

**STATEMENT OF MARY A. BOMAR, DIRECTOR, NATIONAL PARK SERVICE,
BEFORE THE SUBCOMMITTEE ON NATIONAL PARKS, FORESTS, AND PUBLIC
LANDS OF THE HOUSE NATURAL RESOURCES COMMITTEE CONCERNING THE
FISCAL YEAR 2009 BUDGET REQUEST FOR THE NATIONAL PARK SERVICE**

FEBRUARY 27, 2008

Mr. Chairman and members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today at this oversight hearing on the FY 2009 President's request for the National Park Service (NPS). We thank you for your continuing support of the work we do as stewards of many of our Nation's most treasured natural and cultural resources.

In this second year of the National Park Service Centennial Initiative, the NPS will continue to build on accomplishments and address challenges while working toward the vision set forth in *The Future of America's National Parks* report. The Administration and Congress have shown the high value the American people place on the National Park System by unveiling and funding the Centennial Initiative in the FY 2008 budget. In the FY 2009 President's budget, the NPS will re-propose the Centennial strategy to maintain the momentum of this bold initiative.

We are appreciative that Mr. Bishop introduced the Administration's proposed National Park Centennial Challenge Fund Act and that Mr. Grivalja introduced the National Park Centennial Fund Act. We appreciate all of the effort this subcommittee has given to this issue and we look forward to continuing to work with you to see that this legislation is enacted. This fund would be used to finance NPS signature projects and programs for the next 10 years. It would use Federal funding to leverage private cash donations to improve and enhance our national parks for another century of conservation and visitor enjoyment. It is vitally important that this legislation be in place as soon as possible to maintain the energy and excitement of our partners, our dedicated employees, and the public at large that has been generated as a result of the Centennial proposal.

The Secretary of the Interior presented an initial list of eligible signature projects and programs in August 2007. This project list draws on ideas generated through listening sessions, public engagement, and the input of NPS professionals. Over the next 10 years, the list will be expanded and the Secretary may amend the list annually. An annual report will provide financial information, such as the amount of donations collected, the rate of spending, and significant milestones and projects completed.

In FY 2008, the NPS will take the first step in implementing Centennial projects and programs by using the \$24.6 million in Centennial Challenge funding provided by Congress on an interim basis in absence of the Centennial legislation. This funding will be matched with cash donations from partners for worthy and valuable projects and programs that contribute to one or more of the Secretary's five centennial goals described in *The Future of America's National Parks*.

In FY 2008, the NPS received an increase of \$122.2 million or 6% for park operations. We appreciate your support for the 2008 program. With this infusion, we will be able to hire 3,000 seasonal national park rangers, guides and maintenance workers; repair building; enroll more

children in Junior and Web Ranger programs at the parks; and expand the use of volunteers in parks. The FY 2009 request builds on that with an increase in park operations of \$160.1 million, or 8% over the FY 2008 funding. Together these two-year increases total \$282.3 million - a 15% boost in park operations. With these increases, the total park operating budget is \$2.1 billion. For those funds directly under the control of park managers – generally termed the park base – there is an increase of nearly \$100 million, bringing this important total to \$1.292 billion. This commitment by the Administration reflects the importance of national parks to our Nation and recognizes that parks can play a meaningful role for broad segments of our society in bringing history and nature to life. This broad role is illustrated by the fact that there were more than 275 million visits to national parks in 2007. In 2006, according to a Michigan State University study, spending by those visitors contributed \$11 billion to communities near national parks, which translated into almost 250,000 local jobs.

The FY 2009 budget request proposes total discretionary budget authority of \$2.4 billion, an increase of \$13.9 million above the FY 2008 enacted budget. Discretionary authority includes the Operation of the National Park System, National Recreation and Preservation, Historic Preservation Fund, Construction, and Land Acquisition and State Assistance appropriations. The 2009 budget places a priority on ensuring operational capacity in parks with a budget that maintains the President's commitment to fiscal constraint. The asset management programs of the NPS remain strong and vital, with a budget request of \$989 million, an increase of \$10 million over 2008. This increase continues our focus on lifecycle management to safeguard the multi-billion investment in maintaining facilities.

The 2009 budget request includes an increase of \$5.2 million as part of the Department's overall Safe Borderlands initiative to enhance safety for public land visitors, residents, and employees and reduce the impacts affecting Interior-managed lands along the southwest border. Increased border enforcement in urban areas has resulted in a shift in the flow of illegal drugs and unauthorized people to rural areas and lands such as those managed by the National Park Service. In some locations, our employees, residents and visitors are facing significant risks from illegal activities and portions of these public lands are closed to visitors. Employees who live on site contend with the potential threat of vandalism, theft, and confrontation with illegal activities. The impacts to lands and resources have also been extensive, including abandoned vehicles and personal property, roads and through sensitive areas, and elevated threats to at-risk species. The increased funding in 2009 will allow the Park Service to deploy additional law enforcement personnel to patrol and protect employee housing areas, recreational areas and other high-use sites, improve communications with Interior and other law enforcement entities within the region, and mitigate environmental damage, including restoring high-priority habitat and wilderness areas.

