and-spoke” approach to travel: flying from home to another metropolitan area, then traveling by rented car around the area. This can sometimes result in a decrease in visitation to lesser-known parks.

On the other hand, mobile technology is making do-it-yourself travel easier than ever, with thousands of mobile phone apps bringing travel, accommodation, and activity services to our fingertips. Technology combined with social media means that interest in obscure or off-the-beaten path sites can suddenly go viral, and that destination marketers can more easily reach and influence potential visitors to their area. Travel news outlets have also recently been reporting on an increase in cross-country road trips. As a result of the diversity of the travel market, attracting visitors to a particular site, community, park, or destination is more complex than ever.

National Park Service Initiatives

The National Park Service does not have the expertise and resources of the travel industry, and is barred from paying for advertising. We do, however, work in a variety of ways, both independently and in collaboration with community partners, to promote lesser-visited sites.

Here at the Grant-Kohrs Ranch National Historic Site, visitation has grown from about 20,000 to about 26,000 annually over the last decade. The key to this increased visitation has been building relationships with partners throughout the region, including the Powell County Chamber of Commerce, and local and regional tourism groups. The park offers unique programming and events, including the annual Pumpkin Sunday event in the fall, Haying with Horses, and the Holiday Open House. The park has agreements in place with the Draft Horse Expo and it partners with the Rialto Community Theatre. Some of the events held at the park are uniquely local and intended to engage the local community, such as hosting the Powell County High School Cross Country Meets and the Deer Lodge Medical Center Wellness Walk. The Movie with a Ranger and Evening at the Ranch programs provides visitors with activities in the evening hours that encourage hotel guests and RV campers to also explore the town and support restaurants and shops.

Nationally, there are several programs to attract visitors to lesser-visited parks. In 2015, the National Park Service and National Park Foundation, our national philanthropic partner, launched the public engagement campaign called “Find Your Park” as an initiative for the 2016 Centennial. Find Your Park continues today, through traditional advertising in key markets, digital and social media advertising, and special events and programs. A continuous theme of Find Your Park is highlighting the breadth and depth of the National Park System. For example, Find Your Park videos have featured parks such as Morristown National Historical Park, not just the well-known iconic national parks.

The National Park Service has always hosted special events and programs in parks, but during the Centennial, park staff were encouraged to plan unique events to appeal to visitors, often in collaboration with partners. That creativity continues, attracting new and repeat visitors to parks. For example, James A. Garfield National Historic Site hosts a Shakespeare in the Park series as well as a Civil War Concert Series. Herbert Hoover National Historic Site is also hosting concerts, featuring the Air Force Band of Mid-America.

Another Centennial initiative was the “Every Kid in a Park” program, which is now transitioning to “Every Kid Outdoors” following the authorization of the program by Congress with a revised name as part of Public Law 116-9, which was enacted earlier this year. This program provides free passes to parks and public lands to fourth graders and their families. For smaller sites that do not charge entrance fees, the significance of this program has been the associated transportation assistance provided to school groups by the National Park Foundation and other partner organizations. This initiative has been very successful in introducing fourth graders and their families to the sites run by the National Park Service in their own communities.

In addition, beginning with the Centennial, the National Park Service has had a program placing individual youth volunteers in parks for the purpose of enhancing those parks’ capacity for managing volunteer programs. At least 20% of these “Community Volunteer Ambassadors” are placed in lesser-visited parks in order to conduct community engagement and support ongoing park stewardship.

An area where the National Park Service has made great strides in increasing the visibility of lesser-visited sites is in digital and social media. Our website, NPS.gov, is regularly upgraded with trip suggestions, thematic itineraries, and other tools to guide people to park experiences based on interests and activities. It is a great way for potential park visitors to discover experiences available at parks they may never have heard of. The website also features monthly getaways, articles often featuring lesser-visited parks, and monthly messaging themes that highlight the broad range of sites within the National Park System.

There are many lesser-visited parks using a robust and strategic presence on social media to cultivate a community of engaged followers and raise their visibility, including Dinosaur National Monument, Waco Mammoth National Monument, Rosie the Riveter World War II Home Front National Historical Park, and Katmai National Park and Preserve. A video recently posted by Martin Van Buren National Historic Site in New York went viral and has received more hits than the number of annual visitors to the park.

A number of parks, some of them off the beaten path, have instituted web-based distance learning programs, bringing park rangers into classrooms and planting the seeds for future visits. Parks actively involved in this effort include Buffalo National River, Homestead National Monument of America, Channel Islands National Park, Denali National Park and Preserve, and Nicodemus National Historic Site.

The National Park Service works closely with state and local tourism partners to manage and promote high-quality visitor experiences. This work varies depending on the needs and priorities of the park and the community. For example, Fort Sumter and Fort Moultrie National Historical Park has a well-established relationship with the Charleston tourism office, coordinating familiarization visits for travel journalists and sharing visitation data and forecasts. In addition, several parks in southern Arizona are working with local partners and tourism stakeholders to develop strategies to encourage more visitation and longer stays in the community of Ajo, just north of Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument. In Delaware, National Park Service staff at First State National Historical Park are participating in community discussions, facilitated by the National Parks Conservation Association and the Conservation Fund, on leveraging the presence of this recently established park, for positive economic benefits.

In summary, there are multiple ways in which lesser-visited parks are becoming more attractive to potential visitors. We hope to continue building on these efforts to make more people aware of the vast resources under our stewardship.

Mr. Chairman, this concludes my statement. I would be pleased to answer any questions you have.

Senator DAINES. Thank you. Commissioner.

**STATEMENT OF HON. DOUG CRACHY, COMMISSIONER,
POWELL COUNTY, MONTANA**

Mr. CRACHY. Well, thank you Senator Daines for having this hearing at Grant-Kohrs, Deer Lodge, and Powell County. I will start by giving a little bit of history of the County. Powell County originated by being split off of Deer Lodge County in 1901. The County seat of Powell County is Deer Lodge. Agriculture has been and still is the main economic business in Powell County. Mining was a major industry in the County until approximately 1990 when the last major mine, a phosphate mine, shut down eliminating many jobs.

Another mine-related business, the smelter in Anaconda, employed many Powell County residents. Until the Milwaukee Railroad closed in 1980, a roundhouse was located in Deer Lodge and employed many good-paying positions. Approximately 49 percent of Powell County is Federal Government-owned, the vast majority being the U.S. Forest Service, and minor percentages are BLM and Park Service. Logging in Powell County was a very active industry until the political and management climate curtailed almost all timber harvesting on federal land.

Now the County must rely on SRS payments as a major funding source instead of logging as income from non-taxable federal land. One of the few sawmills left in the state is located in Deer Lodge, and it is still a major employer in the area, but the majority of the trees are not harvested in Powell County. Deer Lodge is midway between Glacier and Yellowstone off of Interstate 90, one of the main corridors between these major national parks. Powell County has many recreational activities that now attract people from both in and out of the State of Montana. Fishing is excellent on the Clark Fork, Blackfoot and Little Blackfoot rivers, Georgetown Lake, and many of the smaller streams and lakes in the County. Hunting is also very popular. Elk, deer, antelope, bear and predators are all able to be hunted locally.

The northern portion of Powell County is in the Bob Marshall Wilderness, limiting economic activity to recreation. The Territorial Prison, constructed before Montana became a state, is located in Deer Lodge, and is a major tourist attraction for the area, along with the car museum and the hobby shop which sells inmate produced items. The Continental Divide Trail runs the length of the eastern boundary of Powell County. Powell County has acquired the old Milwaukee railroad bed between Deer Lodge and Garrison, a distance of approximately eight miles and also very instrumental to this Grant-Kohrs Ranch. But we are doing it as a future extension to the Arrowstone Park and Trail System within the City of Deer Lodge.

Hiking and biking trails are becoming very popular as a tourist attraction. A 9-hole golf course is located just outside of town, and the Jack Nicklaus-designed Old Works Golf Course is just a few miles away in Anaconda. These activities are all draws that are available for tourists to enjoy along with visiting Grant-Kohrs Ranch. Powell County recently added a commercial kitchen to the

Blue Ribbon Pavilion located on the Powell County Fairgrounds that has the capability of serving around 500 people.

Obtaining functions at the pavilion also encourages attendees to also enjoy the other activities available such as hiking, golfing and Grant-Kohrs. The Deer Lodge City-Powell County Airport is in the process of being expanded with the assistance of the FAA. Advertising is important, as tourists must be aware of what is available and having the area presented as an interesting destination to get them to stop and enjoy the amenities. Social media and websites are popular and widely used.

