



NPS Mission & History

NPS Fundamentals I

Module 1: The History of the National Park Service



**America's Best Idea
PBS Photo.**

As an NPS intern, you are part of an organization with a rich heritage and an important place in U.S. history. In this module, you will learn about the ideas that formed and transformed the National Park Service, the people who supplied those ideas, and the laws that shaped the Service. The module is divided into the following pages:

The National Park Service

- Origins of the National Park Idea
- Creation of the National Park Service
- Changing Times
- The NPS Regroups
- The Environmental Era
- Entering the 21st Century



**Glacier National Park
1932. NPS Photo.**

After completing this module, you should be able to:

- **Explain the significance of major events in NPS history.**
- **State the key points of the Organic Act and the NPS Mission Statement.**

The next page will take you to the start of the course, an introduction to the history of the National Park Service.

“One hundred years from now, as people look back on our use of this continent, we shall not be praised for reckless use of its oil, nor the loss of our forests; we shall be heartily damned for all of these things. But we may take comfort in the knowledge that we shall certainly be thanked for the national parks.” --Secretary of the Interior Ray Wilbur, 1931



**Glacier National Park
1960. NPS Photo.**

The concept of national parks was one of the most popular ideas the United States ever conceived. It stemmed from the desire to protect special places for visitors’ present and future enjoyment.

Since the first site was designated in the 19th century, the concept of what constitutes a national park has expanded significantly. The original focus on natural wonders has evolved to include sites that chronicle human history, educate, and elevate the quality of life.

The NPS is about people, not just places.



Park Ranger, Shelton Johnson.
PBS Photo.

As an intern for the NPS, you have become one of those people. Soon, you will discover that questions about the nature of this agency and about the parks themselves are not confined to the past. The debate is very much alive.

- What should be protected?
- What should be considered a national park?
- Is there room to expand the national park system? If so, how?

These important questions are a part of every partners, intern's , and NPS employee's professional life. Welcome to the discussion.

Origins of the National Park Idea

“National Parks are the best idea we ever had. Absolutely American, absolutely democratic, they reflect us at our best rather than our worst.” –Wallace Stegner, 1998



George Catlin painting, from a self-published 1841 book. public domain

The grandeur of the American West inspired the idea of national parks. There, vast landscapes, still untouched by development filled the eye. Artists, authors, and scientists struggled to capture the beauty they encountered and to record and share their discoveries. But they worried. What would happen when westward expansion arrived on the doorstep of the wilderness?

Artist George Catlin, during an 1832 trip to the Dakotas, was perhaps the first to suggest a novel solution to this fast-approaching reality. Indian civilization, wildlife, and wilderness were all in danger, wrote Catlin, unless they could be preserved "by some great protecting policy of government...in a *magnificent park*.... *A nation's Park*, containing man and beast, in all the wild[ness] and freshness of their nature's beauty!"



"INDIAN BOY"
OIL ON CANVAS
GEORGE CATLIN
CIRCA 1830

Encouraged by art, literature, and science, a powerful preservationist viewpoint gradually emerged. Even without a national policy, individual sites received protection. In 1864, Abraham Lincoln signed a law that turned federally controlled lands in Yosemite Valley and the Mariposa Big Tree Grove over to California, provided the state set them aside "for public use, resort, and recreation...inalienable for all time."

After a scientific expedition proposed protection for the Yellowstone Valley, federal legislation was passed in 1872 that designated it as a national park. Unlike Yosemite, Yellowstone was placed under the administration of the Secretary of the Interior.



Grand Canyon of Yellowstone Oil on Canvas, Thomas Moran, Circa 1870 DOI Photo.

In 1861, Congress appointed Ferdinand Hayden, head of the government's new geological survey, to lead a fact-finding expedition to the region at the headwaters of the Yellowstone River. The area, situated in the Montana and Wyoming territories, had been an attraction for explorers, trappers, and prospectors since the late 18th century. There were numerous accounts of its strange features, geysers, hot springs, and holes of bubbling mud, but it was not until Hayden's team of geologists, botanists, and zoologists returned from their trip that the U.S. government had a full account of the area's wonders.



**Grand Canyon of Yellowstone Oil on Canvas, Thomas Moran,
Circa 1870 DOI Photo.**

Hayden strongly advocated for setting the Yellowstone region aside as a national park, and it did not take long for him to convince Congress. In December of 1871, bills were introduced in both the House and Senate for the establishment of such a park. Congress approved the legislation in early 1872, and on March 1st of that year, President Grant signed the bill designating 2.2 million acres of land as a "a public park or pleasuring-ground for the benefit and enjoyment of the people." The second section of the bill gave the Secretary of the Interior responsibility for "the preservation, from injury or spoilation, of all timber, mineral deposits, natural curiosities, or wonders within said park, and their retention in their natural condition."



Stephan Mather
NPS Photo.

Gradually, the federal government established a policy on the preservation of natural resources.

- **The Forest Reserve Act of 1891** allowed presidents to proclaim permanent forest reserves on publicly-owned land—legislation that led to national forests.
- The Antiquities Act of 1906 gave presidents authority to protect sites of historic significance as national monuments.
- Congress also authorized the preservation of four major Civil War battlefields during this era, designating them as National Military Parks.

