

**National Park System Advisory Board**  
**DRAFT Meeting Minutes**  
August 27, 2019

The **National Park System Advisory Board** (Board) convened for a meeting at 9:30am on Tuesday, August 27, 2019. In accordance with the provisions of Public Law 92-463 (5 U.S.C. app.) the meeting was open to the public throughout its duration. The meeting was held in the South Penthouse of the Stewart Lee Udall Department of the Interior Building, 1849 C Street, NW, Washington, DC 20240.

**Board Members Participating:**

Mr. Andrew “Tuck” Beckstoffer, Mr. Joseph Emert, Hon. William Hewes, Ms. Mary Pope Hutson, Mr. Ellis Ivory, Dr. Zelma Lansford, Dr. Les Moore, Mr. John Nau III, Mr. Philip Pearce, Mr. Boyd Smith

**Designated Federal Officer (DFO) for the Board:**

Mr. Dan Smith, Deputy Director Exercising the Authority of the Director for the National Park Service

**Other Participants:**

The Honorable David Bernhardt, Secretary of the Interior; Ryan Hambleton, Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Interior for Fish and Wildlife and Parks; Mr. David Vela, Acting Deputy Director for Operations, National Park Service (NPS); Dr. Turkiya Lowe, Chief Historian, NPS; Mr. Reginald Chapple, Acting Assistant Director, Partnerships and Civic Engagement, NPS; Mr. Shawn Benge, Associate Director, Park Planning, Facilities and Lands, NPS; Ms. Joy Beasley, Acting Associate Director, Cultural Resources, Partnerships and Science, NPS; Ms. Alma Ripps, Chief, Office of Policy, NPS; Dr. Ray Sauvajot, Associate Director for Natural Resource Stewardship and Science, NPS; Mr. Joshua Winchell, Staff Director for the National Park System Advisory Board, Office of Policy, NPS; Ms. Roegener Kirk, Office of Policy, NPS; Ms. Shirley Sears, Office of Policy, NPS; Ms. Danean Smith; Ms. Madison Moore; Ms. Pam Inman, President, CTP, CAE, IOM, National Tour Association; Ms. Lisa Simon, Executive Director, International Inbound Travel Association; Ms. Sarah Leavitt, Curator, National Building Museum; Mr. Rob Hotakainen, E&E News; Mr. Alex Nazaryan, Yahoo! News; Mr. Steve Salisbury, American Motorcyclist Association; Mr. Dan Puskar, President and CEO, Public Lands Alliance; Mr. Ken Presley, Vice President, Industry Relations & CEO, United Motorcoach Association; Ms. Emily Douce, Director of Budget and Appropriations, Government Affairs, National Parks Conservation Association.

**Convening the Meeting**

Meeting was called to order by Deputy Director Dan Smith at 9:30am.

## **Introductions**

- Smith announced he would be serving as interim Board Chair until the new Chair was elected by the Board during the afternoon session of the meeting. Smith introduced NPS staff at the meeting and requested Board and audience members to introduce themselves. Smith provided a brief history of the Board and its duties, and introduced NPS and DOI leadership in the room (see “Board Members Participating” and “Other Participants” - above - for a full list of individuals attending the meeting). Smith introduced Secretary of the Interior, David Bernhardt.

## **Remarks from the Secretary of the Interior**

- The Secretary shared his priorities for the NPS including finding innovative ways to improve the visitor experience and public lands infrastructure, and examining improvements to the NPS revenue model. The Secretary mentioned the high visitation of the parks, the beneficial economic impact of visitation, and the long history of the government “marketing” visitation to the parks. The Secretary mentioned collaboration and partnerships with concessionaires, state and local governments as a few approaches to facilitate further successes in the development and improvement of visitor experiences. The Secretary also mentioned the need to develop a workforce for the future, to make the workforce reflect the diversity of society as a whole, to attract and keep the best talent, and to address challenges such as sexual harassment. The Secretary discussed deferred maintenance issues, referring to the long-term nature of the problem and the need to develop a wide range of funding solutions including congressional funding and legislation, as well as revenue models and partnerships. The Secretary asked the Board to think of these issues, and consider developing new ideas to address his priorities and associated challenges.