Many tourists planning to visit Montana obtain brochures from the State tourism office. Being included in these brochures is a benefit. Advertising in travel magazines and placing information at resorts, campgrounds, and RV parks is beneficial. The old standby of attractive billboards placed on the highways still brings attention to local attractions to traveling tourists, tempting them to stop.

I thank you very much Senator for having me here to testify.
[The prepared statement of Mr. Crachy follows:]

TESTIMONY OF DOUG CRACHY
COMMISSIONER, POWELL COUNTY, MONTANA

BEFORE THE
SENATE COMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND NATURAL RESOURCES

OPPORTUNITIES TO EXPAND VISITATION
AT LESSER-KNOWN NATIONAL PARK SYSTEM UNITS
AUGUST 8, 2019

Powell County originated by being split off of Deer Lodge County in 1901. The county seat of Powell County is Deer Lodge. Agriculture has been and still is the main economic business in Powell County. Mining was a major industry in the county until approximately 1990 when the last major mine, a phosphate mine, shut down eliminating many jobs. Another mine related business, the smelter in Anaconda, employed many Powell County residents.

Until the Milwaukee Railroad closed in 1980, a roundhouse was located in Deer Lodge, and employed many good paying positions.

Approximately 49 percent of Powell County is federal government owned, the vast majority being the U.S. Forest Service, minor percentages are BLM and Park Service. Logging in Powell County was a very active industry until the political and management climate curtailed almost all timber harvesting on federal land. Now the county must rely on SRS payments as a major funding source instead of logging as income from non-taxable federal land. One of the few sawmills left in the state is located in Deer Lodge, and it is still a major employer in the area, but the majority of the trees are not harvested in Powell County.

Deer Lodge is midway between Glacier and Yellowstone off of Interstate 90, one of the main corridors between these major national parks.

Powell County has many recreational activities that now attract people from both in and out of the state on Montana. Fishing is excellent on the Clark Fork, Blackfoot and Little Blackfoot rivers, Georgetown Lake, and many of the smaller streams and lakes in the county. Hunting is also very popular. Elk, deer, antelope, bear and predators are all able to be hunted locally. The northern portion of Powell County is in the Bob Marshall Wilderness, limiting economic activity to recreation. The Territorial Prison, constructed before Montana became a state, is located in Deer Lodge, and is a major tourist attraction for the area, along with the car museum, and the Hobby shop, which sells inmate produced items. The Continental Divide trail runs the length of the eastern boundary of Powell County. Powell County has acquired the old Milwaukee railroad bed between Deer Lodge and Garrison, a distance of approximately 8 miles, as a future extension to the Arrowstone park and trail system within the city of Deer Lodge. Hiking and biking trails are becoming very popular as a tourist attraction. A 9-hole golf course is located just outside of town, and the Jack Nicklaus designed Old Works golf course is just a few miles away in Anaconda. These activities are all draws that are available for tourists to enjoy along with visiting Grant-Kohrs Ranch. Powell County recently added a commercial kitchen to the Blue Ribbon Pavilion located on the Powell County Fairgrounds that has the capability of serving around 500 people. Obtaining functions at the pavilion also encourages attendees to also enjoy the other activities available as hiking, golf and Grant-Kohrs.

The Deer Lodge city-Powell county airport is in the process of being expanded with the assistance of the FAA.

Advertising is important, as tourists must be aware what is available, and having the area presented as an interesting destination to get them to stop and enjoy the amenities. Social media and web-sites are popular and widely used. Many tourists planning to visit Montana obtain brochures from the state tourism office. Being included in these brochures is a benefit. Advertising in travel magazines and placing information at resorts, campgrounds and RV parks is also beneficial. The old standby of attractive billboards placed on the highways still bring attention to local attractions to travelling tourists tempting them to stop.

Senator DAINES. Thank you, Commissioner. Ms. Bannon.

**STATEMENT OF SARAH BANNON, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR,
SOUTHWEST MONTANA**

Ms. BANNON. I am Sarah Bannon, Executive Director of Southwest Montana. We are a contractor with the State for marketing the nine counties in Southwest, Montana. Senator Daines, I appreciate the opportunity to visit with you and to be a part of this hearing.

Montana has over 2.3 million non-residents come to the state, and so that was the number for 2018. Eighty-four percent of these people plan to return to Montana within two years. Of the non-resident visitors surveyed who came to Powell County, 70 percent of those people went to Yellowstone National Park, 57 percent of those people went to Glacier National Park, and 71 percent of the people coming to Powell County said they were looking for other historical sites. Now if we could get more of the national park travelers coming to the Grant-Kohrs Ranch and the Big Hole National Battlefield's national historic sites, it would take some of the pressure off the national parks' overflow and reduce the impact on the environment.

So what are some of the ways that we drive Montana tourism? Of course, we have print advertising, billboards strategically placed, travel guide websites, social media, and our partnerships like with Deer Lodge, we do cooperative grants and community quarter grants, we do brochures. And regionally we have the travel guide, a tear-off map, a website, video for the website, a birding brochure, which our first feature on the birding brochure is Grant-Kohrs Ranch.

So we would like to give more exposure right in the national parks, and they are so willing to bring people to the other parts in the State, and in our region, and into these national historic sites. So we need to get them the information to get them to funnel more people over to this wonderful site here.

Jacque Lavelle, the Superintendent, super superintendent, she has created the largest event in Deer Lodge with Pumpkin Sunday. This event brings in 5,000 people into a slower shoulder season. She has excited the town to piggyback on the event and now they are doing their own Fall Festival along with the Pumpkin Sunday. She has all kinds of events, movies at the theater, birding, trail hikes and runs. Jacque is so willing to do anything she can to build interest in Grant-Kohrs Ranch, and she is doing a fabulous job at this.

As you know, Southwest Montana considers this historic ranch a main attraction not only in Montana, but in the country as it is the way of life that is too often forgotten. School field trips are regular here to educate children on the actual history of the cattle industry and life on the frontier. Adults from all over are jolted into a glimpse of the past trials and tribulations forged in this way of life.

Southwest Montana markets the Grant-Kohrs Ranch and the regional travel guide along with influencers where we bring writers in to come and write about their experiences here. We look forward to helping with more marketing exposure for the Grant-Kohrs

Ranch historic site and continuing to work with Superintendent
Jacque Lavelle.

Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Bannon follows:]



Sarah Bannon
Executive Director
Southwest Montana

August 5, 2019

Dear Committee on Energy and Natural Resources,

The Grant Kohrs Ranch is the only 1880's working ranch National Historic Site in the United States. It is an active monument of the working ranches indicative of the Montana history and how the cattle industry began. With actual cowboy branding exhibitions, draft horse hay cuttings stacked by the old fashioned beaver slide, a busy black smith pounding away on a horseshoe, and chuckwagon beans cooked over a fire, this historic site offers a glimpse into the beginnings of the rough and rugged life on the range.

In Powell County alone, over 71% of the nonresident visitors come to see historic sites. The state has over 12 million nonresident visitors and about .9% come to the county. Southwest Montana considers this historical ranch a main attraction not only in Montana but in the country as this way of life is too often forgotten. School field trips are a regular here to educate the children on the actual history of the cattle industry and life on the frontier. Adults from all over are jolted into a glimpse of the past trials and tribulations forged in this way of life.

Grant Kohrs Ranch offers many other activities such as walking trails, birding opportunities, cross country runs, Christmas activities. The largest attended event in Powell County is the ranch's Pumpkin Sunday which is now turned into a Fall Festival as the whole town is joining in this shoulder season event.

Southwest Montana markets the Grant Kohrs Ranch through the regional travel guide, advertising in the *True West Magazine*, placements on social media, and through familiarization tours when the opportunity arises. We look forward to helping with more marketing exposure for the Grant Kohrs Ranch Historic Site.

Sincerely,

Sarah Bannon

Sarah Bannon

Senator DAINES. Thank you, Ms. Bannon. Ms. O'Rourke.

**STATEMENT OF TOBY O'ROURKE, PRESIDENT & CEO,
KAMPGROUNDS OF AMERICA, INC.**

Ms. O'ROURKE. Thank you, Senator, for having me, a KOA representative, at this hearing today. I appreciate the invitation to discuss this topic of expanding visitation in our parks, specifically to lesser-known parks, as it has a direct overlap to our business. My name is Toby O'Rourke. I am the President and CEO of Kampgrounds of America, or as you said, KOA. We are the world's largest network of privately owned campgrounds with nearly 520 locations across the United States and Canada. We were founded in 1962 in Billings and our headquarters remain there today.

