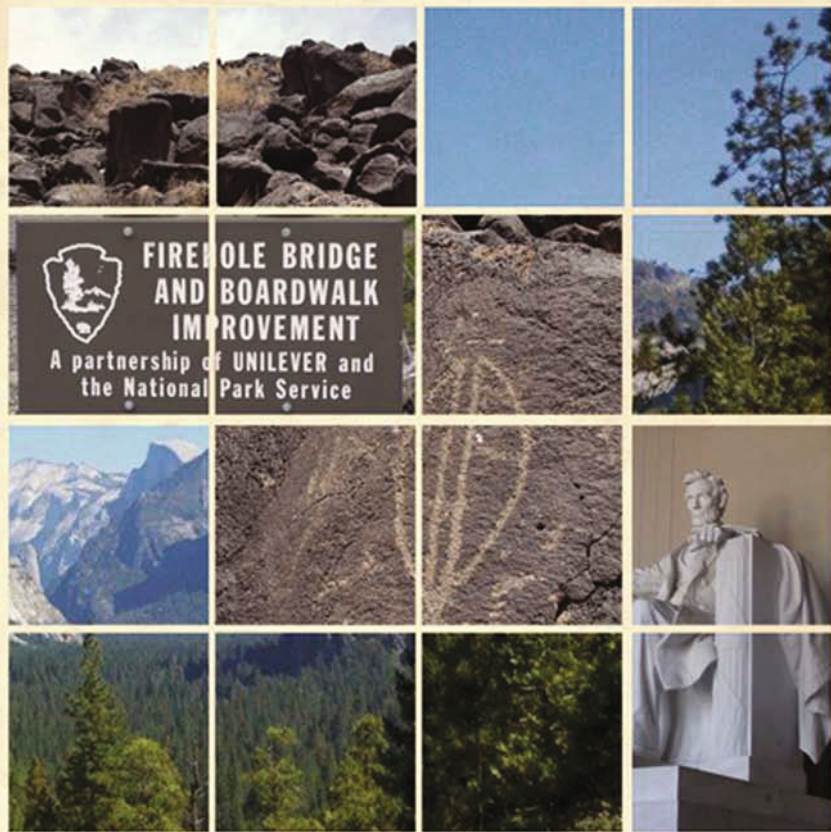
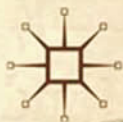

PHILANTHROPY AND THE NATIONAL PARK SERVICE



**Jacqueline Vaughn
& Hanna J. Cortner**



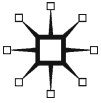
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Philanthropy and the National Park Service

Jacqueline Vaughn
and
Hanna J. Cortner

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To my beloved husband, Robert Easton

To Peggy Edge and the memory of Charles Edge

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Preface

There is nothing so American as our national parks.

—Franklin D. Roosevelt¹

The nation's 401 national parks. More than 84 million acres in every state. A variety of places, from the nation's premier mountains, seashores, and deserts, to historically significant homes, military forts, schools, trails, farms, and canals. A performing arts center. Archeological sites from ancient cultures. Memorials to presidents, scientists, and civil rights figures. Battlefields that remind us of the costs of a nation divided by civil war, and a solemn field that marks the resting place of Flight 93, testament to more recent travails and pivotal events in the nation's history. All of this is managed by an agency, the National Park Service (NPS), with a budget of approximately \$2.50 billion and 22,000 employees. "[T]he best idea we ever had," writer Wallace Stegner declared in 1983. "Absolutely American, absolutely democratic."²

We began this project on philanthropy and the National Park Service, with its particular focus on friends groups and cooperating associations, with a curiosity about how to further the preservation of these special places. The project had its genesis in the childhood of one of the authors, Jacqueline Vaughn. Growing up in San Diego, one of her teachers introduced her to the national parks by showing slides on the wall of a classroom, while a phonograph played records that included both narration and music, such as Ferde Grofé's *Grand Canyon Suite*. For many years, the only national park she visited more than once was Yosemite, and it held a special place in her heart. In 1997, she decided it was time to revise her estate plans and asked her attorney how to bequeath money to the park. With a new job and a strongly held philanthropic ethic, she decided to make a contribution while still alive. So she started looking for the address and tax ID number the attorney needed, to start leaving a legacy sooner rather than later. Sounds simple, right?

Google wasn't available back then, so searching for Yosemite National Park in the library and on a less-developed Internet system brought up all kinds of choices: a website for the park itself, the Yosemite Fund, a Yosemite Natural History Association, the Yosemite Association, the Yosemite Museum Association, the Yosemite Institute, and Friends of Yosemite Valley. Looking further, she also learned donations could be made through the National Park Foundation, or directly to the park superintendent. Support could also be provided through the National Parks Conservation Association, or through one of the NPS partnering corporations. Which one to choose? She chose the Yosemite Fund, the park's official fundraising partner. But if you look on Google now, you'll find that in 2010 the Yosemite Fund merged with the cooperating association, the Yosemite Association, to become the Yosemite Conservancy.

Jacqueline's interest in park philanthropy grew with the advent of several developments in park policy, including President G. W. Bush's 2007 National Parks Centennial Initiative to provide additional funding for the national parks over the next ten years. The Centennial Initiative had been developed in preparation for the one hundredth anniversary of the Park Service in 2016, and it came on the heels of congressional inquiries into fundraising, partnerships, and the commercialization of national parks. Park philanthropy through private-public partnerships was raising some troubling policy and administrative issues.

In the summer of 2009, having just received one of the periodic requests for donations from the Yosemite Fund, Jacqueline began to ask more questions about the group and projects to which her donations were going and the issues surrounding park philanthropy, an interest that bloomed into a topic for an upcoming sabbatical. During a return trip to Yosemite with Hanna Cortner where they saw some of the beneficial results of the Yosemite Fund's efforts, they discussed the possibility of collaborating on the project. Although a firm believer in the values embodied in the national park system, Hanna had never written a check to a specific park or a friends group, and had concerns about the slippery slope of relying upon private sources for park funding.

Together, we began this project not only for our own edification, but also because we felt that partnerships are one key to understanding the current operations of many natural resource agencies. In a time of fiscal cliffs, sequesters, and philosophies of government built on citizen participation, transparency, and shared decision making, it is apparent that it is all about managing more with less. The trustees

of the nation's vast array of land and water resources will need all the philanthropic partners and friends they can get.

At first, we broadly framed the research task around the question, "How do park partners philanthropically support national parks and with what benefits and challenges?" Like most research studies, we then undertook a literature search. This led to months of preliminary research on partnerships, constituency building, and NPS history, organization, and administration. Although that work was helpful and essential for understanding the historic sources of support for park establishment and operations, such as that provided by the railroads and the tourist industry, and in providing context for the particular park philanthropy of friends groups and cooperating associations, two things became apparent: first, very little had been written that directly addressed NPS philanthropy and park partnerships, and second, the definition of "park partner" is much more complicated and imprecise than one might at first realize. After encountering the many and varied kinds of partnerships described in chapter 1, we decided to limit our research parameters to friends groups and cooperating associations, the two types of non-governmental and nonprofit philanthropic partners established primarily to assist or benefit a specific park area, a series of park areas, or national park program.

During the study's literature search phase, we did find a few particularly relevant journal articles, PhD dissertations, and nonprofit organization sources that specifically addressed park partners. This included two dissertations on local population engagement and friends groups (specifically with Virgin Islands National Park), and several surveys. The surveys, which will be discussed further in chapter 4, provided useful statistical snapshots of friends groups and changes in their makeup and activities over time. But the surveys, by themselves, failed to offer the kind of robust portrait of the landscape inhabited by the Park Service and its friends that was clearly lacking in the literature. We wanted to move beyond numbers and quantitative analysis to narratives and qualitative analysis.

We also reviewed the work of the Center for Park Management, part of the National Parks Conservation Association (NPCA), whose report, *Best Practices in Friends Groups and National Parks*, originated from a request from a NPS superintendent.³ This study, published in September 2005, provided us with an initial overview of the interaction between the Park Service and philanthropic organizations that support national parks, and guided us in our selection of some of the park units we would study ourselves. The NPCA also identified six best practices that the organization could share with the Park Service

and friends groups, something that we decided not to duplicate in our research.

We then contacted the Washington Office of the National Park Service to obtain basic background data and information on friends and cooperating associations. It was anticipated that the NPS Partnerships Office and the NPS Partnership Council would serve as the best source of information on friends groups and cooperating associations. However, our timing of the study did not anticipate a major reorganization of the NPS Partnerships Office, proposed changes in friends group agreements, or significant staff changes. Nor did we anticipate that the Park Service itself was lacking the types of data we had hoped to access: basic information on the number of friends groups, current lists or directories of friends groups and cooperating associations, annual reports, or up-to-date financial statements on what is commonly referred to as “aid to parks”—one measure of how partners support an individual park unit.

After this initial investigation of resources, we began to look elsewhere for more information, contacting the NPCA, the National Park Foundation, the Western National Parks Association, the Association of Partners for Public Lands, National Parks Friends Alliance, an existing contact we had within a friends group, and regional Park Service partnership coordinators. This initial data-gathering effort convinced us that the best approach from that point on would be to carry out our research by visiting as many park units as possible and interviewing park superintendents and their partners on a one-on-one basis.