Laws and presidential decrees, however, did not solve real-world administration problems. Responsibility for overseeing the national parks belonged to the Department of the Interior (DOI). But the Department of Agriculture had been given control of the nation's forest reserves.



Stephan Mather
NPS Photo.

While some of the national monuments reserved under the 1906 Antiquities Act were located in areas controlled by the DOI, others were on land supervised by the Department of War or the Department of Agriculture. With responsibility divided among several departments, who would make the rules, and could they possibly be consistent?

To learn more about the questions and challenges of the Park System's early days, watch the following video segment:

[Video 1 - Origins of the National Parks Idea](#)

Learn More:

[**Philosophical Underpinnings of the National Park Idea**](#)

<http://www.nps.gov/history/history/hisnps/NPSThinking/underpinnings.htm>

Dwight T. Pitcaithley

Chief Historian

National Park Service

Creation of the National Park Service

“Ever since it was organized the Service has been able to do its difficult, complex, and highly expert job with great distinction because it could count on the ardor and devotion (of its employees).”

Historian Bernard DeVoto



Bernard DeVoto

<http://www.goodreads.com>

As you have learned, national parks and monuments existed decades before the National Park Service. The problem was that no single federal agency had the authority to operate and advocate for these parks and monuments. Individual sites received uneven attention and minimal federal support. Even conservationists argued over whether these parks should be used for timber, water, and energy. One of the most significant controversies centered on the building of the Hetch Hetchy dam in Yosemite National Park. It was, in fact, Congressional approval of the dam's construction in 1913 that helped underscore the need for a federal agency dedicated to the nation's parks.



HETCH HETCHY CAÑON, OIL ON CANVAS
ALBERT BIERSTADT, CIRCA 1890

The Hetch Hetchy dam controversy began in the late 1800s, when the city of San Francisco began searching for a way to supply its growing population with water. The city's mayor, James Phelan, suggested the idea of creating a reservoir by damming the Hetch Hetchy Valley in Yosemite National Park. In 1903, and again in 1905, Phelan applied to the Secretary of the Interior for water rights to the area—and was refused both times.



HETCH HETCHY CAÑON, OIL ON CANVAS
ALBERT BIERSTADT, CIRCA 1890

Mayer Phalen sought help from noted conservationist figure Gifford Pinchot as an advocate for the dam, while the preservationist side had John Muir among its champions. Newspapers nationwide ran stories about the controversy and Congress held a number of debates about the proposed development.

Despite a vigorous campaign by preservationists, in 1913 Congress ultimately passed legislation allowing the dam to be built. In 1923, construction of the dam was completed, and the Hetch Hetchy Valley was flooded, obliterating its plant and animal life.



Stephan Mather
NPS Photo.

The campaign for such an agency was underway, led by a Chicago businessman named Stephen Mather. In 1914, Mather, an active outdoorsman, wrote a letter to Secretary of the Interior Franklin Lane in which he complained about the management of national parks. Lane wrote back, "If you don't like the way things are run, come to Washington and run them yourself." Mather accepted the challenge and, as special assistant to Lane, began building support for the creation of a national parks bureau.

He appealed to the directors of the powerful railroads who hoped to capitalize on the parks' tourist potential. He also found allies in nature groups like the Sierra Club and the Audubon Society. Mather's effective public relations campaign reminded political and civic leaders of the parks' magnificence and stressed their potential economic value as tourist attractions. On August 25, 1916, President Woodrow Wilson signed the **National Park Service Organic Act**.



Stephan Mather
NPS Photo.

The act, which established the National Park Service, created a unified system of management for the parks. It also offered a philosophy for the new agency. On the one hand, it must "conserve the scenery and the natural and historic objects and the wild life therein." At the same time, it must "provide for the enjoyment of the same in such manner and by such means as will leave them unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations."

Early Leadership

The earliest policies of the NPS emerged from the partnership of Mather, who became its first director, and Horace Albright, his assistant director. More than any others, these two men laid the groundwork for the agency's future. They tried to strike a balance between preservation and visitor use, keeping in mind Secretary Lane's instruction that "every activity of the Service is subordinate to the duties imposed upon it to faithfully preserve the parks for posterity in essentially their natural state."

Learn More:

[The Organic Act](http://www.nps.gov/legacy/organic-act.htm)

<http://www.nps.gov/legacy/organic-act.htm>



**Stephan Mather and
Horace Albright 1924.
NPS Photo.**

They also recognized the importance of fostering tourism. Without public support, Congress would not allocate funding. So Mather and Albright worked hard to promote the parks and make them accessible and appealing to the public. They admitted automobiles to Yellowstone to encourage more visitors. They permitted the construction of "low-priced camps...as well as comfortable and even luxurious hotels" on park grounds. The camps and hotels, which were built and run by the private sector, are an early example of the important role of concessions in the parks. Mountain climbing, horseback riding, and other recreational activities were encouraged. Mather and Albright also emphasized the educational nature of the parks, incorporating museums, exhibits, and other learning-oriented activities.