The majority of our campgrounds are franchises that are privately owned and operated, and they partner with us primarily for marketing and brand awareness, but also program supporting technology. We at KOA, Inc. also own 31 locations ourselves in various places across the country. Because of our large footprint, there is a KOA location near most every national park, memorial, monument or historical site. For example, here in Montana, not only do we have parks surrounding Glacier and Yellowstone, but we also have a campground at the Big Hole National Battlefield, the Little Bighorn Battlefield National Monument, and here in Deer Lodge near this location. Camping is increasingly growing in popularity.

Based on our research report, the North American Campaign Report that we publish annually, we estimate there are 78 million households who consider themselves active campers, and there has been roughly 7.2 million households that have been new to camping over the past five years. Thirty-nine million of those camp every year, and the number of annual campers has increased 22 percent over the past five years. Not only are more people camping, they are camping more frequently.

Since 2014, we have seen a 72 percent growth in households taking three trips a year. I share these numbers because the growing population of campers represents a growing market for national park visitation. We find that most campers use our campgrounds as base camps for exploring the surrounding area. There are several trends worth noting that have an impact on my business that I believe would likewise affect the national parks. Understanding these trends would allow us to build effective marketing programs and could help build communication strategies for the parks, one of which is diversity.

There has been significant increase in diversity in camping over the past five years. Our report shows that 29 percent of camping households are multicultural, and that is a 17-point increase since 2012. New campers are increasingly more diverse. In fact, last year, all new campers that camped for the first time, 51 percent of those were from minorities demographics. Key to attracting more diverse visitors is focusing on representing inclusion in not just marketing but also in operations and staffing.

Secondly, millennials. Younger generations are driving the growth we see in camping. Millennials represent the largest segment of camping households at 41 percent. That is a 7-point increase. Among new campers, 56 percent were from millennial

households. Millennials are a large focus of the travel market in general, because they are focused on experience, which is a nice target for the national park. I believe, being a marketer, that it is very difficult to market effectively to a whole generation so we like to segment it by life stage. And for us, focusing on the millennial family is a very good target that I think overlaps here. Road trips is a trend.

KOA was built on the concept of road trips. Our founder recognized in 1962 people traveling to the Seattle World's Fair and developed a business off of that. What we are seeing now in research that we follow is that road trips have been trending. The portrait of American traveler research shows that the percentage of American travelers taking road trips has increased by 64 percent, and more than two-thirds plan to do one in the next year.

Close to home, on the other hand, we see one of the most interesting trends in our data is that people are camping closer and closer to home. Seventy percent of campers camp within 150 miles of home, and that has increased 15 points in five years. Our take on this is that people are increasingly busy in time, and while we do market our national destinations such as the national parks, it is very important to reach out to your local area and let people know what they can go explore. We at KOA have a shared interest with you in increasing visitation to all of the national parks, monuments and historical sites in the system. Not only are we passionate about the benefits of the outdoor experience that are found at these locations, but the livelihood of our small business and entrepreneurs that surround these points of interest depend on it.

I believe camping households are a prime target for the park system, and we look forward to doing our part to help increase the collective awareness of our national wonders.

Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Ms. O'Rourke follows:]



**STATEMENT OF TOBY O'ROURKE,
PRESIDENT & CEO OF KAMPGROUNDS OF AMERICA, INC.
BEFORE THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND NATURAL RESOURCES
SUBCOMMITTEE ON NATIONAL PARKS**

AUGUST 8, 2019

Senator Daines, thank you for the opportunity to speak before the Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources' Subcommittee on National Parks. I appreciate the invitation to discuss the topic of expanding visitation in our national park system, specifically to the lesser-known parks across the country, as it has a direct overlap with my business.

My name is Toby O'Rourke, and I am the President and CEO of Kampgrounds of America, Inc., commonly referred to as KOA. KOA is the world's largest network of privately owned campgrounds with nearly 520 locations across the United States and Canada. We were founded in 1962 in Billings, Montana, and our headquarters remain there today. Our mission is "connecting family and friends to the outdoors and each other" and we are committed to delivering quality outdoor hospitality at each of our locations.

The majority of our campgrounds are franchises that are privately owned and operated businesses who partner with KOA primarily for brand awareness and marketing but also for technology and program support. We at KOA, Inc. also own 31 locations ourselves in various destinations across the country. Because of our large footprint there is a KOA location near most every national park, memorial, monument or historical site. For example, here in Montana, not only do we have parks surrounding Glacier and Yellowstone, but we also have a campground near the Big Hole National Battlefield, the Little Bighorn Battlefield National Monument and here in Deer Lodge near the Grant-Kohrs National Historic Site. We promote these locations to our guests on our website by linking to the KOAs near each national point of interest organized by state.¹

Camping is increasingly growing in popularity. Based on the 2019 North American Camping Report² (NACR), research we publish annually that measures overall camping activity, an estimated 78.8 million households consider themselves active campers, and there have been roughly 7.2 million households who are new to camping over the past five years. Thirty-nine million of those camp every year and the number of annual campers has increased by 22 percent since we first started measuring this information over five years ago. Not only are more people camping, they are camping more frequently. Since 2014, we have seen a 72 percent growth in households taking more than three camping trips per year. Those who camp enjoy the activity and return to it multiple times during the year as a leisure activity.

I share these numbers because the growing population of campers represents a growing market for national park visitation. We find that most campers use our campgrounds as base camp locations for exploring the surrounding area. When asked what activities campers leave the

¹ <https://koa.com/blog/koa-campgrounds-near-national-parks/>

² 2019 North American Camping Report. Unless noted otherwise, all data referenced is cited from this report. Report can be downloaded at <https://KOAPressRoom.com/>.



campground for, 50 percent say for sightseeing and scenic drives, 40 percent cite outdoor recreation and 30 percent mention visiting local attractions. All of these align with visiting and engaging with national parks and monuments. Not surprisingly, camping in the national parks themselves is also extremely popular. Our research shows that forty percent of camping nights nationally are spent in national or state park campgrounds.

There are several trends worth noting that have an impact on my business that I believe would likewise affect the national parks. Understanding these trends allows us to build effective marketing programs and similarly could help define a communications strategy focused on driving visitation to lesser known national parks.

- **Diversity:** There has been significant increases in diversity in camping over the past five years. The 2019 NACR shows that 29 percent of camping households are multi-cultural, a 17-point increase since 2012. There is now just a seven-point delta to what the census measures for ethnicity in the general population. New campers are increasingly more diverse, in fact, 51 percent of new camping households in 2018 were from minority demographics. Key to attracting more diverse visitors is focusing on representing inclusion in not only marketing but also in operations and staffing.
- **Millennials:** Younger generations are driving the growth in camping. Millennials represent the largest segment of camping households at 41 percent, a 7-point increase since 2015. Among new campers in 2018, 56 percent were millennial. Millennials are a large focus of the travel market in general due to their size and the importance they are believed to place on experiences. I believe it is difficult to market effectively and generalize the entirety of a generation and feel there's more value in looking at life stage. The *millennial family* is a prime target for our business that should overlap well as a target for the parks. When asked of millennial campers what was the key trigger in getting them to camp more, the majority said having kids. Tapping into reasons for engaging children with the park system will speak to these families. This includes educational purposes and the importance of time outside. The NACR shows that 62 percent of campers believe getting their kids involved in outdoor activities is "very important." The Family Travel Association has also shared that a 33 percent of American families say they would like to take their children on a national park vacation.
- **Road Trips:** KOA was built around the concept of the road trip as our founder developed a campground system after recognizing people traveling through to the Seattle World's Fair. A trend that we've found very interesting over the past couple of years is the increasing interest again in road trips. The 2019 Portrait of the American Traveler³ research shows that the percentage of American travelers taking a road trip has increased 64 percent since 2015. More than half of American travelers took a road trip during the past year and two-thirds intend to take one during the next twelve months. Respondents to this survey showed that those that took road trips were motivated by exploration and 77 percent indicated going on vacation brings their family closer together.

³ 2019 Portrait of the American Traveler, MMGY. <https://www.mmgy.com/services/research-data/portrait-of-american-travelers/>



The research also noted that some road trips also included flying to a city and then beginning from there. Millennial families engaged the most in this activity with 57 percent saying they took a road trip that began in another city. National parks and monuments are an ideal road trip destination, and there are a number of road trip oriented sites and apps that are designed to help people map their routes and points of interest.