Since the travel budget for the research was limited, we developed a nongeneralizable “opportunity sample” of groups and park units, rather than trying to draw an entirely random sample or a stratified random sample to ensure inclusion of every state, region, or park unit type. Our opportunity sample often meant fitting an interview in along with otherwise personal travel as well as planning several trips specifically around a series of interviews. When personal on-site interviews were not possible, we chose to interview partners or NPS staff by telephone. Within the limits of our resources, we did, however, attempt to make sure that our sample was as inclusive as possible. As the interview process proceeded, adjustments were made to insure that we included all types of park units, from the large “crown jewel” national parks to smaller national historical sites, all NPS regions, parks without friends groups, and parks just starting friends groups. Slicing the sample from the perspective of the cooperating associations and friends groups, we included cooperating associations that served only a single park as well as those with a multi-region or multi-park focus, and friends groups

from small, all-volunteer groups to groups with multimillion dollar endowments and operating budgets. We also included groups that thought they were an official friend but weren't, as well as those who knew they weren't but acted as friends, nonetheless.

A total of 58 semi-structured interviews were conducted, including 30 interviews with representatives of friends groups or cooperating associations, 16 with national park superintendents, and 12 with other NPS personnel or individuals affiliated with other park partners. Because some interviews involved more than one person, the number of persons actually interviewed is higher than 58. Additional site visits were made to park units where no formal interviews were conducted, but where materials were collected or facilities and projects reviewed. (A list of parks visited and groups contacted is given in the Appendix.) To encourage candor, we promised anonymity to all those interviewed unless the material was in the public domain, or unless we recontacted the individual to receive permission when any quote was obvious enough to show to whom it could be attributed. We believed that the information and perspectives they provided would be straightforward and more valuable when not tainted by organizational norms or political pressure. Data gathered from the fieldwork/interviews comprise the heart of the study.

Keeping track of park benefactors is difficult. The groups are in a constant state of flux as their agreements with the Park Service are renegotiated or terminated, or as the group evolves, changes names, or ceases to exist. Although the study made every attempt to be accurate in identifying the nonprofit organizations that are the "official" friends groups and cooperating associations, the numbers of partners and their leaders may change by the time the reader picks up this book. We do believe, however, that the data gathered over the past several years paint a more robust portrait of past and current national park philanthropy than previously available for the Park Service, scholars, and the partners themselves.

Had our resources and time allowed, we would have wanted to visit every park unit that houses a cooperating association and/or friends group. We would have enjoyed the opportunity to sift through the historical records of Mather, or the Union Pacific Railroad, to see how the nation's initial support for national parks was cultivated. We had hoped to interview wealthy park benefactors like the Rockefellers, or the Haas family, or participate in the annual conference of the Association of Partners for Public Lands. But those ideas and dreams aside, we do feel this book makes a major contribution to what we know about non-governmental support for the national parks.

We would like to acknowledge the assistance we received from those we interviewed as a part of this study. We truly appreciate the time and the materials they made available to us. We also wish to thank our colleague, Frederic I. Solop of Northern Arizona University, who willingly provided his knowledge of the Park Service in reviewing the complete draft manuscript, and to Ron Foresta of the University of Tennessee and an anonymous reviewer who provided comments on the draft manuscript to Palgrave Macmillan. We have been the beneficiaries of the support of Editor Brian O'Connor of Palgrave Macmillan, who shepherded the project through the acquisition process, his editorial assistant Scarlet Neath, and the editorial team who brought the manuscript to fruition. Finally, we want to thank those individuals and organizations who support the country's national parks in so many ways, stretching government and philanthropic dollars and resources so that we can continue to marvel at "America's Best Idea."

Chapter 1

Philanthropy through Park Partnerships

When President Woodrow Wilson signed the National Park Service Act in 1916, he brought 36 national parks, monuments, and reservations under a single federal agency, the National Park Service (NPS). A number of disparate units that earlier had mostly been cared for by the military would henceforth be managed by the new agency 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.”¹ What developed over the next century was a complex system of partnerships, internal and external to the Park Service, designed to meet the two prongs of the agency’s dual, and often conflicting, mandate of preservation and visitor enjoyment. As the agency grew from managing the 36 units to today’s 401, so did the array of partnership arrangements. One significant role that many partnerships have assumed is philanthropic, raising money to donate to the agency as a supplement to the appropriations provided by Congress.

Today many NPS units depend on park-specific, philanthropic nonprofit partners, called friends groups, for fundraising, and there are currently about 185 friends to choose from. But not every park has a friends group, and some groups support more than one park. In addition, most national parks are served by one of the approximately 70 cooperating associations, legal entities that are older than friends groups (the first was the Yosemite Association, established in 1923). As partners, cooperating associations have a decidedly educational mission, operating bookstores and publishing interpretative materials, and directing their proceeds to the national parks. Within the overall

context and historical background of park philanthropy through park partnerships, this study examines the legal and organizational frameworks within which friends and cooperating associations operate, the diverse roles they play in the operation and maintenance of park units, and the issues and challenges they and the parks encounter. But before delving into the specifics of how philanthropic partnerships between the Park Service and its friends groups and cooperating associations function, which is explained in chapters 3–6, it is first necessary to understand more fully the contours of the partnership concept as well as the historical evolution of park philanthropy in general, which forms the crux of this chapter and chapter 2.

Defining Partners

Thanks Partner!

Yes, YOU! By paying the entrance fee, you are partnering with the National Park Service through the Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act Program at Devils Tower National Monument. Your entry fees are used to support improved signage and building restoration.

Other partners include the Black Hills National Forest, Black Hills Youth Conservation Corps, Black Hills National Forest Tribal Youth Conservation Corps, Montana Conservation Corps, Student Conservation Association, American Conservation Experience, Hulett and Crook County Emergency Response, Bear Lodge Alternative High School, Christian Motorcycle Association, Crook County Sheriff Department, Access Fund, Wyoming Department of Transportation, Boy Scouts of America, Bearlodge Writers, and the many park climbing guides. Thanks for helping us out.²

Thus the Devils Tower National Monument's official newspaper publication, *The Tower Columns*, gives an account of the partners it relies upon. Immediately below these acknowledgments is a paragraph highlighting the monument's cooperating association, the Devils Tower National History Association, and its work, operating the bookstore in the visitor's center, whose profits help the Wyoming park support the Junior Ranger program, interpretive exhibits, and a cultural program series. A membership form for the partner sits alongside the description.

So what is a partnership? The term is a deceptively complex one. The US Department of the Interior (DOI), the cabinet department in which the Park Service resides, notes that "almost any time that a

federal or non-federal entity is working together with the Department, that working relationship may be considered a partnership.”³ Within the Park Service and among its stakeholders, “partnership” is used loosely and frequently to describe almost any type of associational relationship. The entrance fee-paying park visitor is a partner, as are individuals who drop a small donation in a donation box inside the park, make a sizeable bequest, or volunteer their time to work in the parks. Apart from these people, groups with formal and congressionally authorized status to work cooperatively with the agency (e.g., cooperating associations, National Park Foundation), are partners. Other federal agencies, both within and outside the DOI, particularly those agencies that share resource management responsibilities, including, for example, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) within the DOI and the Forest Service within the Department of Agriculture, are also considered partners.

State and local units of governments can also be counted as partners in a number of ways: through official cooperative management agreements, through agreements to provide services to parks or programs, through programs where the Park Service provides technical assistance (such as the Historic American Buildings Survey program) as well as planning assistance,⁴ or simply through informal consultations and cooperation. Private interest groups organized specifically and solely to advocate nationally on behalf of parks (e.g., the National Parks Conservation Association [NPCA]), or to benefit one or more parks (e.g., friends of the park groups), are partners too, as are national, regional, or locally based private interest groups organized around other issues not related to a national park but who engage in some type of activity benefiting a park. Thus, in addition to such well-known conservation and environmental groups as the Nature Conservancy or the Sierra Club, groups as diverse as the Boy Scouts, the Christian Motorcycle Association, or a local writers’ group may be included as a park partner.

There are a myriad other partnership arrangements involving non-profit organizations. San Francisco-based NatureBridge, founded as the Yosemite Institute in 1971, offers national park-based overnight field science programs in Yosemite, Olympic, and Channel Islands national parks, Golden Gate National Recreation Area, and the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area. The organization merged with the Headlands Institute and Olympic Park Institute in 2012, and now serves an estimated 30,000 participants each year. NatureBridge is working with the Park Service to develop a \$43 million environmental education center in Yosemite. Another entity, the Udall Foundation,

coordinates a Parks in Focus program giving middle school youth from underserved communities an opportunity to use photography to learn about nature in the national parks. Universities and other research and educational institutions may interact through the national network of the Cooperative Ecosystem Studies Units that conduct collaborative and interdisciplinary applied projects, or may work more informally on a project-to-project basis. Finally, corporate and business entities (e.g., concessioners, companies that make donations or engage in fundraising campaigns, travel agencies, and chambers of commerce) are also considered partners. The National Parks Promotion Council, for instance, helps establish cooperative partnerships with state tourism offices, gateway communities, destination marketing organizations, and travel companies that provide services related to the national parks.