## **Remarks from National Park Service Leadership**

- Smith commented on the role of the NPS in keeping Americans connected with all of their history, using the 400th commemoration of the first enslaved Africans arriving to the English colonies in North America as one example of examining history as both an important educational, awareness, and healing process and the NPS role in telling that history truthfully. Smith reaffirmed the Secretary’s comments about deferred maintenance, the visitor experience, and the NPS workforce as important topics for the Board to consider. Smith also reaffirmed the economic impact of visitation to the park system, both in tourism and outdoor recreational activities. Smith introduced Mr. David Vela, Deputy Director of Operations, NPS.
- Vela discussed the second century of the NPS, the importance of workforce planning, and working with partners and the concessions community. Vela emphasized the importance of outdoor recreation in the parks, and how that activity is a major economic driver both nationwide and at the gateway community levels. Vela mentioned the importance of parks as places for people to heal physically, mentally, and spiritually. He mentioned the need to assess how new technology might facilitate those opportunities and experiences. Vela mentioned the need to better understand how we can connect the next generation with public lands and parks, such as the Every Kid Outdoors program. Lastly, Vela mentioned planning for the 250th anniversary of the nation’s founding and the Declaration of Independence and asked the Board to start thinking about how it can help get the NPS ready for that event.

### **The National Park Service - A Historical Review**

- Dr. Turkiya Lowe (Chief Historian, NPS) gave a slide presentation on the history of the NPS. Dr. Lowe described the “pyramid” of federal site recognition composed of 419 units of the National Park System; 599 designated National Natural Landmarks; 2,597 designated National Historic Landmarks; and 95,022 listings under the National Register of Historic Places. Lowe discussed the more than 55 national and regional community assistance programs supported by the NPS. Lowe described a series of federal legislative acts that expanded the NPS portfolio to include the nation’s historic and natural assets. Lowe concluded by providing a short description of the NPS Second Century Vision, which includes utilizing social media and new technologies, expanding the interpretation and education mission, telling stories about all Americans, advancing workforce initiatives, and fostering shared resource stewardship.

### **Partnerships and Philanthropy in the National Park Service**

- Mr. Reginald Chapple (Acting Assistant Director, Partnerships and Civic Engagement, NPS) gave a slide presentation on multiple programs within his office including the National Tourism Office and Program which coordinates domestic and international engagement with the travel and tourism sector. Chapple stated the program works on tourism issues such as tribal tourism, diversity in travel, and accessible policy for all DOI Bureaus to create recreational access for all and has a long history of working in collaboration with the travel and tourism sector including railroads, hotels, and tire/auto industries. Chapple also described the Office of Partnerships and Philanthropic Stewardship which develops, facilitates, and at times manages programs that focus on fundraising and donations, marketing and promotions, park-based friends groups, partnership training, and relations with the National Park Foundation.
- Chapple concluded by describing how philanthropy and strategic partnerships have always had a major role in advancing the creation and conservation of national parks and NPS sites and programs, stating that even before Congress annually appropriated funds for park lands, private donations and land donations were responsible for substantial additions to the National Park System.

### **National Historic Landmarks Program Overview**

- Ms. Joy Beasley (Acting Associate Director, Cultural Resources, Partnerships, and Science, NPS) provided a slide presentation on the National Historic Landmarks (NHL) Program, starting with the Historic Sites Act (1935), which transferred national monuments, battlefields, and historic sites to NPS stewardship and established a number of New Deal-era programs, including the National Historic Sites Survey (which was the former name of NHL Program). The Act also established the National Park System Advisory Board with a mandate to provide recommendations on the designation of NHLs. NHLs are automatically listed in the National Register of Historic Places (more than 90,000 listings to date) upon designation if the property was not previously listed. NHLs possess exceptional national significance and historic integrity, reserved for the nation’s most important properties, including some NPS resources, and are designated by the Secretary of the Interior. NHLs may be owned by the federal government, state or

local governments, American Indian tribes, corporations, non-profit organizations, universities, or private individuals. The NHL program promotes preservation efforts of public and private partners. NHL designation helps preserve nationally significant stories for all Americans, and can be eligible for grants and tax credits to assist in their preservation. Nearly 85% of NHLs are in private ownership. Designation does not mandate preservation or otherwise impose any limitations at the federal level on what a private owner may do with their NHL property. The Board's NHL Committee historically consists of scholars and preservation experts drawn nationally from the fields of archeology, history, historic architecture, and other disciplines.