- **Close to Home:** On the other hand, one of the most interesting trends in our data is that people are camping closer and closer to home. Our North American Camping research shows that 54 percent camp within 100 miles of home and 70 percent within 150 miles, a 15-point increase in the past five years. Our take on this is that people are increasingly busy and time starved. The US Travel Association reports that a significant number of employees have unused vacation at the end of the year⁴. Camping provides an easy way for people to get away with their friends and family over a weekend close to home. While we at KOA do market destinations we find that promoting to locals what is in their backyard can have a large impact on business. Likewise, increasing awareness of nearby national parks to local markets and not just tourists may do the same.
- **Overtourism:** Finally, many in travel point to the increasing awareness of overtourism - or the congestion or overcrowding at popular destinations. The Portrait of the American Traveler research cites that 60 percent of travelers say that tourism overcrowding will have a significant influence on what destinations they choose to visit in the next five to ten years.⁵ Interestingly, Baby Boomers were even slightly more so to say this than Millennials. Encouraging more exploration of lesser known national parks would likely appeal to those falling into this category.

We at KOA have a shared interest with you in increasing visitation to all of the national parks, monuments and historical sites in the system. Not only are we passionate about the benefits of the outdoor experience to be found at these special places, the livelihood of our small business entrepreneurs that surround these points of interest depend on it. I believe camping households are a prime target for the park system, and we look forward to doing our part to help increase the collective awareness of our national wonders.

Toby O'Rourke
President & CEO
Kampgrounds of America, Inc.

⁴ State of the American Vacation, US Travel Association. <https://www.ustravel.org/research/state-american-vacation-2018>

⁵ 2019 Portrait of the American Traveler, MMGY. <https://www.mmgy.com/services/research-data/portrait-of-american-travelers/>

Senator DAINES. Well, that was impressive. You all stayed right within the time limits too. That is great.

Let's start with Mr. Jenkins. As you are aware, the Centennial set records, you mentioned that in your testimony, in terms of visitation at a number of parks across the country, including places in Montana like Yellowstone and Glacier. I know you track those numbers. As we seek to increase visitation of parks that are currently less well-known, like Grant-Kohrs or Little Bighorn Battlefield, we need to ensure these sites have the capacity to meet the needs of increased visitation.

We talked a little bit about that in your testimony, reflected across the witnesses here, about the Every Kid Outdoors and the Find Your Park initiative, which are wonderful. What we need to do here is get more young people outside. Could you explain how the Park Service forecasts visitation in individual park units? How do you prioritize staffing decisions, especially when you have the seasonality challenges with staffing units, while at the same time dealing with increasing visitation?

Mr. JENKINS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I am not aware that we actually, across the country, forecast increases in visitation. Rather, what we do is we rely upon the superintendents of the staff in their parks, given their local knowledge and the work that they do with their partners, to be paying attention to the trends and looking into the future in terms of what might be coming our way. Are there special events coming? Commemorations, anniversaries, as well as also larger trends. You are correct in terms of staffing is a really interesting calculus for superintendents and their leadership teams as they are trying to figure out how to manage within fixed budgets and optimize when they need to have staff on in order to be able to meet the visitation curve, if you will.

And increasingly what we are seeing is that those visitation curves are both higher and pushing at—so earlier into the spring and later into the fall in terms of parks wanting to have programs to be able to support people coming. And then also, many superintendent parks are working closely with local communities, with school districts and educators, to run programs that are counter seasonal. So when the school year is going on, to be able to host kids like they do here at Grant-Kohrs, to be able to come and be able to learn about the park.

Senator DAINES. What about some of these larger bus tours that we will see? We see those more typically in some of the larger national parks. How would the National Park Service coordinate with these tour groups? Think about their itineraries. I mean this is a hidden gem here. And I think about how increasingly there is a desire for the genuineness of a travel experience. You know, to be off the beaten path and social media can drive some of that as well.

We were chatting a little bit at the Big Bend National Park where the Find Your Park hashtag just drove tremendous traffic to a place you have to hike miles to even get to the park. How does the National Park Service work on these itineraries with some of these larger tour groups, and how might you highlight a place like Grant-Kohrs?

Mr. JENKINS. Sir, with your permission, let me give part of the answer, and then I will turn it over to Jacque to let her talk about

some of the things that we are doing here. So at a national level, we have a tourism office that works with the tourism industry and that participates in things like the international powwow and other trade shows where they get together with the trade industry too. And a specific thing that they do with that time is to try to highlight opportunities in terms of lesser-known parks.

I think also what we realize is that when people are on bus tours and they are visiting Yellowstone, or Glacier, or Rocky Mountain, they are usually coming from large metropolitan areas and going by places. And so it is, if you will, filling in the hole, filling in the places on the on the journey. I like your recognition of people who are looking for authenticity and being able to go and visit those. And then, again, we rely on local knowledge and local partnerships. By way of example, when I worked at Lewis and Clark National Park in Astoria, Oregon, we would coordinate with the commercial tour industry, where we would meet with them early in the season and we would provide training for their onboard guides. And then we would work with them to try to make sure that the tour buses all did not show up at 11 o'clock. And where we would have, you know, long lines for the bathroom or trying to see, you know, rather we would work with them to try to set up a schedule so that the buses would arrive at intervals so that both we could handle them within our capacity but they were also ensuring the quality experience. Let's hear from Jacque.

Ms. LAVELLE. Several years ago, we had a success story, which fits right into your question Senator. A tour bus operator who brings tourists from Australia and they do an extended tour through Glacier National Park, visiting Montana, and going down to Yellowstone, stopped by to visit, just to see Grant-Kohrs Ranch. And after finding what a gem this was, they now regularly schedule their tour bus routes coming through here. They contact us before their buses come through. They stop in Deer Lodge, and this is basically the restroom stop. They let the buses, sometimes two, three buses at a time, unload here in Deer Lodge.

And not only do they visit Grant-Kohrs Ranch, they go down Main Street, they go to the Brew Pub, they have pizza at the pizza place, and it actually is a wonderful opportunity and we find that the other Australian tourists love American ranching history. So it's a perfect marriage just by having that one visit of the tour bus company recognizing, oh, there's a brown sign, it's a national park, and I'm getting the same experience here that I would get at Yellowstone or Glacier.

Senator DAINES. Of course those Aussies, that is the land of Man from Snowy River, right?

[Laughter.]

But I think about some of our visitors that are coming from overseas, perhaps a little North of Australia, and how that Montana cowboy mystique that everybody knows about seems like would just be a tremendous attraction for here, an experience I believe goes so well with our heritage here in Montana.

I wanted to go over here to Commissioner Crachy. Thanks for your testimony, again, and kind of letting out the perspective here on the economics and as a Commissioner, the challenges you face

of making everything balanced and providing services for the County Government.

According to Park Service, visitors to the parks in the State of Montana spent \$633 million in our local gateway communities last year, and Grant-Kohrs identified about \$1.6 million for this park. Could you elaborate on the importance of that number to Powell County and what it might mean if we were to continue growing that number year over year?

Mr. CRACHY. Thank you, Senator. All the tourists that come in, if they stop, you know, like Jacque mentioned, with the buses coming in and going down Main Street, and any of the tourists that visit or spend any money at any of the local businesses, obviously wind up helping both the city and the county by creating jobs, by employment, and you can see that by looking at the town. We have a brewery that has opened in just the last couple of years, you know, they seem to be doing well.

If you look out by the interstate where we have a McDonald's, the new hospital, you know, the I-90 convenience store, the one across the street, there is an Indian Creek Campground right there. You know, there has been some expansion going on in that area. And not that this is all related to tourism, but tourism does have a major impact on the city and the county. And the more tourists we can get in, or even people just to come off the interstate and fill up a car with gas and spend money is going to help the overall general economy.

Senator DAINES. I am going to go over to, again, a question for Mr. Jenkins. I mentioned earlier in my opening remarks about the deferred maintenance challenge we face across our national parks. We have got the spreadsheet for it here at Grant-Kohrs. That number is about \$5.4 million, and I think for the sake of those who may not be in the weeds of what we look at on deferred maintenance, this can be not just the things you see on the storefront when you walk around, how beautiful it is, but sometimes it is the lesser-known parts, employee housing, water and sewer systems that are absolutely essential to allow these parks to continue. So it is about \$5.4 million here in deferred maintenance. That is not as large as some of the parks in Montana. I am working with Cam Sholly and Jeff Mow, and Jacque you are now my next best friend. Superintendents here at parks love you. This is great. It is still a significant number, \$5.4 million a year. How does that total impact the visitors' experience here of the site by you not addressing the issue of deferred maintenance?