In their efforts to promote tourism, Mather and Albright created zoos in some parks. They also stocked park lakes and rivers with non-native fish and eradicated wolves and coyotes from some of the western parks in an attempt to please visitors.



Horace Albright
NPS Photo.

Criteria for the expansion of the park system decreed that new parks would possess "scenery of supreme and distinctive quality or some natural feature so extraordinary or unique as to be of national interest and importance."

In the early years, the majority of national parks were in the West. However, it was recognized that parks in the East were important as well. One example of this was the Hot Springs Reservation in Arkansas, which was federally established in 1832, but not officially named a national park until 1921. The establishment of parks in the East—Acadia, Great Smoky Mountains, Shenandoah, and Mammoth Cave—brought parks closer to more heavily populated regions.

Albright recognized that the most effective way to expand the park system into the eastern states was to make it encompass historic sites. He then requested that eastern battlefields and war memorials be transferred to the National Park Service. Prior to that they had been managed by the War Department. When his arguments failed to convince the needed politicians, he took a different approach.



Horace Albright
NPS Photo.

Soon after he became director in 1929, in a departure from the established emphasis on natural resources, Albright convinced Congress to authorize three new historical parks and place them under NPS administration. The parks included Morristown National Historical Park, George Washington National Monument, and Colonial National Historical Park and were all in eastern states.

To learn more about the early days of the NPS, watch the following video segment:

[Video 2 – Creation of the National Park Service](#)

Changing Times

“ The proper use of leisure time is a fundamental problem of modern society. The very circumstance which shorten the working hours also speed up production, intensify the strain of present-day-living, and create a need for periodic relief. Outdoor recreation answers this need.” Secretary of the Interior Harold Ickes, 1941



Cape Hatteras National Seashore. Seashores were added to the NPS system during the New Deal.

The changes that swept the nation during the Great Depression affected the NPS as well. Several of Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal programs focused on conservation—in particular, the Civilian Conservation Corps. Among their many contributions, the Corps upgraded and expanded visitor facilities at national parks throughout the nation. This work led some conservationists to complain that the parks were being overdeveloped.



Civilian Conservation Corps planting. NPS Photo.

By the early 1930s, the United States was in the throes of the Great Depression, and unemployment had reached a critical level. When newly Franklin Roosevelt took office in 1933, he acted quickly to combat the economic chaos. One of his first measures was the creation of the Civilian Conservation Corps.

The goals of the Civilian Conservation Corps were twofold: to provide jobs for thousands of unemployed young men and to replenish the depleted soil and timber resources of the nation's forests, parks, and range lands. Their work included building roads, dams, housing, and visitor centers; stringing telephone lines; installing drainage systems; protecting fish and wildlife habitats; and planting millions of trees.

The program was a huge success. By the time the Corps were discontinued in 1942, they had employed more than 3 million young men, and completed tens of thousands of projects, many of which are still in full use today.



**Lincoln Memorial
NPS Photo.**

The Reorganization Act of 1933

The Park Service itself underwent a major change, one for which Albright had requested years earlier. In 1933, the Reorganization Act was passed, giving the president the authority to transfer national monuments from one governmental department to another. The War Department's parks and monuments were transferred to the NPS that same year. Also transferred to the NPS were the national monuments administered by the Agriculture Department and the sites included in the national capital parks in Washington, DC. In all, these orders gave the NPS 57 new areas.



Cape Hatteras National Seashore. Seashores were added to the NPS system during the New Deal.

The Reorganization Act of 1933 resulted in:

- The consolidation of all the national parks and national monuments into one National Park System.
- The broadening and strengthening of the newly developed preservation program by adding all federally owned national military parks, battlefield sites, and shrines, including Gettysburg, Antietam, Chickamauga-Chattanooga, Shiloh, Vicksburg, and Fort McHenry.
- The addition of great national memorials such as the Statute of Liberty and the Washington Monument.
- The addition of the National Capital public buildings and parks to the System.
- A new focus on historic preservation with increased efforts to rescue, protect, and develop these nationally significant historic places.

The addition of parks and the new emphasis on preservation still has significant impact on the NPS today.



Cape Hatteras National Seashore. Seashores were added to the NPS system during the New Deal.

Park Service historian Barry Mackintosh calls this reorganization "the most significant event in the evolution of the National Park System." He goes on to explain, "There was now a single system of federal parklands, truly national in scope, embracing historic as well as natural places. The Service's major involvement with historic sites held limitless potential for the system's further growth."

Learn More: The Museum Management Program

[Treasures of the Nation](#)

<http://www.cr.nps.gov/museum/treasures/index.htm>



Cape Hatteras National Seashore. Seashores were added to the NPS system during the New Deal.

A Broader Scope of Responsibility

The NPS took on a still larger role in the 1930s, when Congress created new categories of parklands.

The Historic Sites Act of 1935 confirmed and expanded the role of the NPS in preserving and restoring park resources and engaging in educational activities related to historic sites.

The Park, Parkway, and Recreational Area Study Act of 1936 led to the purchase of land for parkways and recreational areas. The act's goal was in keeping with the government's expanding interest in improving the quality of life of U.S. citizens.

