

**Opening Statement
Chairman Raúl Grijalva
Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests and Public Lands
The Role of Partnerships in National Parks
September 23, 2010**

The Subcommittee will now come to order. Thank you.

Private philanthropy has played a vital role in sustaining and expanding the National Park System since its inception. In recent years, as federal funding levels have declined, park managers have worked creatively and collaboratively to develop more and better public/private partnerships than ever.

The vast majority of these partnerships serve visitors and tax payers well: the new education center at Old Faithful was funded in part by the Yellowstone Park Foundation and \$13 million in donations from private individuals; on the West Coast, a non-profit group called NatureBridge introduces children from some of the poorest neighborhoods in Los Angeles to hiking and camping in nearby national parks; the National Park Foundation is providing essential funding for the Flight 93 memorial in Pennsylvania; and in my hometown of Tucson, the Tohono O'odham Nation helped the National Park Service build portions of the Juan Bautista de Anza National Historic Trail.

These and many other partnerships are helping the National Park Service reach out to new audiences and serve the public in new ways and we look forward to hearing from our witnesses today about some of these success stories.

It is important to note, however, that private partnerships within the National Park System have developed on a case-by-case basis and have grown in size and scope without coherent, system-wide, standards and management practices in law.

Last year, I instructed the Government Accountability Office to study National Park Service management of these partnerships and report on how these important relationships can be improved. The study revealed a number of concerns and made specific recommendations about how to remedy those concerns. Today's hearing is an important opportunity to discuss these and other issues with the agency and with some of the most successful park partners.

We appreciate our witnesses for participating in today's hearing and look forward to their comments.

Mr. Bishop?