Mr. JENKINS. Again, let me answer part of this question and have Jacque speak specifically. So exactly as you mentioned, it is a little over \$5 million here in deferred maintenance for Grant-Kohrs, \$586 million for Yellowstone, that Cam is dealing with there. In between, for Glacier it is \$325 million, I believe is the total across the State, or Yellowstone was kind of counting a large part of Wyoming. And that maintenance backlog is critical because, as you said, it is everything from the things that you don't see, water and wastewater, and electrical systems. So relating it to your home, it would be like your septic system, or connection to the sewer, or your well, to the employee housing and the roads to trails.

About half of all the deferred maintenance is in roads, the way that people want to be able to access the park, whether that is Yellowstone or Grant-Kohrs. And so making progress on addressing the deferred maintenance is fundamental to meeting our mission for providing a high-quality visitor experience, everything, you know, being able to drive, hike, get information to the visitor center, spend the night in a campground or a lodge, and all of the other support structures. But let's learn a little bit about what the story is here.

Ms. LAVELLE. So the deferred maintenance story here, as Chip mentioned, about half of it is roads, which for us means the access that we use to get to our cultural landscape and our fields, taking care of our fields, which actually double as hiking trails, hiking trails that tie into the County's hiking trail. So being able to maintain those and keep those in good condition is of paramount importance.

The other aspect of the deferred maintenance is the fact that this is a historic site so every time you do maintenance on a historic structure, you have to follow the Secretary of the Interior's standards. It is not as inexpensive as it would be if it was modern buildings. We have to use historic techniques, so it is always more expensive. So whenever you are thinking about maintenance for a building like this, you are thinking about using the traditional methods, you are thinking about using whitewash in the traditional recipes. So it is more expensive, and it actually makes the visitor experience more realistic and more authentic.

Senator DAINES. Great. Thank you, and I could not agree more. You know, part of the good news that you hear a lot about the polarization divides in Washington, DC, and I think if more Americans saw some of the good work going on between Democrats and Republicans working together here on the deferred maintenance so they can move everybody's hearts like we need to produce an outcome here. But there is a lot of the genuine bipartisan support to address this very important issue. So before we can stay in Grant-Kohrs with you, Superintendent, I hope that we will see a bill moving through here pretty soon, so keep pushing on it.

Ms. Bannon, thank you for being here as well today. You know as well as anyone that tourism is a pillar of our economy here in Montana. Outdoor recreation, by some estimates, suggest it is a \$7 billion economic driver here in Montana. One of our biggest draws, of course, is our unmatched scenery, and it was earlier here today when Michelle and I were doing our brief before the hearing, we were out there outside the barn where the draft horses are—what a change of scenery from the swamp back in DC.

[Laughter.]

Just a beautiful landscape there. What is often left out of this story though is that the smaller and the lesser-known parks, the small businesses, the rich history, draws visitors from all around the world as well. I think about our parks in our country as being kind of the "Department of First Impressions" oftentimes for international visitors who come to the United States, and their first experience will be in one of our parks.

This gets back into the importance of the deferred maintenance to make sure everybody's experience here, that first impression, is

a positive one. Your expertise is in the Southwest region here. Could you give me an idea of how the sites like Grant-Kohrs, how they draw visitors into towns like Deer Lodge, and what importance does that play in the larger Montana tourism economy?

Ms. BANNON. Well Grant-Kohrs offers a culture that you cannot find in most national parks at all, and it is a way of life that most people are not exposed to. So that in itself is a draw. And then when we have international people coming, they find that authentic heritage is a big draw. And so all of this brings in people from not only all over the states but international tourists, and they are experiences that use their money as they pass through, as you heard, in the restaurants, and in our other attractions.

They also go back with word of mouth. That is really huge for bringing more people in and quite often they will say, we found this little gem hidden in the corner of Montana. So we find that word of mouth is huge in spreading the word and consequently bringing in more economic development here.

Senator DAINES. In today's society with these [holds up smartphone], word of mouth oftentimes I think is social media, and I think we have seen examples with the Find Your Park initiative, the #everykidoutdoors. I would like to just maybe open this up to any of the witnesses here, Ms. Bannon, thinking about how might we use social media to promote a site like Grant-Kohrs?

Ms. BANNON. On our social media, they have events that people are excited about. They like to post their pictures. Pumpkin Sunday, they want to post pictures of all the fun they're having here. Roping, the little wooden cow over there. So right away people are already excited and want to post on that. We have things going up on YouTube that will capture some of this. We have the branding that is exciting—some of us have a hard time with it; we know it's part of culture.

[Laughter.]

But all of that is so educational and so mind-boggling to some people that go get a hamburger at McDonalds. They don't see the back side of things. So all of that with social media will help, and along with Facebook and Twitter, Instagram, the photos going up on Snapchat. So it's out there, and we just need to keep that on the forefront, I think.

Senator DAINES. Ms. O'Rourke? You probably have a thought on that, I am guessing.

Ms. O'ROURKE. I do. Social media and digital marketing are very foundational to have a market at KOA. A couple suggestions I would have, one plays into influencers strategy. So it is one thing to have a Facebook presence or Instagram, you know blast out yourself, but it is more impactful to engage people on these national parks, invite these people that have audiences of their own.

So if you just hope for it to organically happen, there is some of that and there are some success stories, but we are very thoughtful about our engagement with specific influencers, whether that be someone that is starting a family, you know, a mom in our blogger target, or something to do with diversity stays, for example, that we get them onto our campgrounds to experience that and they are sharing it to a much wider audience.

The other thing I would add with social media is that Facebook, Instagram in particular, are so sophisticated in the way you can target, so we can get our message, we can be very specific about which zip codes we want to hit, which interests these people have based on what they post on, other pages that they like, and so you can have a very sophisticated strategy of advertising within social media. It is not just about posting, it is about your digital marketing strategy to get, you know, they look like organic posts, but they are essentially ads, in front of people. So you could be targeting the region, you could be targeting certain areas of the country, about specific locations to attract that awareness.

Senator DAINES. Go ahead and keep the microphone. I will try to project, you can keep the mic. So these influencers you are talking about, are for the benefit of those who may not be in that world watching that, where you have Instagram sites that are primarily having a travel experience. That is all they do. They travel and they post their experiences, people follow that, and they want to mimic that experience they have. It is particularly targeted to millennials, which is a big part of demographics as we are thinking about where we could target. Could you talk a little more about who might—specifically talk about this park, what influencers do you look at? Are there some particular influencers you might think about—you don't have to give me specifics—you probably have some ideas in mind. What partnerships—thinking about with Southwest Montana, with development, with our commissioners, with the park here? We might want to bring them here to post on Instagram, Facebook, and that has ignited some significant shift in park visitation in other places around this country. I mean, remarkable results. Just think more about how we might do that because it is a fairly cost-effective way to market.

Ms. O'ROURKE. Yes, it is very cost-effective. So there was a lot of talk earlier about word-of-mouth marketing?

Senator DAINES. Yes.

Ms. O'ROURKE. Really, it is about word of “mouse” marketing in today's world—

[Laughter.]

And so people, and there are a lot of stats around it, how they are influenced to travel is based on what they see friends and family posting. They have been more so influenced by people they trust online. So that you know, retail companies use this all the time, they send their clothes to fashion bloggers that post images of them in these outfits, they cultivate these communities of people that follow and trust their advice, and then they order that product.

So it is similar in travel. It is a really big deal, and I think we can take more advantage of that within the park system. So a place like this, you know, if you were asking for my suggestions, top of mind, I would definitely play into the family target. And I talked about I think the millennial family is very important. Millennial parents are very interested in educating their children. They want to provide them unique experiences. They want to get them outdoors.

And so if you can create environments where you are bringing some of the social media influencers that have audiences of families, you know, mothers that are watching them of young children

and you are bringing them here with their children, they are getting that educational experience. They are seeing all of the unique things that Grant-Kohrs has to offer. They are going to write stories about that on their blogs. They are going to post pictures of that on Instagram.

And these people have hundreds of thousands of followers, and then they bookmark that, and that becomes one of their bucket lists. And we do this every day, and I think it is how you can get very targeted for very, very little money and investment.

Senator DAINES. Right. So you have a facility here you mentioned, right?

Ms. O'ROURKE. We do.