Thus, one might just as easily ask: just who isn't a partner? The NPS's *Management Policies 2006* indicates that the "Service will embrace partnership opportunities that will help accomplish the NPS mission provided that personnel and funding requirements do not make it impractical for the Service to participate and the partnership activity would not (1) violate legal or ethical standards, (2) otherwise reflect adversely on the NPS mission and image, or (3) imply or indicate an unwillingness by the Service to perform an inherently governmental function."⁵ The Park Service may partner, for example, with corporations in campaigns to raise money, but such fundraising campaigns cannot identify the NPS with alcohol or tobacco products.⁶

Partnership Benefits

Management Policies stresses the benefits of partnerships to the agency: "Through these partnerships the Service has received valuable assistance in the form of educational programs, visitor services, living history demonstrations, search-and-rescue operations, fundraising campaigns, habitat restoration, scientific and scholarly research, ecosystem management, and a host of other activities."⁷ The focus areas for partnerships are just as varied as the forms of partnerships. In addition to the areas included in the *Management Policies* description noted above, the agency's partnership website has posted case studies of partnerships in the following areas: arts, capital improvements, community relations, concessioners, cultural resources, design, education/interpretation, facility management, fire management, fundraising, information services, mutual aid, natural resources management/restoration, planning, program delivery, tenant organizations, tourism, trails, transportation, visitor services, and other.⁸ The importance

of such partnerships is increasingly stressed by politicians, resource managers, scholars, and interested members of the public, as a necessary and desirable tool for doing business.⁹

Partnerships provide financial support for things a park is prohibited from doing or cannot afford to do with its allotted budget, whether that be updating signage, building new visitor facilities, restoring buildings or habitats, or providing food for volunteers. Partners can bring additional expertise to assist in interpretation, education, and research, and serve as independent ombuds to watch over park priorities and programs. They can be active and powerful constituencies that promote the agency's mission, argue for its budgets, and broaden the political base of support nationally and with nearby communities. The agency's partners benefit from an alliance with the Park Service because it advances their agenda, whether it is dedication to the scenic, ecological, cultural, or historical reasons for establishing the park, or organizational development purposes, such as enhancing public image, growing the membership base, or building political power and prestige.

Partnerships are also a mechanism by which lands are added to the national park system. For instance, several partners came together to fund and purchase 623 acres of land near California's Joshua Tree National Park, where developers planned to build 2,400 homes in 2013. The \$1.4 million for the purchase of the large parcel came from the California Wildlife Conservation Board and the nearby Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center in Twentynine Palms as part of the Department of Defense's Readiness Environmental Protection Initiative. The federal program helped two other partners, The Trust for Public Land and the Mojave Desert Land Trust, to purchase the conservation easement. The easement protects a key aviation corridor in an area known as the Joshua Tree North Linkage that extends about 11 miles from the north end of the national park to the Marine base. The Gateway Parcel is also a migratory corridor for wildlife and includes more than 10,000 Joshua trees. Another partner, a Wells Fargo real estate division, helped the groups with an extended agreement while they completed the fundraising to acquire the land.¹⁰

A similar multi-stakeholder partnership at Petrified Forest National Park in Arizona added the McCauley Ranch parcel to the park, protecting what one partner called "exceptional" and "irreplaceable" prehistoric resources. The efforts of The Conservation Fund and the NPCA added 4,265 acres to the 119,000 acre site, which is also valuable for its underground reserves of potash, a key ingredient in making fertilizers. The potash is estimated to be about 1,000 feet below the surface, and could potentially generate millions of dollars

in royalties, although the purchase does not convey mineral rights to the Park Service. What is especially important about the acquisition, however, is that the purchase was already part of the Petrified Forest Expansion Act of 2004, which authorized the Park Service to acquire more than 125,000 acres of state and private lands that form a crazy quilt that crisscrosses the area. But Congress failed to appropriate more money for the acquisition of new land, forcing the NPS to use its own limited resources or rely on philanthropic partners to do so for it. The agency had previously attempted to purchase another ranch on the park's boundary, but negotiations failed when the NPS could not come up with the \$20 million in funding. A Canadian mining company reached an agreement with the ranch owners to buy both the land and the mineral rights attached to it, although park officials hoped the deal might fall through, or that they could someday acquire the surface rights by themselves.¹¹

Without these partnerships, whether for fundraising, friend-raising, political assistance, financial management, or media coverage of a park's needs, these land acquisitions likely would not have taken place. The partners worked together to forge alliances outside the governmental sphere that all parties agreed would benefit the national parks and the public that enjoys and visits them. The parties recognized that time was of the essence in preserving the land from future development that might destroy or damage valuable artifacts, viewsheds, wildlife and plants, or other natural resources that cannot be replaced or restored. While the partners worked closely with the Park Service in determining the parks' needs and priorities, they also worked side by side in ways that avoided at least some of the political and bureaucratic barriers that might have stopped the land purchases had they been attempted internally by the agency.

Establishing Partnerships

Some partnerships have a legislative basis. Examples include the 1946 legislative act that statutorily authorized cooperating associations, the National Parks Omnibus Management Act of 1998 that enables the Park Service to enter into cooperative management agreements for federal, state, and local park areas adjacent to a national park unit, and the National Park Service Concessions Management Improvement Act of 1998 that governs commercial visitor services within the parks (e.g., lodging, food, tours, and guide services).

Partnerships in support of parks and recreation areas historically have been encouraged by the federal government, including the 1986

Report and Recommendations to the President of the United States of the President's Commission on Americans Outdoors. The report highlighted multiple case studies where nonprofit organizations assisted federal agencies, including the Park Service, urging groups to help protect outdoor recreation areas such as the Appalachian Trail.¹² Another venue, the 2004 White House Conference on Cooperative Conservation, gave nonprofit partners an opportunity to identify problems and potential solutions when dealing with federal agencies, and at least one resource agency developed a desk guide on dealing with partners as a result of the meeting.

Other partnerships are founded under the authorities that have been granted the agency to enter into cooperative agreements, memoranda of understanding, and leases and contracts for a variety of general or park-specific purposes. Still others are initiated by local park unit employees and may involve informal nonbinding agreements or may be undertaken simply with a handshake.

There are also several comanaged arrangements, often called "partnership parks." Legislation in the National Parks Omnibus Management 1998, for example, enables the Park Service to enter into cooperative management agreements with state and local governments for the comanagement of a national park unit with adjacent or nearby state and local park units. The legislation is clear, however, that no transfer of administrative responsibility for units in the park system can occur under such arrangements. In other partnership parks, there are a number of landowners besides the Park Service and so administration of the protected unit is more collaborative in intent and practice. Landownership may be shared among private landowners, land trusts, tribal governments, commercial interests, as well as with other agencies or levels of government.¹³ Canyon de Chelly National Monument on the Navajo Indian Reservation in Arizona, and the Tallgrass Prairie National Preserve in Kansas involving the Nature Conservancy and the Park Service, fall into this category.¹⁴ For some areas, congressional legislation has given advisory commissions a decisionmaking role.¹⁵

Congress also created a unique federal agency partnership within the national park hierarchy when the Presidio Trust Act was enacted in 1996 to deal with the closure of the Presidio as a US Army base in 1994. Though plans were made to transfer the base to the Golden Gate National Recreation Area, no funds had been appropriated to assist in the transition to a new use, or for the \$1 billion in anticipated rehabilitation costs of the site's buildings and infrastructure. The Presidio Trust was created with the mandate of protecting the site's natural and historic resources while also managing property leases, historic

buildings, and public programming. Congress provided short-term funding to the Trust, which leveraged the taxpayer dollars to attract private support to make the Presidio independent of taxpayer dollars by the end of 2012.¹⁶

A new type of park—the tribal national park—is on the horizon as a different variety of partnership that can be established. In 1942, during World War II, the federal government established the Pine Ridge Aerial Gunnery Range on the lands of the Oglala Sioux Tribe, and then in 1968, declared the gunnery range as excess land. Located completely on reservation lands in southwestern South Dakota, the land later was conveyed by Congress to the Tribe, but administered by the Park Service as a government-held trust as part of what was then Badlands National Monument. The 133,000 acres, comprising two tracts of land known as the South Unit, became jointly administered by the Tribe and the Park Service in 1976, and in 1978, the national monument was redesignated as Badlands National Park. After decades of negotiations between the Tribe and several federal agencies, the Park Service is now working toward congressional legislation that would create the nation's first tribal national park. While the administrative niceties of the partnership would need to be worked out, including whether the Tribe could regulate hunting by tribal members within the park's boundaries, the Park Service would work with the Tribe to restore the landscape and promote the heritage of the Oglala Sioux people.¹⁷ What happens in South Dakota could ultimately affect the Navajo's relationship with the Park Service at Canyon de Chelly in Arizona, or lead to other tribal partnerships.

Although there have long been partnership arrangements between governments and other entities, the past few years has seen an even greater emphasis on partnerships as a way of conducting governmental programs. From the perspective of citizens, partnerships provide greater opportunities for input into governmental decision making, increase communication between the private and public sectors, and coalesce resources to reach common goals. In recent years, collaborative partnerships have become more widespread and have been heralded as a new approach for dealing with many contentious resource issues.¹⁸ It must be stressed, however, that partnerships may or may not be established as collaborative. Collaboration implies shared power and consensus decision making. Although partnerships may have benefits for all parties, in many instances the relationship is not collaborative: the agency designs the playing field, sets the rules, and retains most of the decisionmaking power. Such is the case with friends groups and cooperating associations.