The FY 2009 budget request includes an increase of \$37.9 million to fund all non-discretionary fixed cost increases. The request also includes an estimated \$573 million in mandatory accounts, including fee and concession receipts, donations, the United States Park Police Pension Fund, other special revenue authorities and the proposed Centennial Challenge Fund.

This second year of the Centennial Initiative will address a number of themes through an investment that will:

I. Build Park Operational Capacity through funding of \$79.4 million above the FY 2008 President's Request. Highlights include \$44.8 million for specific park base increases at 220 parks, \$5.2 million for increased security and resource restoration along the southwest border, \$4.8 million to provide a major increase in sworn officers for the United States Park Police, and \$6.0 million to allow parks to make full use of the Service's asset management system.

II. Provide Care for America's Treasures through a combination of flexible park base dollars and focused project funding totaling \$44.8 million. Highlights include \$20 million for the second year of the Flex Park Initiative, which seeks to improve park natural and cultural resource condition over a one- to three-year period and measure results, and \$22.8 million for preventive facility maintenance to improve recreational and historic park assets.

III. Ensure Organizational Capacity and Professional Development through \$5.6 million for improvements in human resources and contracting services; \$2.0 million for superintendent training, comprehensive, mission-oriented training for new employees and enhancement in distance learning capabilities; and \$340,000 for accountability and performance management enhancements. This nearly \$8.0 million investment is crucial in allowing the NPS to meet its responsibilities in a changing working environment and to ensure accountability for the resources it protects.

Beyond the Centennial funding proposals, the NPS budget includes \$66.1 million for Historic Preservation Fund grants, \$172.5 million for Construction and \$21.8 million for Federal Land Acquisition.

Highlights within the Historic Preservation appropriation include \$15.0 million for Save America's Treasures and \$10.0 million for Preserve America's grants, in addition to \$41.7 million in grants to States and Tribes. The FY 2009 budget includes \$2.0 million to establish Grants-In-Aid for a National Inventory of Historic Properties. These grants would make existing inventories more accessible and provide significant long-term cost savings for cities, transportation departments, and others that need to know the type and location of historic properties. This was the key recommendation from historic preservation professionals at the 2006 Preserve America Summit.

For FY 2009, there are 17 projects requested as part of a \$90.2 million line-item construction program, including \$10.0 million for continued improvements in the Everglades water delivery system, \$20.0 million for the ongoing restoration of the Elwha River Ecosystem, and \$10.0 million for emergency seawall repairs to address settlement problems at the Thomas Jefferson Memorial.

A focused Federal land acquisition program is requested, including critical acquisitions at four park units, including Gettysburg National Military Park. Funding for inholdings and emergencies is also requested, as well as \$4.0 million for Civil War Battlefield Grants to be matched by partner funding. We will continue the acquisition of inholdings and emergencies with \$4.0 million. This will allow us to address the urgent land acquisition needs.

The budget request also includes an estimated \$6.3 million in mandatory funds for State Land and Water Conservation grants. The Gulf of Mexico Energy Security Act of 2006 authorized a portion of the receipts from Outer Continental Shelf oil and gas leasing activities be distributed to states in accordance with the Land and Water Conservation Act of 1965. Under the 2006 legislation, the NPS portion is 12.5 percent of total qualified OCS revenues.

As you know, the Office of Inspector General recently released a review of U.S. Park Police operations. Established in 1791 by George Washington, the U.S. Park Police is the oldest Federal law enforcement agency and is responsible for law enforcement services to designated NPS sites in the metropolitan areas of Washington, D.C., New York City, and San Francisco, CA. The USPP employs permanent, full-time security guards, and contract security guards, and deploys a force of professional police officers trained to prevent and detect criminal activity, conduct criminal investigations, and apprehend individuals suspected of committing offenses against Federal, State and local laws. The men and women who carry the badge and wear the uniform of the USPP do so with honor and distinction.

The Department of the Interior and the National Park Service previously undertook a comprehensive internal review to clearly define the mission, priorities, and responsibilities of the Park Police. This effort aligned Park Police personnel with their priority duties for monument and visitor protection and reduced collateral duty responsibilities. At that time, the Park Police redeployed officers from lower priority functions, hired civilian guards, and reduced patrols in areas that were already being effectively served by other law enforcement agencies. The internal review also provided a robust staffing plan for the U.S. Park Police, with a goal of maintaining a force of 639 sworn officers. Our 2009 budget request includes a programmatic increase of \$4.8 million for the USPP that puts us on track to achieve this goal. Together with a fixed cost increase of \$1.9 million, this amount will allow the USPP to grow to 630 officers by the end of 2009 and reach the level of 639 sworn officers by 2010, assuming full enactment of the President's budget request.

The Department and the National Park Service are also working closely to review all the findings and recommendations of the OIG's report and respond quickly. We will soon be implementing an action plan to address each of the OIG recommendations and will take any other steps necessary to achieve management excellence within the Park Police.

Mr. Chairman, this concludes my summary of the FY 2009 budget request for NPS. We would be pleased to answer any questions you and the other members of the subcommittee may have.