Senator DAINES. As you think about, if you were going to market for the Grant-Kohrs KOA Campground here, are there some influencers that come to mind as you think about that, both domestic and perhaps even internationally? And then how we might, in building strategy here, make that stop, Yellowstone and Glacier would be anchor locations, we could use that to our advantage, figure out ways of making that trek?

We want to make sure they spend not just a bathroom break here, but I would get them here, into town, and have an experience here where this becomes a high-priority part of the travel experience and not just a place to take a stretch point?

Ms. O'ROURKE. Right. And the other, you know, trend is FOMO, the fear of missing out. So if they feel like something is happening here, that they came all this way to Montana and Wyoming, and then they drove right by it and they are missing out, and your messaging can be structured around that. And this could be very targeted in advertising through geo-targeting so you can hit somebody when they are in view, and they are seeing—you know, everyone is on their phone. I just got off a road trip with my family, and I sat on my phone half the time while my husband was driving and I was getting ads for things happening in Colorado as we were driving through Colorado.

You make people think with those ads that they are missing out on real, true, authentic Western experience, you know, just a stop down the road. So if I'm marketing, to your question, the KOA here, I am promoting—I am drawing that camper base here because there are all these things to do in the area. So we find people choose campground locations based on location. So you have to sell them what there is to do here, and a lot of ways to do that is not just show it but to really show it authentically.

And people, you know, not just a billboard, and billboards are very important, but really show what is happening behind that whether you are doing it online, on the billboard, or in a magazine ad, that feeling that they are missing out on something and they have to stop.

Senator DAINES. Okay. Are there comments, thoughts? Jacque, you want to follow up on that too? Sure.

Ms. LAVELLE. Yes, I would agree. And I love the FOMO. I think that is absolutely accurate. The other thing which happens a lot at Deer Lodge, Facebook is definitely a media that is heavily used for people to communicate about events, and I noticed we will post something on our Facebook page and then the Deer Lodge classi-

fieds will post it on their page, and then the Chamber of Commerce will post it on their page. So sometimes that reposting actually builds that FOMO excitement of, why are all these people talking about this event? I did see the announcement for this hearing posted several times yesterday on our Facebook page and Facebook for Deer Lodge classifieds.

Mr. JENKINS. The National Park Service has social media accounts that are both handling nationally as well as also locally. And nationally, our DC office works to highlight lesser-visited parks, but perhaps more directly to your question is what we also have is some of the larger parks are actually stepping up to market the less-visited parks. Grand Teton actually has Wyoming Wednesday, where every Wednesday they use their social media to be able to highlight places around the State of Wyoming to inform people.

So I think it is—we also have many parks, just as Jacque was saying, working to get expertise such as what Toby, you know, talks about to be able to try to develop a social media marketing plan and be able to identify what is appropriate for the National Park Service to do, what is appropriate for private businesses to do, but how you can go about coordinating your social media activities so that you are amplifying it in a strategic way.

Senator DAINES. So Jacque, you need to go talk to Jeff Mow and have Montana Monday, how is that?

[Laughter.]

Ms. LAVELLE. Great idea.

Senator DAINES. So Cam Sholly is the Superintendent of Yellowstone National Park and Jeff Mow of Glacier National Park, for those who may not know those names.

A question about cost and return on investment. As some of you know, I spent most of my career in the private sector, so politics is still a new thing for me, and marketing was always such an important part of any business. If you are not selling, you are not moving your business forward and keeping the lights on. Think about the relative costs whereas you think about marketing budgets, it is always tight budgets, there is never a lot of excess dollars floating around in this world. What do you think would be the most effective use of marketing, and that may mean to back up a social media site, in terms of the greater return on investment for marketing spent?

Ms. O'ROURKE. We are very data-driven in my business, so we track everything. We transitioned most of our money out of TV into digital. We can return \$22 per dollar spent on a digital ad and that is not necessarily, that can exist within social media, but that could be, you know, standard billboard ads that you may see while you are navigating the site, or search advertising is probably the most efficient and effective way we can market our business and you have to be top of the pole, you have to be the first one or two. And sometimes we see upwards of \$27 of return based on an investment in that area—

Senator DAINES. For a dollar?

Ms. O'ROURKE. For a dollar. And so as you are—it is very, you know, based on keywords. You have to be in front of what you think people are searching, and I think there is a big opportunity to market places like this and others across the country if you are

focused on road trips, and you know people are looking at Yellowstone, so you buy Yellowstone keywords to promote Grant-Kohrs. They are already going to Yellowstone, so they are searching all these things to do in Yellowstone, but you are serving them ads and they are like, oh, yeah, we are going to drive right by there. And that, we find, our most return comes from digital ads.

Ms. BANNON. I find that it is really hard to measure the other side of advertising. Digital is cost-effective, but you also find that you have a lot of people that like to read while they are in the car. So I find it is nice to have both the digital and brochures saying come in to Grant-Kohrs because it is not necessarily on their radar. If they are going through say Yellowstone, but they see the brochure, they say, oh, yes, let's keep this on our radar and that is passed through on that. So I think you need a variety of ways of marketing your attractions.

Mr. JENKINS. And just to build on how to give credit to Jeff up in Glacier is that, you know, many national parks have a park newspaper. Well Glacier dedicates a page in their park newspaper to Grant-Kohrs, so people visiting there, when they come through the entrance gate, they get something they can read in the car about Grant-Kohrs.

Senator DAINES. That is great. How about Cam?

Mr. JENKINS. Well, we will have a conversation.

[Laughter.]

Senator DAINES. Cam is a dear friend. I was going to try to get a few days out there to spend some time together off the beaten path in Yellowstone this summer, but it is not working out that much, maybe next year. Thank you for that discussion and that thought. Spending time here, and you think about the off-the-beaten-path, and again that word authentic was used, the genuineness of this experience and the lack of crowds and so forth, and so many things people are yearning for. They come to Montana to get away from the traffic, away from the urban kind of environment, and I think you have got something very, very special here.

I have a question back for Ms. O'Rourke. KOA, like the National Park Service, manages a lot of individual units across the U.S. You are in Alaska, Maine, as well as in Canada and, of course, your campground here in Deer Lodge. Just like the Park Service, or really any business with a retail presence, some sites are just getting more popular than others. What does KOA, or if you are able to share, how do you identify new sites for your portfolio as you look at a potential visitation stream? Approximate national park unit is something you might look at as you think about expansion.

Ms. O'ROURKE. Thank you. Yes, as I said, we have 520 locations across the country. Each of our franchised properties, which is the majority of that, is guaranteed of territory. So in some ways that can restrict our ability to oversaturate one particular area. For example, the Yellowstone parks we were talking about earlier and Glacier or any national park campgrounds are very, very busy and popular because there are people traveling to those parks so naturally they are camping outside the parks. Our strategy is to put as many KOAs around those parks as possible, and a lot of our owners are adding additional locations because it is within their terri-

tory. We cannot just add another one. They are guaranteed a certain territory.

But other ways we look to expand, you know, our business grew up on highways and byways, the interstate system. We actually have three types of campgrounds that were segmented: the resort destinations; holiday locations, which are base camps to explore; and journey parks, and journey parks are all about convenience for that traveler. So we do have some campgrounds that are more popular based on their location, but each of our campgrounds serve some sort of purpose. It could be aiding that traveler. And so if I'm equating that to the park system, every park has, you know, there are certain crown jewels and there is another part that maybe serves a different purpose. They are all meeting that need of someone exploring our heritage and they can be promoted, just like that road trip, again going back to that.

So just as a journey campground serving someone traveling, so could this campground be a great step for an afternoon while they are going to make it to their ultimate destination in Glacier and make their stay in the campgrounds there. So I don't know if that answers your question, but absolutely it is driven by tourism markets, it is driven by national parks, urban centers. We have campgrounds outside of major cities as there's people looking to get outside the city, and that is our expansion strategy.

Senator DAINES. Mr. Jenkins, you are the Director of the entire Intermountain Region. You serve under the National Park Service. Thank you for your service. Could you share some of the success stories that might come to mind where you have seen maybe smaller parks where they have been able to drive some increase in visitation, increase in visibility, and perhaps there are parks within your territory, or stories you have heard about other parks around the country that once were kind of off-the-beaten-path and now are increasing their numbers?

Mr. JENKINS. Sure. First, what I would say is, kind of, every place where there is an example of successfully marketing the opportunity with a lesser-known park pretty much is universally as a result of a partnership or partnerships, work collaboration with local communities, collaboration with local businesses, collaboration with state organizations. It is not something that we can do alone, and part of it is, is leveraging resources to be able to do that.