### **National Natural Landmarks Program Overview**

- Dr. Raymond Sauvajot (Associate Director, Natural Resource Stewardship and Science, NPS) provided a slide presentation on the National Natural Landmarks (NNL) Program. The program, established in 1962 under the authority of the 1935 Historic Sites Act, was created to identify, recognize and encourage the conservation of significant natural resources and is administered by the NPS. NNLs are natural areas that contain outstanding examples of biological and/or geological features and can be publicly or privately owned. They can be city, state, or county parks, wildlife refuges, national forests, tribal lands, nature preserves, or even “backyards” of private individuals. NNLs are designated by the Secretary of the Interior after in-depth study. The existing 599 sites collectively illustrate the story of America's natural heritage. NNL designation provides recognition of the diversity of the nation's natural features; honors landowners for their dedicated stewardship and commitment to protecting and preserving a nationally significant site; increases awareness to encourage well-informed land-use planning decisions; encourages cooperative conservation of America's natural heritage. Landmark designation is not a land withdrawal and it does not change ownership of the site, nor does it necessitate public access or dictate land use activities. Conservation of NNL resources is achieved because of the voluntary commitment of landowners and the NPS works alongside owners and managers to encourage and support conservation. The designation process includes an assessment of whether a potential site selected for study will likely meet significance criteria; requires written permission granted from all landowners of site under study; evaluation by qualified scientists; and comparative assessment using significance criteria. It also involves external reviews by peer scientists, internal reviews by NPS and public comment, and review and recommendation by the National Park System Advisory Board. Lastly, it must be designated by the Secretary of the Interior.

### **Public Comment**

- **Ms. Lisa Simon, Executive Director, International Inbound Travel Association**
  - Simon provided comments about the recently introduced commercial use authorization permit for commercial tour operators. She stated that on January 1, 2020, the NPS will institute a systemwide commercial use authorization (CUA) permit program for tour operators which will require the tour operators to get the CUAs throughout the park system for all 419 parks, monuments, historic cultural sites that the NPS manages. Simon stated that tour operators are not opposed to

reasonable fee increases, and in fact they have been actually asking for standardized CUAs for many years but the actual system wide implementation at one time will be a tremendous financial and administrative burden to companies which mostly are small businesses.

- Simon stated that tour operators will have to continue to bring groups to the iconic parks because that's what sells the tours. But Simon said that operators can often provide better visitor experiences when they bring their customers to other smaller, lesser-known parks which also helps to distribute visitors throughout the park system. Simon stated that tour operators will have to remove the smaller parks from their itineraries, but will continue to keep the iconic parks in their tour itineraries which will increase congestion in those parks because they are going to stay longer in those parks. Simon requested an extension for a full year or a delay for the program going into effect, and that the Park Service meet with tour operators and members of the tour and travel industry, and the destinations and the gateway communities as well to talk about how we can facilitate this on a more reasonable basis. Simon stated they have workable solutions for dispersing visitors to other lesser-known parks without actually costing operators so much money and causing them to introduce new administrative processes that are also going to add to their cost.
- **Ms. Sarah Leavitt, Curator, National Building Museum**
  - Leavitt stated that she had previously served on the NHL committee, talked about what it meant to serve and why that committee is such an important part of the Board. Leavitt stressed that the process allows for thinking about how historic places matter to people and allows for people to see their history designated as a NHL. Leavitt requested the committee be deliberate and thoughtful in nominating subject matter experts to the NHL committee to include scholars, archaeologists, historians, architectural historians, professors, museum curators--a full range of experts who are really invested in the history of this country and can help tell the story of the nation.
- **Ms. Pam Inman, President, CTP, CAE, IOM, National Tour Association**
  - Inman reiterated the points Simon discussed previously, but also highlighted the problem of park fees and pricing structures that create an additional burden on tour operators. Inman offered an example of where a tour company comes in and takes 50 people into a park with all of the fees that have been tacked on driving the cost to ~\$28 a person, but if a single car comes in with a family of five it will be ~\$7 a person. Inman said that with that kind of discrepancy tour operators will have to pass that \$28 off to their clients which in turn will deter clients from wanting to visit when packages get too expensive. Inman did acknowledge that NPS staff has been good at listening to operators and stated that the implementation delay referred to by Simon was a result of NPS listening to the tour operators and understand how a tour operator does business with and help the parks.
- **Mr. Dan Puskar, President and CEO, Public Lands Alliance**
  - Puskar provided an introduction on the Public Lands Alliance as a capacity builder and representative of the nonprofit partners of America's parks, forests,