In 1937, the first national seashore was created at Cape Hatteras, North Carolina. This initiated an expansion of the National Park System to include islands and beaches of the Atlantic and Pacific oceans, the Gulf of Mexico, and the Great Lakes.



Elk in Rocky Mountain National Park. NPS Photo.

Still another significant change that took place during the 1930s involved the creation of a program designed to evaluate the status of each park's wildlife, identify species that were in danger, and generate ideas for restoration. This wildlife survey program, initiated by a park naturalist named George Wright, represented one of the Park Service's earliest efforts toward scientific wildlife conservation and management.

To learn more about how the park system changed during this era, watch the following video segment:

[Video 3 – Changing Times](#)



**George Wright talking
with a native woman.
NPS Photo.**

Learn More:

[The Legacy of George Wright](http://www.georgewright.org/gmwright)

<http://www.georgewright.org/gmwright>

The NPS Regroups

“The year 1966 will mark the Golden Anniversary of the NPS. In an effort to solve, by that time, the difficult problem of protecting the scenic and historic areas of the NPS from over-use and, at the same time, of providing optimum opportunity for public enjoyment of the parks, I have initiated a project which we are calling MISSION 66.” Director Conrad Wirth, 1956



Automobiles provided easier access to parks.
NPS Photo.

World War II had presented challenges for the NPS. Director Newton Drury had been faced with the task of protecting the nation's parks from those who wanted to use their resources for the war effort. Although he was besieged by loggers and salvage committees who wanted to use historic cannons for scrap metal, he managed to keep the parks intact.

The war years took their toll on the parks. With the return of peace and the subsequent increase of travel, the parks' problems became painfully evident. Visitation to national parks swelled, overwhelming run-down facilities. A 1955 article in a popular magazine warned potential park visitors that their trips were "likely to be fraught with discomfort, disappointment, even danger."

On June 26, 1956, in the midst of the Cold War, Congress passed the Federal Aid Highway Act, approving the creation of a 41,000-mile highway system to improve military mobility. These new roads meant that travel and, consequently, park visitation were sure to increase even more.

That same year, NPS Director Conrad Wirth responded to the park system's decline with an ambitious 10-year program dubbed Mission 66. Under this program, Wirth proposed upgrading facilities in time for the NPS's 50th anniversary in 1966. Congress and the president approved of the idea and ultimately spent over a billion dollars on the program. Improvements it brought included staff increases, new housing for employees, and staff development. Some described his initiative as a "renaissance."

To learn more watch the following video segment:

[Video 4 – NPS Regroups](#)



Automobiles provided easier access to parks.
NPS Photo.

The Environmental Era

“ There are serious gaps and inadequacies which must be remedied while opportunities still exist if the System is to fulfill the people’s need always to see and understand their heritage of history and the natural world.” Secretary of the Interior Walter Hickel, 1969



Cuyahoga River, the river that burned help create the first Earth Day in 1970. NPS Photo.

Even before Mission 66 was completed, environmentally sensitive individuals had emerged to influence the shape of the NPS. In 1963, a committee of distinguished scientists, issued a report focusing on the management of natural areas. The report declared that the nation's parks "should represent a vignette of primitive America."

Other environmentalists voiced their opinions through literature. One important publication of this era was Edward Abbey's *Desert Solitaire*, an account of the author's experiences as a ranger at Arches National Park. In *Desert Solitaire*, Abbey advocated banning automobiles from all national parks, asserting that they would ultimately destroy the plant and animal life. On the national front, Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* first alerted the public to the damage that certain pesticides, such as DDT, were causing to wildlife.



Cuyahoga River, the river that burned help create the first Earth Day in 1970. NPS Photo.

Learn More:

[Edward Abbey](#)

<http://www.abbeyweb.net/introduction.html>

[Rachel Carson](#)

<http://www.rachelcarson.org/>

[John Muir](#)

<http://www.johnmuirassociation.org/>

[Arthur Carhart](#)

<http://carhart.wilderness.net/index.cfm?fuse=arthurCarhart>



Cuyahoga River, the river that burned help create the first Earth Day in 1970. NPS Photo.

A series of congressional acts passed over the next few years—including the Wilderness Act of 1964, the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, and the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969—reflects the growing concern for protection and conservation.

The National Historic Preservation Act was particularly significant for the NPS because it authorized the National Register of Historic Places. The National Register, which is administered by the NPS, is a list of historic and archeological resources that have been designated for preservation. It includes national historic landmarks, all historic areas in the National Park System, and properties all over the country that are significant to a particular community, a state, or the nation as a whole.

Learn More: [National Register of Historic Places](https://www.nps.gov/nr/)

<http://www.cr.nps.gov/nr/travel/>

Congress Defines the National Park System

As it expanded the size of the NPS in the 1970s, Congress emphasized the equal standing each site had and the importance of recognizing one national park system. In 1970, the General Authorities Act was passed. This piece of legislation stated that the various areas managed by the NPS—like parkways, recreation areas, and national seashores—were all an equal part of the park system.



STAMP
COMMEMORATING
THE FIRST
EARTH DAY ON
APRIL 22, 1970

The NPS's role in managing these areas was further clarified in the Redwood National Park Expansion Act of 1978, which stated that the NPS cannot allow activities that violate a park's enabling legislation—the law that created the park and outlined its purpose.