I think a nice example that is going on is actually the Big Hole National Battlefield where the park is continuing to grow the relationship with the Nez Perce tribe. Many, many people both from the United States and from around the world are fascinated about tribal history and culture, and the working relationship of Big Hole and also the other Nez Perce sites where the tribe is willing to come in and do cultural demonstrations, where they are able to do drumming and singing, language programs. Again, it goes to that authenticity. It is the real thing and it is done by the people who, you know, it is their heritage, telling their story. I think that that is part of what is attractive here at Grant-Kohrs. It is the real heritage.

In addition, we are also working with local businesses about how they can play a role with commercial tours and tying in with other local businesses in terms of being able to have crafts that are also

being sold. So that is one example. I think a different place, and a little bit of a different angle, is a Little Bighorn, where we are seeing a change in visitation. We are seeing people showing up with larger vehicles, particularly trailers, and within the existing footprint that we have, you know, just being able to be a welcoming place as part of our deferred maintenance, we need to modernize the parking lot so that we can reconfigure within the existing footprint, so that we can accommodate people being able to come with the projected way that they are going to be visiting there. And so working with funding that comes from Congress in order to be able to make the infrastructure changes that we are making at those parks.

Senator DAINES. Yes. When you think about it, our history in this country is still relatively new compared to a lot of the world. You used that Nez Perce example, or the cowboy experience here, it is not that far removed. In fact, I had dinner with an 83-year-old rancher in Carbon County early this week, and he was talking about his grandfather and it was just direct memories of when he came to Montana pre-statehood. And you think about, that was his grandpa and he still has firsthand memories of that. And we have a chance to preserve that, right, and to share that.

I wanted to talk too about the veteran population, one of targeted groups we can have in terms of driving tourism. Last year there was a bill that I sponsored called the Every Kid Outdoors Act, talking about the importance there in the demographic of millennials and so forth, getting kids out of the house into our national parks. I should say the students not kids. I am a father—having a slip there. I was happy to see that that was signed into law by the President as part of this Lands package we passed earlier this year. A historic Lands package.

This year, we are working on increasing veterans' access to our parks. It is a bill and it is called Accelerating Veterans Recovery Outdoors Act, and here in Montana we have a lot of Wounded Warrior programs bringing veterans here who have suffered injuries in the battlefield and come out here, we take them fly fishing, we take them hunting. There are a lot of great stories of where they have experienced the Montana way of life. This bill will not only help get veterans into our parks, but also help, again, with their recovery and treatment from some of their injuries.

Mr. Jenkins, could you talk a bit about the parks that give passes to veterans and students to expand visitation? You shared a little bit earlier about Every Kid Outdoors, and particularly how it applies to our less-visited parks?

Mr. JENKINS. Sure. First of all, thank you for the support of the Every Kid Outdoors Act. I mean that has been—in the Every Kid in a Park program, in the first four years of existence, there were over 600,000 fourth graders that participated in that program. That is a remarkable success, and the fact that that program was authorized to continue into the future gives us and the BLM, the Fish and Wildlife Service, and the Forest Service, a very powerful tool to work with our partners for that. Programs like that are important both for the passes and also incentivizing nonprofit organizations, like the National Park Foundation and others, to provide grants to work with educators and schools so that we bring fourth

graders to parks. And then as a part of their school visit, they get an Every Kid Outdoors pass.

So we are leveraging a lot of different resources in order to be able to do that. Hopefully, the kid, the student, goes back from there, from their fourth grade class trip, takes their pass home, and that incentivizes the whole family then to be able to come and visit the park or multiple parks. In terms of working with our military, both active and veterans, it is—one of the angles, as Toby pointed out, you know, part of it is working in the diversity space and one of the most diverse organizations in this country is the military.

And so there, actually the Park Service has been viewing that as kind of double duty, both honoring the service of working with those who are active duty and veterans, but it is also an enormous opportunity for us to be able to connect with diverse audiences and diverse organizations. And we work with a variety of different partner organizations to host veterans to be able to come in a variety of different ways, and we are experimenting and piloting different programs, particularly around helping veterans heal and move to post-military service careers.

For example, I would use my day job. I am Superintendent at Mount Rainier National Park. We work with an organization called Mission Continues, where for the last several years the Mission Continues leadership comes to Mount Rainier and they spend four or five days doing a combination of service projects where they are working together and doing team building, and then around the campfire and over evenings, they are doing strategic planning for the organization about how they can bring other vets to be able to be engaged.

Senator DAINES. Well, thanks. I think we cannot underestimate the power of that experience. We had a young Green Beret from Montana that was nearly killed in action in March in Afghanistan. I visited him in Walter Reed. He is from Northwest Montana and I will keep it anonymous here because he is in Special Ops, but then he could not walk again. He got out of Walter Reed, and as they were pushing the wheelchair around the Capitol Hill earlier this year, so you can see it, then fast-forward to Fort Carson a couple weeks ago shooting on their long-range thousand meter targets. Guess who showed up to shoot with me? This young Green Beret from Montana. And as part of the healing process, we said we would elk hunt here this fall, and he was so excited. And the day when we lost one of our key Green Berets on July 13th, a 40-year-old gentleman with three children tragically killed who was a mentor to all these Green Berets, and on that really dark day, that text I sent him, would you like to go elk hunting in Montana? And now they are going to come, and of course we will work on the project. Anyway, it is a little of that important part, I guess. Just one more story to add.

Well, we are going to move toward our conclusion here. Before we close, I would like to ask one more question to each of you, and we have discussed a lot of different thoughts, thrown some ideas out there about ways to perhaps cost-effectively improve traffic and visibility here to a place like Grant-Kohrs. Here is the question. If

you were to leave one suggestion for Congress, for the Administration—I am sorry, it can only be one——

[Laughter.]

We are just interested in Montana in general, what would you want to see done that might help improve visitation at a site like Grant-Kohrs, and anything you would like to see done specifically? And we are going to open up to whoever wants to go first, and Jacque you get to have a word on this as well, okay, as the honorary fifth member of the panel. So if anybody wants to start that out, let me know.

Ms. BANNON. Well, I like the idea that we will continue our marketing and really focusing on this national historic site. I would like to find a way to get more, and this goes against the new way, but the traditional, I would like to have some brochures. We have brochure exchanges. We have our Glacier Park National Park. I feel if we can get Grant-Kohrs Ranch in there, this is right in-between, it is right on the trail. It is in their hands. I think if we can get more brochures, we will get them out to all our area and our neighboring areas. So I would like to be able to do that.

Mr. CRACHY. Thank you, and I would like to kind of play on that too. I am old-fashioned, you might say. I don't have a cellphone—I don't have a smartphone.

[Laughter.]

I don't have cell service at my house, so I don't have a smartphone. I do have a flip phone. Brochures are great. I learned a lot about what social media has to do. I am not on Facebook and all that, but I did learn a lot from Ms. O'Rourke about how good of an advertising factor that is. I want to make sure that we, as a county, we are in cooperation with the city and the Chamber of Commerce. We do have an individual that is hired jointly that we all have that is just for that purpose of trying to bring anything of importance, or bring tourism in or anything, into the county in general, and also with the city and the Chamber.

But we are not only looking at Deer Lodge, we are also looking at our little rural communities like Vandal, Helmsville, smaller ones. If they have anything that they are doing, trying to get it out and advertise through this individual. I know she uses social media. Thank you very much for having me.

Senator DAINES. Thanks, Commissioner. Ms. O'Rourke.

Ms. O'ROURKE. Thank you. So the first one is that I would offer brand partnerships representing private industry here. We get, you know, discussions a lot with the Interior Department about private investment in parks or centers, but let's extend that discussion to something Chip talked about, maybe think about ways that we could better partner together for purposes of marketing because that drives my business and drives visitations to each of these individual locations.

And before the hearing he had shared that the park system can't actually buy ads. So the discussion we had, I did not know, and I do know now that you can't actually invest money into those digital ads, but I can, and I can do that to the benefit of both of us. So I think that there is something to be explored there. But the thing I wanted to talk about again, we talked about children and we talked about veterans and I touched briefly in my statement about

minorities. I think that that is a huge area of opportunity nationally for targeting and be more inclusive and focusing on bringing minority demographics to the outdoors, into our national parks, whether it is the large parks or the small parks.