Increasing Need, Diminishing Resources

After a series of cuts to the federal budget during the 1980s, conservation groups, park lovers, and the media began focusing attention on the deteriorating conditions of America's national parks. The *National Geographic Traveler*, for example, noted that 45 percent of Park Service collections of museum artifacts had not been catalogued, and the parks were plagued with 6,500 nonnative invasive species encroaching on seven million acres of national parklands.¹⁹ The DOI noted that visitation at Yellowstone National Park in 2002 would exceed the visitation to the entire national park system in 1916, the year the NPS was founded. "Maintenance funding has not kept pace with the aging of the park infrastructure and increasing park visitation," according to the DOI, which estimated \$4.9 billion in deferred maintenance for infrastructure, roads and bridges in 2002.²⁰

In recent years, the funding problems have not diminished, nor have they escaped the notice of those outside the Park Service. In 2011, a study by the Center for Park Research, part of the NPCA, noted that deferred maintenance of historic structures was "one of the most serious, and most highly visible, challenges facing the National Park Service." The report said that in 2011, the NPS itself had estimated the deferred maintenance cost just for historic structures at \$3 billion.²¹ The American Society of Civil Engineers, in its 2012 Policy Statement on National Parks Infrastructure, called for "immediate and sustained federal action to reinvest in the deteriorating infrastructure of America's National Parks, Monuments, Battlefields, and other preserves," to protect the country's national heritage and enhance the visitor experience, now citing an estimated \$6.1 billion maintenance backlog.²²

Few would question that the parks need to address the maintenance backlog and a host of other problems from air pollution to understaffing, but promises of assistance have not been kept. In 2002, Interior Secretary Gale A. Norton stated, "The President and I will work to eliminate the National Park Service's maintenance backlog with nearly \$5 billion over five years to fix our national treasures and protect our wild places so more families across America can enjoy them."²³ Then, in 2007, President Bush proposed the three-part National Parks Centennial Initiative to provide \$3 billion in new funds for the national parks over the next ten years. The Initiative included the President's Centennial Commitment of \$100 million per year for park improvements, including the hiring of 3,000 additional seasonal national park rangers, interpreters, and maintenance workers. The Commitment

also included funds for repairing park infrastructure and encouraging children to become Junior Rangers. The second part of the initiative, the President's Centennial Challenge, called upon private donors, including individuals and foundations, to contribute \$100 million for signature projects and programs during each year of the initiative. The initiative's third component, the President's Centennial Match, called upon Congress to allow the federal government to match private contributions, dollar for dollar, up to \$100 million in mandatory funds annually for ten years, to "dramatically expand the National Park Service's legacy of leveraging philanthropic investment for the benefit of our National Parks and future generations of visitors."²⁴

While the Bush administration recognized the funding need, Congress only funded two years of the initiative before making cuts to the NPS budget. Today, the agency's budget is approximately \$400 million below what it was a decade ago, with no prospects for any significant reversal of course. The Obama administration cut the agency's budget by 6 percent from 2010 to 2012, which the NPCA refers to as "a bargain at 1/14 of 1 percent of the federal budget and declining. Yet every dollar invested in our parks generates \$10 in economic activity." "At a time when policymakers are, importantly, so focused on jobs, making pound-foolish cuts to parks, whether through a mindless sequester or a half-hearted substitute, turns a blind eye toward their tremendous economic impact."²⁵

The past half decade has seen escalating political demands to reduce the national debt and government spending, accompanied by deep political cleavages over what should be cut and how deeply, and whether revenue enhancement should be part of the solution. In hopes of providing an incentive to come to an agreement, the Budget Control Act of 2011 mandated across-the-board budget cuts (called sequestration) in the event that no agreement was reached. As an incentive, the act was a failure. The sequestration of funds that began on March 1, 2013 caused the Park Service to develop a budget that was 5 percent less than what was spent in 2012. Park officials began talking about closing down visitor centers, reducing the number of park rangers, and cutting back on interpretive programs and services. Some training, including sessions for mid-level NPS officials that dealt with partnerships, was canceled, even though the training itself would have taught staff how to leverage external resources during times of budgetary constraint like the sequester.

As the sequester began to take effect around the country, superintendents and officials throughout the agency began to paint a dire picture of what would happen at individual parks. The superintendent of

the Blue Ridge Parkway, for instance, noted that at its peak, the park's budget had been \$16.5 million, and in 2012, that figure was reduced to \$15.7 million. He said that at least seven visitor facilities along the 470 mile scenic route that runs through North Carolina and Virginia would not open in 2013, including campgrounds, picnic areas, and visitor centers, with other facilities opening later than usual in the year. Currently vacant permanent jobs, including four law enforcement positions, would remain vacant, and seasonal interpreter positions would be cut back. In Yellowstone, sequester impacts included delays in the opening of visitor education centers, food services, and gift shops. Even smaller park units, such as Alabama's Tuskegee Airmen National Historic Site and the Selma to Montgomery National Historic Trail, were affected, as park officials closed both locations on Sundays until further notice. At Wind Cave National Park in South Dakota, a campground was closed in order to eliminate the interpretive rangers who offer evening programs for visitors, and to eliminate the two summer employees needed for campground maintenance.²⁶ But some members of Congress questioned whether NPS Director Jon Jarvis had exaggerated the effects of the sequester even before it went into effect. House Oversight and Government Reform Committee Chair Darrell Issa (R-California) noted in an April 2013 hearing that the Park Service had 5 percent more money in its operating budget than when President Barack Obama took office, and fewer visitors. "In 2008, quite frankly, Mr. Jarvis, the roads were plowed, the trash was taken out and most of the time, there was toilet paper."²⁷

Although it is impossible to determine whether existing partnerships would be able to minimize the impact of multimillion dollar cuts such as these, the sequester did cause some visitors and supporters to consider the cost of managing the parks, and in some cases, focused attention on the overall NPS budget. Occasionally, a blogger or other individual would comment that the agency ought to consider forming nonprofit organizations to befriend the national parks, obviously unaware that friends groups already exist in about half the park units.

Sequestration aside, any budget/deficit solutions that truly tackle the national debt and the size of the federal budget are also likely to have long-term severe, if not draconian, impacts, upon the NPS budget. It is politically difficult to make sizeable adjustments to mandated spending for entitlement programs such as Social Security and Medicare, leaving the roughly 30 percent of the federal budget allocated to discretionary spending the place to look for spending reductions. Of discretionary spending, however, over one-half is allocated to defense, which also has the political support of some of the most

ardent budget cutters—thus the scenario that non-defense discretionary spending for health, education, and natural resource programs will be hit the hardest.

Beyond the Park Service

It is also important to emphasize that the Park Service is not alone in its efforts to develop partnerships, although the agency has developed what appears to be the most complex legal and administrative structure in working with nonprofit organizations. Partnerships for the purposes of philanthropy in support of resource conservation also exist in several other federal resource management agencies as well as at the state level.

The BLM, for example, has relied more heavily on collaboration as a tool in building and maintaining relationships under Executive Order 13352 (2004), which directs agencies to promote collaborative activity among governments, tribes, private for-profit and nonprofit institutions, and other non-governmental entities and individuals. In 2000, more than 850 sites became part of the National Landscape Conservation System (NLCS), and the BLM's responsibility now includes a variety of units, from national conservation areas and national monuments to interpretive centers. Subsequently, the agency has attempted to make partnerships a key element of the NLCS; the BLM previously lacked an established national policy on the use of volunteers and nonprofit organizations. Some 40 of these sites have friends groups similar to those of the Park Service, such as the Red Rock Canyon National Conservation Area in southern Nevada. This area had previously been managed as the Red Rock Canyon Recreation Lands, with limited resources for visitor center operations. Although the BLM had a contractual arrangement with the Southwest Natural and Cultural Heritage Association for sales of interpretive materials at the visitor center, BLM staff recognized the need for additional support for the site, and in 1984, the Friends of Red Rock Canyon was formed, becoming the BLM's first organized, nonprofit support group. Today, the group's activities include leading hikes, maintaining trails and the visitor center's grounds, picking up trash and removing graffiti, sponsoring an art show, and fundraising that generates more than \$100,000 a year for program support, training, supplies, and equipment.²⁸

Another BLM friends group, Pompeys Pillar Historical Association, formed in 1989, supports the butte in east of Billings, Montana, where Captain William Clark carved his name in the soft sandstone on July 25, 1806, on his return from the Lewis and Clark Expedition.

The Committee for the Preservation of Pompeys Pillar purchased the site from private owners in 1991; it was established as a national monument in 2001. Since then, the association has helped fund a new visitor center and upgraded walkways, enhanced interpretive displays, and provided visitor services during the site's April 30–October 15 visitation season. Like Friends of Red Rock Canyon, the Pompeys Pillar group is part of the Conservation Lands Foundation.²⁹

The BLM has begun to formalize its efforts to build and sustain partnerships, drafting a series of goals as part of the NLCS Summit held in November 2010. Like other federal agencies, the BLM recognized the need to streamline administrative processes with a goal of establishing greater consistency in its partnerships, especially with non-federal nonprofit organizations. The recommendations included a goal of integrating best practices into new and existing partnerships, providing relevant training for NLCS staff, building partner capacity through technical support, workshops, award systems, and establishing partnership coordinators at appropriate levels within the BLM.

The US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), in comparison, has numerous statutory authorities that authorize the agency to enter into partnership arrangements. These include the Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act, which provides that the secretary of the Interior can receive donations of lands and funds, to the Fish and Wildlife Act, which authorizes the acceptance of gifts and volunteer services that benefit the USFWS mission. Some of the partnerships involve state agencies, such as, for example, the Georgia Department of Natural Resources and Georgia Southern University that partner with the agency in the Camp Lawton Partnership Team. The groups have worked together to determine the exact location of the Camp Lawton stockade at Magnolia Springs State Park, and they speak to area schools and organizations on the value of the cultural resources jointly managed by the two agencies. In Arizona, the agency signed a memorandum of understanding with the Liberty Wildlife Rehabilitation Foundation to establish a pilot program that would provide non-eagle feathers and bird parts to federally recognized tribal members for use in cultural and religious practices and ceremonies as a way of conserving North American birds.

The USFWS also benefits from partnerships developed with the National Wildlife Refuge Association, an organization that focuses on citizen mobilization and conservation organizations to generate support for wildlife conservation and the 150 million acre National Wildlife Refuge System. The group helps mobilize the 230 current friends groups and their 40,000 volunteers that contribute 1.3 million

hours each year to the national system of 550 wildlife refuges, the equivalent of 648 full-time employees. The organization assists the friends groups with capacity building through training, mentoring with the USFWS, and by serving as a resource hub for support.