Sparked by a heightened interest in environmental protection and the approaching American Bicentennial, the NPS expanded considerably during this era, particularly under Director George Hartzog.

Learn More: [1978 Redwoods National Park Expansion Act](https://www.cr.nps.gov/history/online_books/anps/anps_7e.htm)

http://www.cr.nps.gov/history/online_books/anps/anps_7e.htm

Learn More: George Hartzog



NPS DIRECTOR GEORGE B. HARTZOG, JR.
CIRCA 1972

George Hartzog, Director, January 9, 1964-December 31, 1972

When George Hartzog, Jr., became the NPS's director in 1964, he had already spent almost 20 years in the bureau. A dynamic, politically astute manager, Hartzog welcomed some 70 new areas to the National Park System during his tenure as director. He also greatly enlarged the Service's role in urban recreation, historic preservation, interpretation, and environmental education. Closely identified with the expansionist policies of the Johnson-Udall administration, Hartzog was less appreciated by its successor, the Nixon administration, and was dismissed in 1972.

In 1972, New York City's Gateway and San Francisco's Golden Gate National Recreation Areas established an NPS presence in two of the nation's most urbanized areas.

Despite caution on the part of several presidential administrations, Congress adopted an activist stance toward park creation. It required the NPS to submit annual reports on potential new areas, including 12 that "have potential for inclusion in the National Park System." In 1978, a single piece of legislation—the National Parks and Recreation Act—authorized 15 new parks, earning the label "park barrel legislation" from critics. This act also specified that there is no hierarchy of parks. All parks hold the same importance within the NPS, regardless of designation.

Among the parks created in 1978 was Lowell National Historic Park, which chronicled immigrant and labor history during the Industrial Revolution. Parks that commemorated the other aspects of American history were also created during this era, including the Martin Luther King, Jr. National Historic Site and the Women's Rights National Historical Park.



Cuyahoga River, the river that burned help create the first Earth Day in 1970. NPS Photo.



Midnight Light on Mount Wrangell.
NPS Photo.

Following President Jimmy Carter's executive action to protect huge segments of land in Alaska, Congress passed the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act of 1980. This act almost doubled the total size of the national park system.

Funding for this expansion came, in part, from The Land and Water Conservation Fund, which had been established in 1964. The fund earmarks revenues from visitor fees, surplus property sales, fuel taxes, and offshore oil and gas leases to be used for the acquisition of state and national parklands.

The NPS and Wilderness

“We must not only protect the country side and save it from destruction, we must restore what has been destroyed and salvage the beauty and charm of our cities... Once our natural splendor is destroyed, it can never be recaptured. And once man can no longer walk with beauty or wonder at nature, his spirit will wither and his sustenance be wasted.” - Lyndon B. Johnson



**Mohave National Preserve.
NPS Photo.**

In 1964 Congress enacted (nearly unanimously) and President Johnson signed into law the Wilderness Act that established the National Wilderness Preservation System to *“...secure for American people of present and future generations the benefits of an enduring resource of wilderness.”*

The compatibility of the intent of the Wilderness Act and the purpose of the NPS is apparent in the similarity between language used in the NPS Organic Act and the Wilderness Act.

Organic Act text	Wilderness Act text
<p>“The service thus established shall promote and regulate the use of the Federal areas known as national parks, monuments, and reservations...by such means and measures as conform to the fundamental purpose of the said parks, monuments, and reservations, which purpose is to conserve the scenery and the natural and historic objects and the wild life therein and to provide for the enjoyment of the same in such manner and by such means as will leave them unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations. “</p>	<p>“... hereby established a National Wilderness Preservation System...of federally owned areas designated by Congress as "wilderness areas", and these shall be administered for the use and enjoyment of the American people in such manner as will leave them unimpaired for future use as wilderness.”</p> <p>A wilderness, in contrast with those areas where man and his own works dominate the landscape, is hereby recognized as an area where the earth and its community of life are untrammelled by man, where man himself is a visitor who does not remain.</p>



**Mohave National
Preserve. NPS Photo.**

The Wilderness Act defines the concept of “unimpaired” much more narrowly than the NPS Organic Act, tying it specifically to preserving wilderness conditions. In spite of some early reluctance to embrace the provisions of the 1964 Wilderness Act, the National Park Service has become an essential component of the Wilderness Preservation System, managing more acreage within the Wilderness Preservation system than any other land management agency.

Wilderness Acreage By Agency

Agency	Acres	Percentage of total Wilderness Acres
Bureau of Land Management	8,739,646	8%
Fish and Wildlife Service	20,702,350	19%
U.S. Forest Service	36,160,078	33%
National Park Service	43,890,517	40%



Congress has now designated more than 109 million acres of federal public lands as wilderness: nearly 44 million of these acres are found in 47 NPS units and represent 53 percent of National Park System lands. Additional NPS areas are managed as “recommended” or “proposed” wilderness until Congress acts on their status.

Wilderness Categories

Potential wilderness: Lands that, due to a use that is inconsistent with the Wilderness Act, are not eligible, but may become so with the end of that nonconforming use.

