

TESTIMONY OF
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Forests, and Public Lands
Legislative Hearing
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Good morning. My name is Will Shafroth, and I am the President and CEO of the National Park Foundation. On behalf of our board members, and all who love America's most treasured spaces, I would like to thank the Subcommittee for holding this hearing, and taking the time to consider H.R. 7693, the National Park Foundation Reauthorization Act of 2022, among the many other important items on the docket today.

Chartered by Congress in 1967, the National Park Foundation was founded on a legacy that began more than a century ago, when private citizens from all walks of life acted to establish and protect our national parks. Today, the National Park Foundation carries on that tradition as the only national charitable nonprofit whose sole mission is to directly support the National Park Service. Working together with the National Park Service and a very dedicated community of passionate park champions, the National Park Foundation strives to ensure that all people are able to discover their own personal connections to national parks, because they don't just stand for where America has been—but inspire where we go next.

The success of the National Park Foundation is intrinsically tied to the passion, engagement, and contributions of its board of directors, many donors, and corporate partners. In fiscal year (FY) 2021, the National Park Foundation raised over \$128 million, from individuals, corporations, foundations, and federal appropriations.

Highlights of the Foundation's work during FY 2021 include:

- Connecting more than 184,000 students to parks;
- Maintaining more than 900 miles of park trails;
- Modernizing campgrounds and trails by making them more accessible to all; and
- Expanding its investment in Service Corps crews—NPF's investment in service corps supported 60,000 hours of service at over 50 national parks.

As we look to where the Foundation and parks go next, I would be remiss if I didn't mention how far we have come. The Foundation's Centennial Campaign (2013-2018) was a tremendously successful national undertaking that raised approximately \$550 million for national park priorities and programs.

To build upon this work, NPF, NPS, and dozens of park partner organizations have been thoughtfully planning an unprecedented high-impact collaborative campaign to support national parks. While I'll have more to say about that at a future date, for now I can say that the the focus

of the campaign closely aligns with the priorities of the National Park Service, including conservation and preservation of threatened parks and wildlife; ensuring a world-class visitor experience; telling the story of America; and nurturing the next generation of park stewards.

The National Park Service Centennial Act authorized the National Park Foundation to receive up to \$5 million in annual appropriations through FY 2023. This annual appropriation requires NPF to provide a minimum of a dollar-for-dollar match for NPS projects and programs. Since receiving its first appropriation in FY 2018, the Foundation has leveraged the federal funds with more than double the amount of private funds invested in programs and projects in national parks.

Since first receiving annual appropriations in FY 2018, NPF has used these dollars to fund more than 100 projects in 32 states and 2 territories. By the end of the next fiscal year, it is the Foundation's goal to have funded projects in all 50 states and multiple territories, including projects in service corps, historical preservation, and wildlife conservation.

Since I'm sure the committee is interested in learning more about some of recent projects, here are a few examples:

- A \$500,000 (\$250,000 from federal appropriations) grant to the Corps Network. This grant, while admittedly a bit technical, will work to ensure Service Corps are able to complete Great American Outdoors-funded projects in small- and medium-sized park units around the country. We think this investment will further leverage about \$5- \$7 million worth of GAOA deferred maintenance funds projects.
- Zion National Park received a \$500,000 grant (\$250,000 federal) to replace an aging shuttle fleet system with zero-tailpipe emission battery-electric buses and chargers.
- At the Grand Canyon, the Foundation partnered with the Grand Canyon Conservancy to provide a transform the Desert View area visitor's center, a \$3.67 million total project, using \$500,000 in appropriated dollars, \$500,000 in private, and the remaining from pre-planned NPS accounts. The new site will be transformed from a scenic overlook and visitors center at the South Rim of the Canyon into an Intertribal Cultural Heritage Site. Once complete, the Service will continue to partner with local tribes, who will offer expanded educational and cultural programs and demonstrations, allowing visitors to learn directly from tribal representatives and artisans.
- The Foundation provided \$185,297 (50% appropriations, 50% private funds) for three separate Service Corps projects at parks in Michigan this past season—two at Sleeping Bear Dunes and one at Isle Royale. All had an emphasis on developing job skills for at-risk youth, and two worked in historic preservation.
- A \$2.3 million (\$455,000 in federal funds) grant to restore the Carter G. Woodson Home National Historic Site in Washington, D.C. This project creates new immersive exhibits using interpretive graphics, artifacts, film, interactive touchscreens, flipbooks, and other dimensional objects to more deeply engage visitors with the life and legacy of Dr. Woodson.
- Katahdin Woods and Waters National Monument received \$100,000 (\$50,000 from federal appropriations) to improve and expand camping access and facilities near the historic Lunksoos Camps on the East Branch of the Penobscot River. Accessible by road

and river, the campground was built to NPS standards for walk-in sites and features ADA toilet facilities, one ADA-compliant site, and connecting trails.

NPF continues to work in close partnership with NPS to deploy funding for national park improvements including rehabilitating trails, visitor centers, and other facilities, expanding youth access and engagement via public lands service corps, conserving park habitat, and boosting NPS resiliency efforts, among many others. These funds are critical in reducing deferred maintenance, making our parks more resilient and sustainable, and increasing access for current and future generations of parks visitors.

With this strong track record over the past 4 years, with the needs only expanding in our national parks for additional investment, and with the Foundation's ability to raise private funds at an all-time high, the National Park Foundation Reauthorization Act could not come at a better time. H.R. 7693 would reauthorize the Foundation's annual appropriation through FY 2030 and increase the authorized amount from \$5 million to \$15 million.

As it has over the past 4 years, the Foundation would more than double the annual federal investment of \$15 million, creating more than \$30 million in annual impact in the National Park System. These federal funds help NPF to raise more funds by showing its donors that the federal government is a strong partner with the Foundation in supporting our treasured national parks.

I thank Ranking Member Westerman and Chairman Grijalva, and all of the original cosponsors for introducing the National Park Foundation Reauthorization Act, as well as those who have joined as cosponsors since.

I would like to thank the members of the committee for having me here to testify today, and I'm happy to answer any questions you may have.