Two USFWS friends groups exemplify the diversity of activities in which they participate and provide support. The Friends of Alaska National Wildlife Refuges supports 16 sites within the state, with a membership teleconference each month rather than a face-to-face meeting of its geographically dispersed members. The organization sponsors a scholarship for a student who has worked at a national wildlife refuge in Alaska, and assists each of the sites with activities from organizing a weed smackdown (pull) to providing information at a shorebird festival. Unlike some other types of agency friends groups, the Alaska group is active in supporting or opposing projects, whether contacting legislators about a drilling proposal, or preparing comments on a draft environmental impact statement.

In contrast, the Friends of Great Swamp National Wildlife Refuge in Morris County, New Jersey, is what the group calls refuge-centric, an all-volunteer nonprofit that promotes the stewardship of a single site. Established in 1999, the friends group provides funds for capital improvements, such as boardwalk railings, benches, and signage, as well as funding for a summer intern, a small visitor information shed, viewing scopes, and publications. The members also participate in more traditional activities such as hosting group tours and educational programs, holding a fall festival and cleanup events, and doing trail maintenance, invasive species removal, and biological surveys.

The US Forest Service notes that the agency uses the word “partnership” more loosely than the precise federal definition. In its *Partnership Guide*, the words partnership and partners are “used in a broad way to describe relationships between the people, organizations, agencies, and communities that work together and share interests.”³⁰ The Forest Service includes in its definition arrangements and work with other entities where the benefits are not shared, such as grants made to communities for revitalizing urban forests, or formal arrangements in which the Forest Service purchases goods and services. Partners also include those with whom the Forest Service is involved more informally, such as organizations participating in community networks and educational events. Unlike the ways in which its sister resource agencies consider other government entities as partners, the Forest Service uses the term “separate consultative relationship” to refer to projects, policies, or decisions that have the potential to affect another government or its jurisdiction.³¹

In addition, the Forest Service works with interpretive associations under the Cooperative Funds and Deposit Act of 1975, the legal authority that allows the agency to enter into cooperative agreements with private organizations to develop and publish environmental education and forest history materials. The organizations must be nonprofit groups, and they may assist the Forest Service through the collection and allocation of donations for agency projects. Interpretive associations also assist with special events, educational programs, volunteers, and visitor activities. In return, the agency is permitted to provide interpretive associations with sales and office space within its facilities, and can provide the groups discount prices for the purchase of maps. Monies raised from interpretive activities can be donated back to the Forest Service.

The Forest Service also benefits from its partnership with a support organization, the National Forest Foundation (NFF). The Foundation was established by congressional charter in 1990 to encourage, accept, and administer private contributions and gifts to the Forest Service in a manner similar to that of the National Park Foundation, which will be discussed in greater detail in chapter 2. The NFF helps the Forest Service build partnerships and partner networks, although many of the partnerships are unlike the more traditional friends groups described previously. With an estimated 450 partner organizations, the NFF is engaged in a major fundraising campaign to raise \$100 million to support the country's 155 national forests and its grasslands. The organization also funds strategic initiatives each year, such as the FY 2011 aspen propagation clones project of the Friends of Northern Arizona Forests, and the New Jersey Audubon Society's development of a collaborative forest stewardship plan.

Other grants are given to partners for capacity building, or as part of a challenge grant. NFF's largest grant initiative is the Matching Awards Program that funds on-the-ground restoration and conservation activities. In FY 2011, 63 grants were made to partners such as the National Wild Turkey Federation of Indiana for the group's habitat improvement project in the Wayne National Forest, the Selway-Bitterroot Frank Church Foundation for its volunteer stewardship program in Montana, and the Friends of the Columbia Gorge in Oregon for enhancement of the New Cape Horn Recreation Area. Notably, NFF provides grants to groups with a broad conservation agenda, rather than organizations allied with a specific national forest. Organizations such as the Forest Guild (New Mexico), the Mono Lake Committee (California), the Wilderness Society (Washington, DC), and Bat Conservation International (Texas) benefit from NFF support

because their goals are aligned with those of the organization, including the improvement of recreation opportunities, wildlife habitat, watershed health, and ecosystem services. The Foundation is funded by donors large and small. In FY 2011, the Walt Disney Company gave more than a million dollars to the organization; dozens of other corporations and foundations donated \$500 or more. Individual donors and organizations ranged from an anonymous donation over \$500,000 to more modest gifts from the City of Dunsmuir, California, the Pikes Peak Marathon, and the Rossbach Foundation.³²

The Army Corps of Engineers (ACE), which also manages parks that are part of its network of multipurpose lakes and waterways projects, has developed several partnership programs, most of which are authorized under the Water Resources Development Act of 1992. The statute allows the acceptance of contributions from groups and individuals when consistent with the Corps' mission, and as part of an approved annual 5-year operational management plan. Projects, for instance, may include trail maintenance, wildlife habitat improvements, native plant and tree plantings, or accessibility improvements for persons with disabilities. Unlike some agencies, real estate cannot be accepted; the Corps attempts to make clear that contributions are not an augmentation of the agency's budget. Other ACE partnerships allow groups and individuals to contribute to and participate in the operation and management of projects to stretch the Corps budget by sharing costs. For example, ACE has partnered with the Texas-based Our Lands & Waters Foundation, which assists the agency in several ways. The organization serves as a contact point for communities and civic groups planning activities such as bike rides and fun runs in ACE parklands, and contracts with vendors who bring services into the areas. It serves as the nonprofit partner for grant applications and projects, and seeks to raise public awareness about the parks, including the group's desire to increase attendance, renovate or repair existing structures, and provide parks with environmental learning areas and self-guided trails.

Among the newest of the partnership umbrella groups is the America's State Parks Foundation, established in 2011. The organization hopes to assist the country's 7,800 state parks as the only national level nonprofit with the sole purpose of advancing the missions and purposes of state parks by expanding the capacity of nonprofit groups that partner with state park agencies. To do this, it plans to share and develop best practices for parks and their partners, promote visitation, and establish and manage funds to advance the state parks movement. One large organization in California—founded in 1969 by the

former director of the state's Department of Parks and Recreation and the NPS, William Penn Mott, Jr.—has a reputation for having one of the largest and strongest of the state park partnership groups. The California State Parks Foundation (CSPF) has raised more than \$209 million for its state parks, with 130,000 members and a staff of 42. Most of its funds come from individuals, with about a third of its support from corporations and foundations. In addition to state-wide projects such as the annual Earth Day Restoration and Cleanup Program, CSPF works with about 90 organizations that support specific parks, much as friends groups support the NPS, BLM, and USFWS. As is the case with the national park system, California has been faced with park closures and a maintenance backlog estimated at \$1.3 billion.³³

Typical of the California friends-type groups is Stewards of the Coast and Redwoods, which has a contractual agreement with the California State Parks in the Russian River District of the state. Founded in the early 1980s and incorporated as the nonprofit group Stewards of Slavianka in 1985, volunteers started out by opening a small visitor center and leading nature walks. The group now provides volunteer support and funding for education and resource management, and it has a future goal of a capital campaign to build new visitor centers. In 2008, when 17 state parks were faced with closure due to budget cuts, the Stewards helped keep the parks open, sometimes with community donations. The group also participates in community events, organize hikes and trails celebrations, and partners with more than 25 other agencies and organizations.

NPS friends and cooperating associations do not stand alone. They are surrounded by a complex set of partnerships similarly engaged in efforts to make government agencies at all levels more efficient, effective, and responsive. They have also evolved in a rich tradition of philanthropic giving that has characterized the agency's history since its inception. It is to this history that we now turn.

Chapter 2

A History of Support for the National Parks

In order to understand how friends groups and cooperating associations support and raise money for national parks, it is also important to take a look at how philanthropic support for national parks has developed. The voluntary action for the public good that defines philanthropy has been woven throughout the agency's history. Over time, national parks have been financially supported by the railroads, automobile interests, and other tourism-oriented organizations; individual philanthropists and the foundations they represent; the National Park Foundation (NPF), a congressionally authorized group, and its precursor, the National Park Trust Fund Board (NPTFB); corporations; concessioners; and a range of conservation groups and land trusts, including the National Parks Conservation Association (NPCA) and the National Park Trust (NPT). But not all philanthropic work involves dollar transactions. Volunteers play a pivotal role whether or not they are affiliated with a group primarily organized to provide volunteer services, as is the case with the Student Conservation Association (SCA).

Railroads, Automobiles, and Tourism

No segment of the American economy deserves more credit for the development of the nation's earliest national parks and monuments than the railroads, although that support was largely due to self-serving interest and the lure of passenger dollars. Even preservationist John Muir recognized the value of working with the railroads in order to advance the objective of wilderness protection, recognizing "the value of forming an alliance with a powerful corporate group committed to similar goals, if not from similar ideals."¹

During the 1860s, reports of spectacular scenery, nineteenth-century wilderness exploration, and descriptive (if not always accurate) depictions of the wonders of the Yellowstone area did not go unnoticed by railroad executives. In June 1870, Northern Pacific Railroad Company financier Jay Cooke met with adventurer and writer Nathaniel P. Langford in Philadelphia; Langford joined the Washburn–Doane Expedition and contracted with the railroad to give a series of public lectures on his experiences. Langford later wrote a book on the Yellowstone expedition, worked for the creation of Yellowstone National Park and became its first superintendent from 1872–1877.² The railroad subsequently financed other activities supporting the establishment of Yellowstone as a national park, including subsidizing the participation of artist Thomas Moran on the 1871 US Geological Survey led by Dr. Ferdinand V. Hayden.³ Cooke noted that a government reservation (or park) would prevent non-railroad interests from gaining control of the area’s most scenic features. The park designation kept private land claimants from limiting tourism, something the Northern Pacific hoped to monopolize itself.⁴ Similar patterns marked the development of Montana’s Glacier National Park (another project supported by Great Northern lobbyists), Oregon’s Crater Lake National Park, and Washington’s Mount Rainier National Park, where rustic-style hotels were built modeled after resorts.