Proposed Wilderness: Lands that the Director of the NPS determines have met the requirements and have been forwarded to the Secretary for recommendation.

Recommended Wilderness: Lands recommended by the Secretary as suitable for inclusion and are forwarded to the President for consideration.

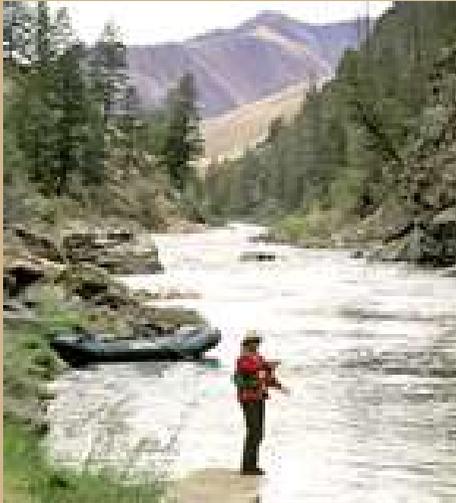
Designated wilderness: Lands that Congress includes in the Wilderness Preservation System.

The Wilderness Act states that *“Lands identified as being suitable for wilderness designation, wilderness study areas, proposed wilderness, and recommended wilderness (including potential wilderness) will be managed to preserve their wilderness character and values undiminished.*

Wilderness Act, 1964



Mohave National Preserve.
NPS Photo.



NPS Photo.

The greatest growth to the wilderness preservation system and to NPS Wilderness areas occurred with the passage of the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA) of 1980, adding 56 million acres of Wilderness.

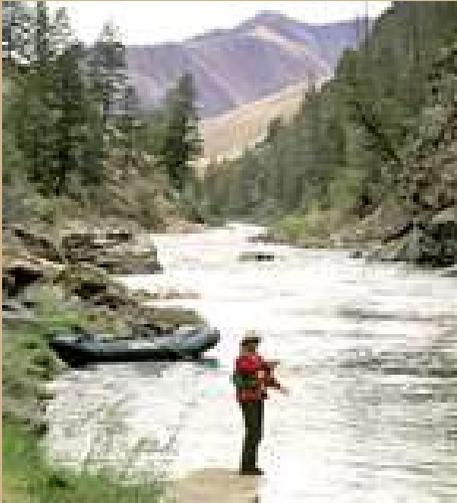
Resource: ANILCA website

[National Interest Lands Conservation Act \(ANILCA\)](http://www.law.cornell.edu/uscode/html/uscode16/usc_sup_01_16_10_51.html)

http://www.law.cornell.edu/uscode/html/uscode16/usc_sup_01_16_10_51.html

The Wilderness Act created wilderness areas for the *“use and enjoyment of the American people in such manner as will leave them unimpaired for future use and enjoyment as wilderness.”*

Approximately 12 million people visit Wilderness areas annually to climb, hike, ride horses, ski, hunt, fish, canoe, raft, stargaze, bird-watch, or simply seek escape from the urban landscape.

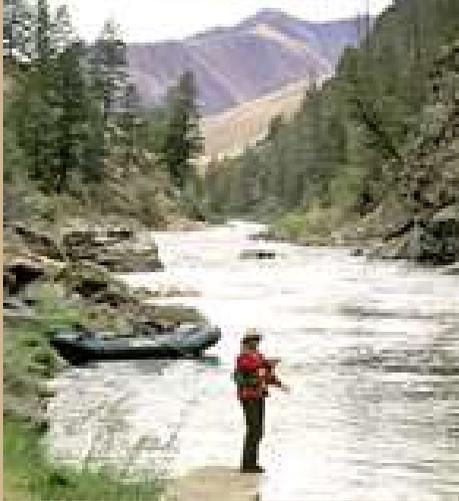


Consistent with the emphasis of the Act that states that Wilderness generally appears to have been affected primarily by the forces of nature, recreational activities that require mechanical conveyance (including bicycles) are generally not allowed in designated wilderness areas.

How lands become part of the Wilderness Preserve

The process for lands to become part of the Wilderness Preservation System starts with each bureau (NPS, BLM, USFS, USFWS) studying the areas for suitability, and recommending appropriate lands to either the Secretary of Interior or of Agriculture as proposed Wilderness. The Secretary then forwards the recommendation to the President who, if in support, recommends the area to Congress for consideration. To be included in the wilderness system, Congress must pass legislation for the President's signature.



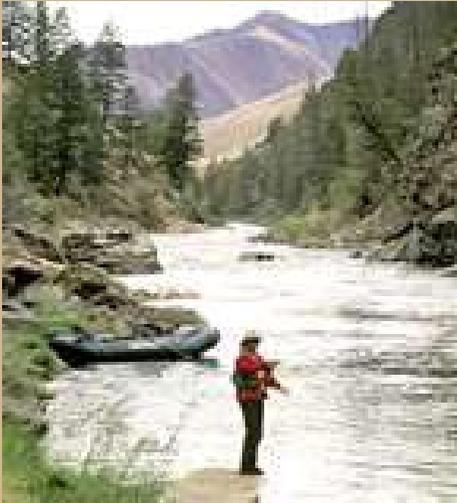


This process can take years. For example in the NPS, recommendations dating back to the late 1970s still exist for 13 national parks. Some lands that have been recommended to Congress have been designated as Wilderness and some lands, such as areas in Yellowstone and Glacier National Parks, have not.

