
Centennial Initiative News Release



April 24, 2008

Secretary Kempthorne announces first round of National Park Centennial projects

\$50 million public-private partnership will improve national parks nationwide this year

(Washington) –Secretary of the Interior Dirk Kempthorne today unveiled the 110 national park improvement projects and programs that will get underway this spring, funded by an equal combination of public and private funds, under President Bush’s National Park Centennial Initiative. The Initiative, announced in 2006, proposed an innovative federal Centennial Challenge matching fund that would be used to match philanthropic contributions for the benefit of our national parks between now and the 100th anniversary of the National Park Service in 2016.

The more than \$50 million in projects announced today on the steps of the U.S. Capitol, overlooking the National Mall, result from the combination of \$24.6 million in federal funds that match nearly \$27 million in philanthropic contributions.

“I am pleased to announce the first round of National Park Centennial Projects that will be undertaken with the first round of funding appropriated by Congress in the 2008 budget,” Kempthorne said at the event supported by the National Park Foundation. “Ground will be broken and work underway very soon. This first round of projects will improve parks nationwide – large and small, urban and rural, natural and historical.

“And that’s just for this year,” said National Park Service Director Mary A. Bomar. “Congress continues its work on legislation to create the President’s National Park Centennial Challenge Matching Fund, an annual fund to match up to \$100 million a year of donations through our centennial in 2016.”

The first round of Centennial Challenge projects range from expansion of a popular outdoor stewardship education outreach program for teen-agers in the Washington, D.C. area to saving endangered sea turtles along the Texas coast at Padre Island to renovation of Yosemite National Park’s iconic Tunnel View Overlook to citizen scientist and citizen naturalist projects at national parks across the country.

“For example, park rangers at Lewis and Clark National Historical Park in Oregon, will adopt the

Class of 2016 and bring the students to the park for special programs and events until they graduate from high school,” Kempthorne said. “I can see that as a program that is undertaken by every national park in America and a great way to engage young people and share with them the legacy and heritage of national parks.”

“There is even a project that will unfold right behind you on the National Mall,” Kempthorne said as he looked from the U.S. Capitol steps westward toward the Washington Monument. “We’ll soon install new, modern interpretive signs near important monuments and memorials on the Mall, as well as new way-finder signs to help guide visitors to other downtown locations near the Mall. Both will improve the visitor experience so that our visitors take away a more lasting and enjoyable memory of their visit to our nation’s capital.”

National Park Service Director Mary A. Bomar said, “Today we celebrate getting the first Centennial Challenge projects off the drawing board and into the parks. We also look forward to the day Congress passes Centennial Challenge legislation so that through 2016 there will be federal money available to match up to \$100 million a year of donations. There are many more worthy projects partners are ready to support for the Centennial.

“I want to emphasize today, however, my personal gratitude to the President and the Secretary for the centennial initiative,” Bomar said. “I also offer my thanks and congratulations to our many partners who have provided overwhelming support for these projects so that we are able to reach so far just this first year of Centennial Challenge projects and programs.”

Bomar said park superintendents will begin these projects almost immediately. “We really have to get cracking,” she said. “Many of our parks have a short construction season for the brick and mortar and trail projects and our park rangers will need to quickly learn and add new programs for the big rush of visitors that return to the parks in a few short months.”

Other highlighted Centennial Challenge projects and programs:

- Restoration of disturbed lands in Everglades National Park.
- A national effort to discover and record all living things in national parks with BioBlitzes and all-taxa biodiversity inventories in nine parks across the country.
- Upgraded and new interpretive trails at San Antonio Missions National Historical Park, Valley Forge National Historical Park, Kennesaw Mountain National Battlefield Park, Hagerman Fossil Beds National Monument, Point Reyes National Seashore and other parks.
- Restoration of ancient redwood forest and watershed in Redwood National Park.
- Water quality enhancement, restoration of endangered mussels, reintroduction of Trumpeter Swans and wetland habitat learning experiences for visitors at Buffalo National River.
- Creation of *The Institute at the Golden Gate* to advance preservation and global sustainability at Golden Gate National Recreation Area in San Francisco.
- Development and expansion of Junior Ranger programs at several national parks.
- Expansion of ranger interpretation at C&O Canal National Historical Park and the George Washington Memorial Parkway with new technology including podcasts and videocasts.

For a complete list of the 2008 National Park Service Centennial Challenge Projects and Programs please visit www.nps.gov/2016

For Centennial Initiative photos please visit www.nps.gov/pub_aff/2016photos/index.htm

EXPERIENCE YOUR AMERICA™

The National Park Service cares for special places saved by the American people so that all may experience our heritage.