The desire to promote tourism colored the development of several subsequent national parks. Indiana Senator Benjamin Harrison unsuccessfully proposed the designation of Arizona’s Grand Canyon as a national park in 1882, and it was not until 1893, when Harrison was president, that the area was proclaimed the Grand Canyon Forest Reserve to protect the area from private encroachment. Tourists began seeking amenities and a more direct transportation link to the canyon in the late 1890s, a need that would be met by the Atchison, Topeka, and Santa Fe Railroad, which built a railroad spur that brought visitors to the South Rim.⁵ In 1905, the railway company opened the El Tovar Hotel, three years before President Theodore Roosevelt converted the reserve to a national monument, and 14 years before it gained status as a national park. The Southern Pacific Railroad became active in promoting the national parks of the West Coast, launching the popular monthly magazine *Sunset* in 1898 to encourage business and tourists to visit the states—especially California—served by the railway.⁶

Sometime around 1908, according to one account, a promotion agent for one of the nation’s railroads was visiting Europe, where he marveled at the natural wonders of the landscape. Periodically a European would ask the agent, who lived in the shadows of the High

Sierra, how the scenery compared with the Yosemite Valley, which the prosperous Californian had to admit he had never visited. Upon his return, the agent brooded over the incident, and reportedly coined the slogan, "See America First."⁷ The slogan led to a nationwide campaign, supported by the railroads, automobile associations and interests, hotels, chambers of commerce, and other organizations that promoted tourism. The idea that wealthy Americans were spending their tourist dollars in Europe, largely because the continent had comfortable lodging, delectable food, and good roads, underscored what the United States did not have. But tourism boosters also knew that the country's national parks might be a sufficient magnet for travelers, despite the fact Congress had failed to support or promote the reserves.

The railroads continued to play a key role in the development of national parks even before there was a *system* of national parks. Railroad executives were regular attendees of the annual national park conferences that began in 1911, and they became some of the biggest boosters for the new parks. One company's leader boasted, in fact, that his company had invested millions of dollars at Yellowstone National Park, constructing lodges and other facilities for tourists, while the federal government had not yet made any significant financial investment in the park.⁸ By January 1915, Congress had approved 13 national parks and 18 national monuments totaling over 4.7 million acres in 12 western states, Arkansas, Oklahoma, and Alaska. The problem was that few Americans had visited the sites, and if they were able to get to one of them, they encountered primitive housing, bad food, and virtually no information on the park or its attractions.

One of those who did care was Franklin K. Lane, secretary of the Interior under President Woodrow Wilson, who had received a letter of complaint from Stephen T. Mather, a wealthy, 47-year-old borax manufacturing executive who was also a graduate from Lane's alma mater, the University of California. Mather's credentials included work as a reporter for a New York newspaper; his hobby was mountain climbing, he was known for his philanthropy, and he was a member of the newly founded Sierra Club. Secretary Lane responded to the complaint, "Dear Steve, If you don't like the way the national parks are being run, come on down to Washington and run them yourself."⁹ Lane's somewhat facetious letter to Mather was successful, and Mather was sworn in as assistant to the secretary of the Interior on January 21, 1915. Mather teamed up with another University of California alumnus Lane had hired, 24-year-old Horace Albright, who was being paid \$135 a month to help with research and administration of the department. Together, the two men worked to establish

and put form and substance on the new National Park Service agency, and to implement the See America First campaign on a grand scale.

Mather was an impressive entrepreneur who recognized the value of marketing and promotion of the national parks. One of his first successes involved an agreement he brokered with the Northern Pacific and Union Pacific Railroads, which had concession agreements to bring passengers into Yellowstone from different portals. Mather was able to convince railroad officials of the advantage of allowing passengers to reach the park by one railroad line and leave the park by another.¹⁰ Prior to Mather's arrival, several railroad companies had realized that passengers needed a reason to board the new transcontinental lines beyond the novelty of the railroad experience. In the late 1880s, the Northern Pacific Railroad created a company called the Yellowstone Park Association to bring Eastern visitors on stage-coach from the railroad's Cinnabar, Montana branch line to a hotel at Mammoth Hot Springs. Other railroad companies followed suit, with the Great Northern Railway developing lines to Glacier National Park; the Union Pacific opening up Utah's Bryce and Zion national parks and the north rim of the Grand Canyon; the Santa Fe Railroad transporting visitors to the south rim of the Grand Canyon; and the Chicago, Milwaukee, and St. Paul Railroad opening a line into Mount Rainier National Park. To further promote rail transportation, the Santa Fe and Union Pacific railroads spent \$500,000 to unveil their national park exhibit at the 1915 Panama–Pacific Exposition in San Francisco. Mather later convened executives from all of the railroad lines servicing the national parks and convinced them to put together “package tours” that included accommodations and meals in the price of the ticket. The Great Northern Railway advertised “modern hotels-in-the-forest and chalets and tepee camps with complete vacations costing \$1–5 per day for those visiting Glacier National Park in 1917.”¹¹ In the trans-Mississippi West, railroads began to use advertising as a way of enticing passengers to travel to areas where the “savage” and “civilized” worlds intersected, or where they could encounter “the most sublime of all earthly scenes” (trumpeted in a Union Pacific ad for Grand Canyon National Park). Even regional railroads jumped on the national park bandwagon, with Colorado's Rio Grande Southern Railroad and the Denver and Rio Grande Western promoting visits to Mesa Verde's Anasazi ruins. The Tonopah and Tidewater Railroad took visitors near Death Valley, and the narrow gauge Death Valley Railroad actually reached into the park area itself.¹²

In 1918, Lane directed Mather to “utilize to the fullest extent” the expertise of the western railroads “to inform the traveling public how

to comfortably reach the national parks,” and urged him to “extend and use the splendid cooperation developed during the last three years among chambers of commerce, tourist bureaus, and automobile highway associations” to distribute information about the parks and “facilitate their use and enjoyment.”¹³ Mather was also to get other federal agencies involved in his efforts to publicize the national parks. In the first nine months of 1919, the United States Railroad Administration printed and distributed 2.5 million pieces of pro-park printed matter, along with lantern slides and films, photographs, and texts of national park articles.¹⁴

Early on, Mather enlisted the help of the nation’s early automobile associations, inviting officials to participate in the Department of the Interior’s three national park conferences in 1911, 1912, and 1915. Representatives of the Southern California Automobile Association and the Automobile Dealers Association of Southern California were prominent in the 1912 conference in Yosemite, as was the American Automobile Association, which established the National Park-to-Park Highway Association in 1915. In order to persuade members of Congress of the need for new roads for visitors, Mather took several representatives on a 1923 trip on the perilous path/road to the Grand Canyon. Afterward, Congress voted for a \$7.5 million, three-year road building program in the parks, more than double the amount appropriated for park roads in all the previous history of the national parks.¹⁵ Mather is said to have recognized “the transformative potential of automotive travel,” promoting a park-to-park auto tour connecting the western parks. He also instructed his park superintendents to caravan by auto to the 1925 park conference at Mesa Verde National Park in Colorado; Mather himself toured the parks in a roadster with the license plate “NPS-1.”¹⁶

Chambers of Commerce and other civic organizations also became allies of the NPS, especially when a proposed park was in their backyard. For instance, after the *National Geographic* carried a series of articles on New Mexico’s Carlsbad Cave National Monument in 1924–1925, the local chamber of commerce paid \$1,600 to finance the construction of a winding stairway through the natural opening, where previously visitors had been lowered into the cave in a metal bucket attached to a pulley. The improvements brought a 1,000 percent increase in visitation between 1923–1924 and 1925–1926, and a greater likelihood the monument would be reclassified as a national park.¹⁷ Richard Watrous, secretary of the American Civic Association, called for national parks to serve as “playgrounds” and urged preservation groups to publicize “the direct material returns that will accrue

to the railroads, to the concessionaires, and to the various sections of the country that will benefit by increased travel.”¹⁸ The group’s president, J. Horace McFarland, helped lead the efforts to establish a national parks bureau, and the rush to create new parks was on.

Mather recognized the need to cultivate partners and park supporters, but such promotion was also not without costs. In attempts to build a supportive constituency of partners by increasing park visitation, the Park Service has often given short shrift to its resource conservation mandate.¹⁹ Ten years after Mather began promoting automobile travel to Yosemite Valley, for example, the valley became clogged with cars, negatively impacting the qualities that the park was established to preserve.²⁰ Much of the history of the Park Service has thus centered on the inherent dichotomy in its mission (preservation and use); the struggle to balance the two prongs of the agency’s mandate remains central to the politics of the agency.

Philanthropists and Their Foundations

Historically, national parks have been the recipients of several types of gifts from wealthy individuals (and later, the foundations they created, managed by individuals who sorted through requests for funding and guided grants based on the funder’s interests). Some of those individuals had a deep-seated interest in a particular place, while others wanted to preserve their interests in adjacent property, and still others felt a sense of stewardship for the nation’s resources. Steven Mather used his own funds, for example, to help finance purchase of the Tioga Pass Road in Yosemite to open up Yosemite’s high country, pay for pamphlets, and cover part of Horace Albright’s salary.