From the 2006 NPS Management Policies:

The NPS will manage wilderness areas for the use and enjoyment of the American people in such a manner as will leave them unimpaired for future use and enjoyment as wilderness. Management will include the protection, the preservation of their wilderness character, and the gathering and dissemination of information regarding their use and enjoyment as wilderness. The purpose of wilderness in the national parks includes the preservation of wilderness character and wilderness resources in an unimpaired condition and, in accordance with the [Wilderness Act](http://www4.law.cornell.edu/uscode/html/uscode16/usc sup 01 16 10 23.html) (<http://www4.law.cornell.edu/uscode/html/uscode16/usc sup 01 16 10 23.html>), wilderness areas shall be devoted to the public purposes of recreational, scenic, scientific, educational, conservation, and historical use.





The proper management of Wilderness within the NPS is the responsibility of all employees. In order to comply with the intent of Congress, we must all be familiar with the provisions of the Wilderness Act. Assets outside of designated Wilderness areas often serve important roles as points of access, viewing platforms or other aides for visitors to experience Wilderness.

“By very definition this wilderness is a need. The idea of wilderness as an area without man's influence is man's own concept. Its values are human values. Its preservation is a purpose that arises out of man's own sense of his fundamental needs.” -- Howard Zahniser, from *The Need for Wilderness Areas*

To learn more watch the following video segment:

[Video 5 - The Environmental Era](#)

Entering the 21st Century

“The national symbols people choose to preserve—the visible reminders of how a nation came to be what it is—serve as useful keys to understanding values. Societies, after all, choose to protect the objects and emblems of their collective pride.” Robin Winks



NPS Photo.

National parks preserve emblems of our society's collective pride. Many of these parks were added in the 1990s, and they serve to remind us of some of the more challenging times in our history. Some examples of this include the following:

Selma to Montgomery National Historic Trail. It was created in 1996. This trail traces the path of the 1965 marches for voting rights for African Americans, during which marchers faced confrontation and even violence.

learn more: [Selma to Montgomery National Historic Trail](http://www.nps.gov/semo/)

<http://www.nps.gov/semo/>



Manzanar National Historic Site. This site was designated in 1992. Manzanar was one of the ten relocation centers in which Japanese American citizens and resident Japanese aliens were interned during World War II.

learn more: [Manzanar National Historic Site](http://www.nps.gov/manz/)
<http://www.nps.gov/manz/>

Washita Battlefield. This park protects and interprets the site of the Southern Cheyenne village of Peace Chief Black Kettle, which was attacked by the 7th U.S. Cavalry under Lt. Col. George A. Custer.

learn more: [Washita Battlefield National Historic Site](http://www.nps.gov/waba/)
<http://www.nps.gov/waba/>



Interpretive program at South Carolina National Heritage Corridor. NPS Photo.

The Vail Agenda

Concurrent with its 75th anniversary in 1991, the NPS sponsored a symposium in Vail, Colorado to create a vision for the agency's future success. The "Vail Agenda," produced recommendations in six areas:

- Resource Stewardship and Protection
- Access and Enjoyment
- Education and Interpretation
- Proactive Leadership
- Science and Research
- Professionalism

The Vail Agenda suggested that the NPS forge partnerships at the state and local levels to develop and manage parks. One initiative created National Heritage Areas: federally designated historic regions that were owned and managed at a state or local level but received technical assistance and grant funding from the NPS.

learn more: [National Heritage Areas](https://www.cr.nps.gov/heritageareas)

<http://www.cr.nps.gov/heritageareas>



Baltimore National Heritage Area. NPS Photo.



**Golden Gate National
Recreation Area. NPS
Photo.**

Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act (FLREA)

Another important source of funding came from the Recreational Fee Demonstration Program—a program proposed in 1995 that allowed NPS sites to test increased fees for admission and certain facilities and activities. The participating parks retained the majority of revenues generated by their own fees, and a smaller percentage of the revenue went to Service-wide initiatives and to parks that were not part of the fee program. The program was so successful that Congress extended it through 2014 by passing the Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act (2004).

learn more about the Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act (FLREA):

<http://www.fs.usda.gov/detail/payette/recreation/?cid=stelprdb5158854>

http://www.blm.gov/wo/st/en/prog/Recreation/recreation_national/recreation_fees/rea_info_page.html



Grand Canyon World
Heritage Site. NPS Photo.

The NPS Mission: In 2000, the NPS updated its agency mission. The updated mission reads as follows:

The National Park Service preserves unimpaired the natural and cultural resources and values of the national park system for the enjoyment, education, and inspiration of this and future generations. The Park Service cooperates with partners to extend the benefits of natural and cultural resource conservation and outdoor recreation throughout this country and the world.