and refuges. It includes friends groups and cooperating associations running educational institutes on public lands. Puskar stated that parks were never meant to be funded or run themselves completely on their own, that they have always had partners including the business community and marketers. Puskar noted as an example that William Kent and his wife back in the early 1900s gave the land to create Muir Woods. Puskar commented that he sees the wonderful work of Nature Bridge bringing kids into public lands from Olympic to Prince William Forest nearby; the Appalachian Trail Conservancy managing a 2,000 plus-mile stretch of national scenic trail; and partners helping address the housing crisis through the Rocky Mountains Conservancy buying up houses in that area to be able to house both NPS staff and their own.

- Puskar commented that there will always be partners available, looking to the Board for additional guidance. Puskar mentioned that he served from 2014 to 2016 on the Board's Committee on Philanthropy and Partnerships, which wrote a report that influenced the development of Director's Order #21 on Donations and Philanthropic Partnerships. Puskar concluded by reaffirming the longstanding partnership between the NPS and the private sector, including corporations, foundations, and individuals that want to give back.

## **Discussion/Actions**

- Election of Chair and Vice Chair
  - Smith requested the Board provide nominations for Chair. Zelma Lansford nominated Mary Pope Hutson, and the Board voted unanimously for Ms. Hutson to serve as Board Chair.
  - Chair Hutson nominated John Nau to serve as Board Vice Chair. The Board voted unanimously for Nau to serve as Board Vice Chair.
- Establishment of Committees
  - Smith requested the Chair and Board consider establishing four committees: the National Historic Landmarks Committee; the National Natural Landmarks Committee; the Visitor Experience Committee; and the Workforce Planning Committee. The work of the first two committees are required under statute and regulations and assist the Board in making national landmark recommendations. The Board approved the establishment of the four Committees, appointed Committee Chairs and selected members for each.
  - Joseph Emert was appointed Chair of the National Historic Landmarks Committee, with John Nau, John Cushman, and Boyd Smith serving as members.
  - Billy Hewes was appointed Chair of the National Natural Landmarks Committee, with Andrew “Tuck” Beckstoffer and Boyd Smith serving as members.
  - Philip Pearce was appointed Chair of the Visitor Experience Committee, with Tuck Beckstoffer, Ellis Ivory, and John Nau serving as members.
  - Zelma Lansford and Les Moore were appointed Co-Chairs of the Workforce Planning Committee, with Philip Pearce and Mary Pope Hutson serving as members.

## **ADJOURNMENT**

- Chair Hutson thanked Board members and meeting attendees and adjourned the meeting at 4:30pm on August 27, 2019.

## **ACTIONS TAKEN BY THE BOARD DURING THE MEETING**

- ❖ Election of Mary Pope Hutson as Chair
- ❖ Election of John Nau as Vice Chair
- ❖ Establishment of the National Historic Landmarks Committee
- ❖ Establishment of the National Natural Landmarks Committee
- ❖ Establishment of the Workforce Planning Committee
- ❖ Establishment of the Visitor Experience Committee