Even before creation of the Park Service, federal officials recognized the role potential donors could play, and they actively courted their support. Sometimes, the task of building support was unnecessary, since some individuals understood the importance of protecting pristine landscapes or natural resources and did not need to be persuaded to bring them under government protection. In 1907, for instance, to avoid having a portion of his 612-acre property developed as a reservoir through a water company’s condemnation suit, William Kent donated 298 acres of one of the last remaining stands of old-growth Coast Redwoods, north of San Francisco Bay, to the federal government. Writing to the Chief of the USDA Forest Service, Gifford Pinchot, Kent said, “You may rest assured that I shall leave no stone unturned to save these trees, and I call upon you as one in distress, to help me out.” Under the Antiquities Act of 1906, President

Theodore Roosevelt declared the area as Muir Woods National Monument in 1908, a name chosen by Kent to honor John Muir, whom he had never even met. The monument was the first to be created from land donated by a private individual. In 1916, as a member of Congress, Kent became the lead sponsor of legislation that created the National Park Service.

A similar series of events in 1916 prompted residents of Mount Desert Island, Maine, led by Charles W. Eliot and George B. Dorr, to donate cash for land purchases and to make outright gifts of land to establish Lafayette National Park, later renamed Acadia National Park. John D. Rockefeller, Jr. (JDR Jr.), who figures in many instances of national park philanthropy, donated 2,700 acres of land to help preserve the scenic character of the island, which many wealthy families used as a summer getaway.

While contemporary campaigns to preserve and protect old growth forests have been highly publicized, citizen efforts actually began nearly 100 years ago. In 1918, the Save-the-Redwoods League raised \$6 million to preserve stands of Sierra Redwoods. One-third of the funds came from JDR Jr., and another third from the State of California; the remainder came from individual donations. In 1954, the South Calaveras Grove of Giant Redwoods was saved through a \$1 million gift by JDR Jr. to the Save-the-Redwoods League in a special campaign. In 2001, the Save-the-Redwoods League acquired the largest grove of giant sequoias in private ownership for \$10.3 million, donating the land to the NPS.

NPS officials have sometimes been very direct in trying to get wealthy supporters to contribute toward individual parks, even specifying what kinds of gifts were needed, in their opinion. Museums within national parks often benefitted from the relationships developed between park superintendents and wealthy visitors. In 1921, photographer and parks advocate Stella M. Leviston of San Francisco visited Mesa Verde National Park and offered \$1,000 for a stone gateway at the entrance. But she was persuaded by the superintendent, Jesse Nusbaum, to use the donation (and several thousand dollars more) for a museum building. John D. Rockefeller, Jr. matched Leviston's gift after Nusbaum told him that Congress had not provided a cent for a museum at the park. The Rockefeller family, known for a variety of philanthropic causes, also provided \$70,500 from the Laura Spelman Rockefeller Memorial Fund to build and equip a museum for Yosemite National Park in 1924. One of the largest gifts to the NPS at the time was the \$5 million donation by the Laura Spelman Rockefeller Memorial Fund in 1926 to match funds raised

by the people of Tennessee and North Carolina to create Great Smoky Mountains National Park.

While it is unknown exactly when the National Park Service began to rely upon the Rockefellers for donations to individual parks, it is clear that both Steven Mather and Horace Albright considered the family to be among their most reliable contributors. After JDR Jr. visited Yellowstone National Park with his family in 1924, he wrote Superintendent Horace Albright that he was troubled by the fallen trees and debris in the park, saying he would like to finance clearing a small portion of the park's roads to demonstrate how important the practice was to the park. Over the next five years, Rockefeller, who had a personal interest in roads, gave \$50,000 to the park, and Congress subsequently made road clearing a national park policy. Two years later, Albright took the Rockefellers and three of their boys on a two-day trip to Jackson Hole, Wyoming, and the Grand Tetons, a 40-mile-long cluster of mountain peaks. Rockefeller told Albright the views were marred by structures on private holdings, and he set about acquiring the land in the Jackson Hole Basin in order to give the land back to the government. A portion of the region became Grand Teton National Park in 1929, and in 1950, Rockefeller added another 30,000 acres to the park. The family also gave \$1.75 million toward the purchase of over 15,000 acres of heavily timbered land, which was added to Yosemite National Park, considerably more than they had contributed toward the museum there.

Park philanthropy was more limited through the Great Depression and World War II, although JDR Jr. and his foundation worked closely with President Franklin D. Roosevelt's secretary of the Interior, Harold L. Ickes, to significantly expand the park system. A strong park supporter and conservationist, Roosevelt also signed executive orders transferring over 50 sites previously administered by the War and Agriculture Departments into the NPS,²¹ and with the support of the administration, Congress passed the Historic Sites Act. During the Roosevelt administration, the agency expanded its responsibilities in the areas of recreation and historic site management, and the park system became a truly *national* system.²²

Postwar increases in leisure time and Americans' interest in recreation and tourism led to a new generation of contributors. In 1956, impressed by a report by the NPS of the possibility of making the Caribbean island of St. John a national park, Laurance Rockefeller, son of JDR Jr., led a \$2 million effort to acquire 5,000 acres of land near his resort at Caneel Bay. Congress accepted his donation, forming Virgin Islands National Park. While some have criticized the

Rockefeller gift as simply an effort on the family's part to limit competition from other hoteliers by tying up any remaining land on the island from development, Laurance Rockefeller continued to support efforts to preserve St. John's beaches, reefs, and historic sugar plantation ruins. He and his wife, Mary French Rockefeller, also donated their \$21.4 million hilltop estate in Woodstock, Vermont, to the NPS for use as an environmental conservation center. The nineteenth-century home belonged to Frederick Billings, Mary's grandfather, and a farm nearby was also given to the NPS, becoming Marsh-Billings-Rockefeller National Historical Park.

Another American family of wealth, the Mellons, has also contributed generously to the national parks. During the 1950s, Paul Mellon assisted the State of North Carolina work with the NPS to acquire land for the nation's first shore park, Cape Hatteras National Seashore. In 1990, the Richard King Mellon Foundation gave a \$10.5 million gift to provide funds for four Civil War parks (Antietam, Fredericksburg, Gettysburg, and Petersburg), along with Virginia's Shenandoah National Park, and sites in Pecos National Historical Park in New Mexico. Other Mellon family foundations have funded shoreline surveys, the acquisition of Maryland's Hampton National Historic Site, preservation of Redwood and Rocky Mountain National Parks, and other NPS activities.

In 1999, the Haas family funds donated a combined \$16 million to redevelop former Army land at Crissy Field at Golden Gate National Recreation Area, and the Annenberg family gave \$10 million to develop a new Liberty Bell complex and make improvements to the Independence Mall area at Philadelphia's Independence National Historical Park. A second major Haas family donation of \$15 million in 2007 helped continue the transformation of the Presidio in San Francisco, making it the largest philanthropic cash contribution to support the national parks.

Not all of the donors have been famous or from wealthy families, however. In 1929, photographer Benjamin F. Loomis donated the Louisa Mae Loomis Memorial Museum, a seismograph station, and the surrounding 40 acres at Manzanita Lake, California, to Lassen Volcanic National Park. The park had started as two separate national monuments designated by President Theodore Roosevelt in 1907: Cinder Cone National Monument and Lassen Peak National Monument. Loomis' advocacy and dramatic photographs of the 1914–1915 volcanic eruptions led to the establishment of the national park in 1926. Similarly, the military firearms collection amassed by Claud E. Fuller was donated to Chickamauga and Chattanooga National Military

Park in Georgia in 1954. Pioneering petroleum geologist Wallace E. Pratt and his family donated 5,632 acres of land and two homes, Pratt Cabin and Ship-in-the-Desert, in McKittrick Canyon, Texas, to the NPS in 1958. The acreage became the core of Guadalupe Mountains National Park in 1965. And in some cases, the federal government has not known for sure what to do with a benefactor's gift. Congress accepted the gift of 128 acres of a working farm in Vienna, Virginia, from Catherine Filene Shouse, a prominent social and political leader from Washington, DC, in 1966. Shouse did not want the land to be subdivided into small lots: and "I wanted it to be used forever by people who enjoyed that land. It's a very cherished piece of property."²³ It is now called Wolf Trap National Park for the Performing Arts.

National Park Trust Fund Board/National Park Foundation

Private philanthropy, and meager congressional appropriations, sustained the National Park Service during its early years. Mostly wealthy benefactors chose which parks to support, and to what degree, sometimes in concert with park officials, and sometimes based on their own self-interest. Congress did, however, recognize private philanthropy's role in national park expansion, and in 1935, legislators established the National Park Trust Fund Board (NPTFB) to serve as a mechanism for private donations. The Board was modeled in part on the National Trust of Great Britain, which had been established in 1885,²⁴ and was substantially identical to the Library of Congress Trust Fund Board that had been created in 1925.