While reusing much of the language, the new statement accepts the validity of outdoor recreation and recognizes important roles for partners. The revised statement lists "inspiration" and "education" as NPS goals, in addition to enjoyment and adding emphasis on interpretive and educational activities. These activities have become a hallmark of the NPS, supplementing the pure pleasure of enjoying nature's wonders and embracing the nation's heritage.

learn more: [World Heritage Sites](https://www.nps.gov/oia/topics/worldheritage/worldheritage.htm)

<http://www.nps.gov/oia/topics/worldheritage/worldheritage.htm>



Archeologists and interpreters at Fort Vancouver. NPS photo

The NPS Messaging Project

As the 20th century drew to a close, the NPS embraced still another important initiative. To enhance its service and its relationship with the public, the NPS developed a messaging project—a tool to help all employees communicate consistently with the public.

The centerpiece of this messaging project is: ***"The National Park Service cares for special places saved by the American people so that all may experience our heritage."***

NPS employees and partners have also developed a series of organizational statements or "messages" to help bridge the gap between what we are and what the public thinks we are. Another key phrase that resulted from the NPS Messaging Project was the phrase ***"Experience your America."***

learn more: [The NPS Messaging Project](http://www.nps.gov/hfc/products/message-project.htm)

<http://www.nps.gov/hfc/products/message-project.htm>



Archeologists and interpreters at Fort Vancouver. NPS photo

[The NPS Messaging Project](#)

The following statements represent, in clear and concise language, what we want the public to understand about the parks and the mission of the NPS. Use them to frame communications at every appropriate opportunity.

Parks Reflect America: National parks should be an honest, accurate, and comprehensive reflection of the diversity of American culture, history, and landscapes.

Parks as Libraries: The National Park Service should offer a lifelong interactive education by serving as a repository of places, things, and ideas, and making them available to teach children and adults about themselves, their communities, and their surroundings.

Parks Are a Legacy: National parks are a gift from past generations that we should preserve for future generations.

Parks Are Real: National parks are special because they are authentic and irreplaceable, which should make them more valuable, more enjoyable, and more educational than a reproduction.



Archeologists and interpreters at Fort Vancouver. NPS photo

[The NPS Messaging Project](#)

Parks Tell Amazing Stories: The National Park Service should tell the story of human history and natural sciences that together equal modern-day America.

Parks Are an American Idea: The idea of national parks was created in the United States and carried by the National Park Service to nations throughout the world.

Preservation Matters: Preserving what we value improves us as individuals, citizens, and communities, and as a people, and the National Park Service should be a leader in promoting preservation.

Parks Belong to All Americans: National parks belong to all Americans, so all Americans should feel welcome to experience parks.

The National Park Service Is a Part of the American Community: The National Park Service should partner with local communities to promote preservation, recreation, and the ideals embodied in parks.



Archeologists and interpreters at Fort Vancouver. NPS photo

[The NPS Messaging Project](#)

Parks Need Resources: Like anything else of value, the future of national parks depends on support; they will require resources—in the form of money, time, and effort—from all Americans in order to thrive.

Parks Are to Be Enjoyed and Preserved: Balance Enjoyment And Preservation: People will always be able to enjoy parks, but they should enjoy them within limits that exist to help in ways that will preserve and protect the parks for the future.

Parks Can Be Experienced in Many Forms: People should experience national parks—for enjoyment, education, and enrichment—in many ways, not just by visiting.

Parks Are a Historical Link: National parks should represent a link between our past, our present, and our future.

The NPS National Park Service Is Credible: Employees of the National Park Service should be passionate, credible, dedicated stewards of resource preservation and protection.



Jon Jarvis, Director.
NPS Photo.

The Director of the NPS

At the top level, the NPS is led by a Director who has been appointed by the President. Because this Director is a presidential appointee, he or she generally holds office only as long as a given administration is in power. The Director works to carry out the NPS mission, which is central to the organization's efforts and to the president's agenda.

The NPS Director works in the NPS Washington, DC office, which is known as the Washington Area Service Office (WASO.) The Director is responsible for the management, administration, policy, and overall direction of the National Park Service. He or she meets quarterly with the National Leadership Council (NLC) which includes the NPS Director, Deputy Directors, Associate Directors, and Regional Directors to consult on major policy and program issues.

Learn More: [Jonathan B. Jarvis - Director, National Park Service](http://www.doi.gov/whoweare/jonjarvis.cfm)
<http://www.doi.gov/whoweare/jonjarvis.cfm>

NPS Future

The discussion about the definition and the role of the NPS continues. However, certain values have survived over time. As the NPS Advisory Board explained in 2001:



**Yellowstone NP Bear.
NPS Photo.**

The NPS has a twenty-first century responsibility of great importance. It is to proclaim anew the meaning and value of parks, conservation, and recreation; to expand the learning and research occurring in parks and share that knowledge broadly; and to encourage all Americans to experience these special places. As a people, our quality of life—our very health and well-being—depends in the most basic way on the protection of nature, the accessibility of open space and recreation opportunities, and the preservation of landmarks that illustrate our historic continuity. By caring for the parks and conveying the park ethic, we care for ourselves and act on behalf of the future. The larger purpose of this mission is to build a citizenry that is committed to conserving its heritage and its home on earth.