And there is a lot of work to do and with my own business we are tackling this as well. We are having an inclusion in camping summit at the Presidio, another national park, in September where we are bringing together leaders in our campground organizations to have discussions specifically about inclusion because we are learning, while the numbers are showing their steady progress, there is so much work to do. There were studies done several years ago out of Wyoming that showed that, for example, the study was an African-American demographic that said they did not feel welcomed in the national parks. Other things coming out of that research was showing that among Hispanic or African-American, they did not even know about the national parks. And so that is something we work on in our business and I think that can be elevated. That plays into the being inclusive in your marketing, that plays into working specific outreach programs with these influencers.

That is how we are starting right now that I talked about earlier. There are a lot of activists groups that have been formed across the board. It is not just people of color communities. It is also LGBTQ and handicap and women as well. So I think there is a lot of work that can be done there and it is not just marketing to market, it is true, authentic engagement. And that is where we are shifting as a brand and I think the Park Service could do that as well because then it seems more welcoming and more real.

And then the third part to that is also representation in park rangers and in staff. So on my side, I want to look at how I can increase numbers of franchisees from people of color communities and other underrepresented groups, and I think some national parks have made efforts and inroads to increase diversity, not just among color but also with women and I think that that is important to continue, because when that is played back to the visitor, they feel welcomed there and that helps increase visitation.

So I think that is a huge initiative that the outdoors needs to embrace across the board, and it is private industry as well as public.

Mr. JENKINS. You can have the last word. Senator, thank you for your work on focusing on the different maintenance backlog and that is what I would say is that it is continuing the effort. Making progress on deferred maintenance is fundamental to world-class visitor experience, and we want people to have a world-class experience from Glacier to Grant-Kohrs. And Congress' continued focus on helping us to address the maintenance backlog will get us there.

Ms. LAVELLE. Thank you for the last word. Senator, the one thing I would say that would make a difference is just what you are doing here today. You have made a conscious decision to come to a lesser-known park and have a public event. And I would say, in my tenure of six years here, this is the first elected representative that has ever visited Grant-Kohrs Ranch. So I applaud you, and I invite you to share that with your colleagues.

Lesser-known parks are in every state in the country, and it is common and very easy to think, I am going to go to Yellowstone, I am going to Yosemite as my backdrop for my event, or for a citizenship ceremony, or for hosting some activity, or even going to an event. It is not common that lesser-known parks are thought of, and I appreciate the fact that you are willing to do that because we are absolutely willing to host events like this.

Senator DAINES. Well, thank you. Ms. O'Rourke, in your opening testimony you talked about a 150-mile kind of a radius where folks are going. I think of my own hometown in Bozeman, which is the fastest-growing micropolitan in America now, which is defined as 50,000 people or less. There are nearly 50,000 people in Bozeman. All the folks move in there and you are exactly right on that radius, two hours, for that family that is looking for something to do on a weekend to kind of get off the beaten path.

And so there are probably some opportunities right here in our backyard that we have around us, some of which I jotted down as well. You could—you drive another 500 people, you know, if that makes a dent, or 1,000, a couple thousand—126,000 visitors a year here.

Well, thank you. I really appreciate the witnesses for your testimony and your thoughts. Jacque, thank you for all you did here to make this happen today. Thanks to our audience as well that is here to see what it is like sitting here. It is a little more relaxed here than in Washington. In some ways, this is the way Government works and it should work that way. I find we can bring DC out here to Montana. We have a discussion here that we got a number of to-dos that hopefully will drive the endgame here, which is increasing visitors coming to Grant-Kohrs, helping out Powell County and these communities around here.

I want to thank the witnesses for your time and your testimony today. The hearing record will be open for two weeks.

This hearing is now adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 12:30 p.m., the hearing was adjourned.]

APPENDIX MATERIAL SUBMITTED

U.S. Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources
 Subcommittee on National Parks
 August 8, 2019 Field Hearing
Opportunities to Expand Visitation at Lesser-Known National Park System Units
 Questions for the Record Submitted to Mr. Palmer “Chip” Jenkins

Question 1: In 2018, Theodore Roosevelt National Park saw 750,000 visitors, a near record number of visitors. However, nationally, Theodore Roosevelt National Park ranks 93rd among National Park Service (NPS) Sites visited, and 27th among national parks, accounting for just 0.24% of the total NPS visitation in 2018. How can the NPS work with local and state industry stakeholders to promote lesser-visited sites such as Theodore Roosevelt National Park?

Response: The National Park Service works closely with state and local tourism partners to manage and promote high-quality visitor experiences. This work varies depending on the needs and priorities of the park and the community.

The work that is done by Theodore Roosevelt National Park with state and local industry stakeholders serves as a good example of how the National Park Service works with state and local partners to promote lesser-visited parks. The park management team works closely with the North Dakota Department of Tourism and Commerce to promote the park and the state through tourism events, conferences, and advertising campaigns. The park partners with the North Dakota State Department of Parks and Recreation as well as the US Forest Service on administration, maintenance, and events for the Maah Daah Hey Trail, a 144-mile long-distance trail that runs through all three units of the park. The park staff provides tours and park orientation for staff from local businesses and visitor-focused service organizations, and for faculty from state educational institutions.

Question 2: As you know, Theodore Roosevelt National Park is the only national park named after a person and honors our former president and the time he spent in North Dakota. Theodore Roosevelt lived in the North Dakota badlands as a rancher and in fact, he often said that he would not have been President had it not been for his experience in North Dakota. Today, the Theodore Roosevelt Presidential Library foundation is working to build a presidential library in the park. What benefits can a project such as this can have on a lesser-visited site and the surrounding gateway communities?

Response: Because a presidential library in the vicinity of Theodore Roosevelt National Park would certainly attract visitors, we would expect that many of those visitors would take advantage of the opportunity to visit the park while they are there. However, the National Park Service has no way of accurately gauging how much a presidential library would benefit the park or its surrounding gateway communities.

U.S. Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources
 Subcommittee on National Parks
 August 8, 2019 Field Hearing
Opportunities to Expand Visitation at Lesser-Known National Park System Units
 Question for the Record Submitted to Ms. Toby O'Rourke

Question from Senator John Hoeven

Question: As you may know, the Northern Plains National Heritage Area covers an 80-mile stretch along the Missouri River in central North Dakota. Important sites in the heritage area include the Knife River Indian Villages and Fort Abraham Lincoln. These sites are vital to the heritage of the region. You mention in your testimony that the 2019 Portrait of the American Traveler shows that the percentage of American travelers taking a road trip has increased 64% since 2015. Can you discuss the symbiotic relationship between camping and road-tripping, as well as how this could serve as a benefit to lesser-visited national parks and other heritage sites that are not as easily accessible by major metropolitan airports?

Response: Thank you, Senator Hoeven, for the question and opportunity to respond. As mentioned in my original testimony there has been impressive growth in road trip activity over the past couple of years. The 2019 Portrait of the American Traveler research shows that the percentage of American travelers taking a road trip has increased 64 percent since 2015. More than half of American travelers took a road trip during the past year and two-thirds intend to take one during the next twelve months. The survey further offered that those who have taken road trips intend to take more vacations and spend more money on vacation than those who have not taken a road trip.

The motivations for taking a road trip according to the respondents range from the flexibility in being able to make stops along the way (62%) to having the ability to pack everything needed for vacation in the car (54%) and nostalgia for past road trip vacations (19%). It also appears that road trips are appealing to multiple generations. While 58 percent of millennials took a road trip in the past year, 53 percent of Gen X and 52 percent of Boomers did as well.

There is a natural symbiotic relationship between camping and road-tripping as you mention. When KOA was formed nearly sixty years ago, cross-country road trips were very common and our business formed as a response to that. A high number of our parks exist on the major highways and byways of North America, and our KOA Journey sub-brand is built on the idea of providing convenience for the traveling camper. The majority of our business is coming in recreational vehicles although there is a sizable number of tent and cabin campers coming by car.

The increasing popularity of road trips could definitely benefit lesser visited national parks and monuments. To start, we do see through our research, the North American Camping Report, that 70 percent of campers are camping within 150 miles from home. Marketing to those within easy driving distance of the parks can create awareness for short micro-cations (vacations less than four nights) nearby. Secondly, tapping into the romanticism of the road trip through marketing to those who may be flying to visit one of the more frequented national parks could help expand awareness. Sparking a sense of adventure could encourage visitors to expand their trip and take a road trip to other locations. I would suggest partnerships with not only with RV and car rental agencies. There sharing economy has expanded to RVing with companies such as Outdoorsy and RVShare allowing RV owners to rent their RV to others. Such partnerships can help benefit both campgrounds and national parks.