The legislation to create the NPTFB was a companion bill to another measure for "the preservation of historical American sites, buildings, objects, and antiquities of national significance" introduced by Virginia Senator Harry F. Byrd and Texas Representative Maury Maverick. Neither member of Congress had been involved in drafting the bills, but both were interested in historic preservation. Maverick, in particular, had been a long-time supporter of the San Antonio Conservation Society and also was attempting to have the San Jose Mission designated a unit of the NPS. During congressional hearings on the Senate and House measures, Interior Secretary Harold Ickes noted that the new board would be able to expend private donations given to the NPS. Congress focused its attention on the measure that would protect historic sites; the NPTFB act (S. 2074) passed quickly.²⁵

The legislation called for the NPTFB to administer bequests of personal property donated by state and local governments, private organizations, and individuals, with the gifts held in a trust fund that the

NPS could use for acquiring, preserving, and restoring historic sites and other areas of scientific and geological interest. Any money or securities in the fund were to be invested or reinvested by the Board, comprising the secretary of the Interior, secretary of the Treasury, the director of the National Park Service, and two individuals appointed by the president for five-year terms. The first members included Secretary Ickes, Secretary of the Treasury Henry Morgenthau, Jr., NPS Director Newton B. Drury, and President Roosevelt's public member appointees, J. Horace McFarland and Louis Hertle. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer provided the first donation to the fund, a \$5,000 gift for use of the facilities in California's Sequoia National Park in filming "Sequoia."²⁶

The NPS did not have a structured or organized fundraising effort until 1967, when the president's wife, Lady Bird Johnson, helped coordinate efforts to create the NPF. The charitable organization was chartered by Congress in Public Law 90-209 as a replacement for the NPTFB and was funded initially by a \$1 million contribution from Laurance Rockefeller. The NPF's mission was considerably broader than its predecessor; rather than serving as the repository for bequests with a modest agenda, the new foundation was "encouraged" to obtain gifts for the NPS "to further the conservation of natural, scenic, historic, scientific, educational, inspirational, or recreational resources for future generations of Americans." The activities of the NPF are directed by the secretary of the Interior, the director of the NPS as an *ex officio* member, and no less than six private citizens appointed by the secretary of the Interior. Board members serve in a voluntary capacity. In 1998, Congress expanded the responsibilities of the NPF's charter by authorizing the organization to assist and promote fundraising at individual national parks, authorization that permits the development of programs to assist friends groups. The NPF's 2011 annual report listed over \$96.3 million in assets, a \$13.5 million increase over 2010, and \$20.3 million in liabilities. Its total revenue and support was \$15.5 million, a \$12.6 million drop from 2010.

The Foundation makes grants to national parks directly, and serves as a conduit for donations made to its partners. Some funding from the Foundation to parks is on a restricted basis where the donor has identified a specific purpose or program. Grants are sometimes given on the basis of a competitive request for proposals process that specifies the type of grant available, along with the purpose, amount, and application requirements. The NPF currently has identified three major areas of focus for grants: conservation and preservation, education, and community engagement. NPF has numerous programs that illustrate its goals, such as support for trail restoration through its Active

Trails grants; the Parks Climate Challenge initiated in 2009 to provide teachers with national park-centric lesson plans on climate change; and the Park Stewards service learning program for high school students and teachers sponsored by the University of Phoenix.

In addition to serving as the mechanism by which donors can make contributions to the national parks, the NPF has more recently helped manage major fundraising campaigns. During the 1980s, for instance, business leader Lee Iacocca chaired efforts to raise \$350 million for renovation of the Statue of Liberty and the Great Hall on Ellis Island. Currently, NPF is spearheading the campaign to complete the Flight 93 National Memorial honoring the crew and passengers on board United Flight 93 that crashed into the ground near Shanksville, Pennsylvania, on September 11, 2001.

Another major project funded by the NPF is the African American Experience Fund (AAEF), which was established in 2001 to support parks and programs that celebrate and preserve African American history. Supported by both corporate and individual donors, the AAEF provides grants to sites where visitors can get a firsthand account of the history and contributions of African Americans, ranging from the Martin Luther King, Jr. National Historic Site in George to Arkansas' Little Rock Central High School National Historic Site. Programs at the sites include professional development training for teachers, and clean-up events in honor of an African American leader like Booker T. Washington, plus funding for van and bus transportation to bring students to a site. The NPF also hosts the AAEF Gala and helps reach out to community organizations to tell students about careers with the National Park Service.

The Park Partners Project of the NPF is of particular interest to this study because it is designed to increase the capacity of organizations that support national parks by providing technical assistance to more than a half dozen friends groups each year. Most of the 16 parks that participated in the first two years of the Park Partners Project (2011–2012) had friends groups that were already well established. In some cases, the project funded groups where there was additional potential for growth and development, such as the Friends of Port Chicago, which supports the nation's three hundred ninety second national park unit, the Port Chicago Naval Magazine National Memorial in Concord, CA. The organization is new and had not yet developed status as an official NPS friends group. The second round of the Park Partners Project focused on all-volunteer organizations, plus one friends group that had only a single staff member—Utah's Friends of Arches and Canyonlands National Parks: The Bates Wilson Legacy Fund.

Another set of eleven Legacy Projects identified by friends groups, park leaders and the NPF have been prioritized for funding because they are perceived as delivering real and immediate impact to national parks. Donations raised by the Foundation for the eleven projects are to be matched by friends groups in those parks to further NPF goals of protecting special places, reaching new audiences, and building transformative educational experiences. The projects range from trails in Boston Harbor Islands, Great Smoky Mountains, Sequoia, and Yosemite national parks, exhibits at Big Bend and Saguaro national parks, a native plant nursery at Grand Canyon National Park, to a youth exploration area at Mount Rushmore National Memorial.²⁷

From an operational perspective, the NPF has what one 2004 General Accounting Office (GAO, now Government Accountability Office) report called “considerable discretion in raising and distributing private contributions to the Park Service.”²⁸ At the time, the GAO criticized the Foundation’s efforts to assist the Park Service because the Foundation and the NPS lacked a specific written agreement that clearly described the NPF’s fundraising strategy and the roles and responsibilities of each partner, at times even entering into verbal rather than written agreements, and because the two entities often disagreed about fundraising strategies and objectives.

Like other large philanthropic organizations, the NPF has undergone changes in both its mission and vision since its congressional charter was enacted. In 1994, for instance, NPF provided start-up funding for volunteer groups at Olympic and Mt. Rainier national parks, helping these and other friends groups get off the ground. Now, the Foundation’s Park Partners Project uses its own resources, sending its staff to work with friends groups that NPS regional coordinators nominate for support. NPS staff assists with capacity building; most of the groups receiving aid are small, all-volunteer organizations. As one Foundation staff member noted, “We want to support the little gems.”

One of the Foundation’s challenges is staking out, and perhaps changing, its role. In the recent past, the NPF has developed its own programs, and provided funding based on its perceptions of park needs. Now, the organization appears to be considering a return to the time, early on, when it helped friends groups become established but encouraged them to develop their own priorities and projects. Friends groups on the ground, some NPF leaders believe, are in the best position to determine what a park unit really needs; they are made up of people who have a love and passion for a particular park, while the NPF is more about the parks as part of a system. The NPF also believes it

can serve as a clearinghouse for information that friends groups need, filling a gap that currently exists. But an even bigger challenge may be that, at least on the surface, the NPF and friends groups are in competition with one another when it comes to fundraising. While the NPF has the added layer of working on a national scale, the organization realizes that its leaders need to figure out how to develop a better communication strategy that works for the benefit of all.

Corporate Support

One segment of sometimes controversial support for the national parks is represented by the private sector and major corporations. The railroad industry's influence began to wane as passenger travel gave way to the automobile road trip, and federal law limited gifts and campaign contributions to members of Congress. Business interests were allowed to make donations to the NPTFB when Congress created the Board in 1935, and subsequently, to the NPF when it replaced the Trust Fund Board in 1967. But as federal deficit reduction efforts began to coalesce in the 1980s, corporate donations became more important in advancing the NPS mission, and the agency began actively pursuing corporate financial support. The Reagan administration, in particular, pushed for more corporate philanthropy and commercial involvement in the parks.²⁹ Now, it is almost impossible to analyze corporate support for national parks without tying that support to the NPF.

In 1997, four corporations or their affiliates gave \$1 million or more to the NPF: American Airlines focused on trail restoration in its "Miles for Trails" campaign; Canon USA supported graduate research in national parks by funding the Canon National Parks Science Scholars Program; Target Stores gave \$1 million and raised an additional \$4 million for the restoration of the Washington Monument; and the Toyota USA Foundation committed \$1 million for an educational program for high school students called "Park Labs."³⁰ In 2000, the NPF launched its Proud Partner program, officially known as "Proud Partners of America's National Parks" program, which encouraged corporations to commit donations, primarily in-kind services, in a tri-party agreement with the NPS. The program allows corporations to affiliate themselves with the Foundation and the agency in promotional materials, and they are granted national marketing exclusivity. Through the agreement, the NPS cannot enter into any other nationwide advertising agreements with companies that sell the same product or service as the Proud Partner. The advantage of this program

is that the NPS gets a significant benefit from the partnership, but the disadvantage is that the exclusivity arrangement has precluded the Foundation from soliciting new corporate donors for significant periods of time.

The corporate partnership program has involved dozens of companies since the NPF and the NPS began actively courting business support, among companies huge and not-so-huge. Even before the Proud Partner program was established, for instance, the Coca-Cola Company launched advertising campaigns featuring individual parks, along with others promoting tourism, including the “Discover America” and “Go America” campaigns of the 1960s. Currently, Coca-Cola North America has pledged \$2.5 million over five years to restore and create walking and hiking trails in the national parks. Previously, the company helped create 12 National Park Discovery Centers—interactive exhibits within parks for both children and adults.

As the longest-standing corporate partner to the NPF, consumer products company Unilever began its National Parks Program in 1994 with its Recycling at Work program, donating 100 percent recycled plastic lumber to more than 150 national parks for use on projects from boardwalks to fences. Its 15-year, \$50 million Proud Partner commitment includes both monetary and in-kind contributions that have supported the National Parks Junior Ranger program, a Healthy Parks-Healthy Living program, and the National Parks America Tour, which brings volunteers to the parks. It has also fostered a public-private executive exchange program for NPS personnel, and underwrites National Park Ranger of the Year Awards, along with grants to individual park units.

One of the more innovative corporate partnerships began in 1998 when American Airlines pledged support for the Park Flight program, which also involves, in addition to the NPS and NPF, the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, the US Agency for International Development, and the University of Arizona, working in 13 national parks. Other corporate entity partners have included giants like Bank of America, the International Paper Foundation, Macy’s, and Pacific Gas and Electric Company.

Recently, smaller companies have joined the partnership roster. Energizer, the battery company, launched an advertising campaign, “Now that’s positivenergy” to bring volunteers into the park during spring and summer. L.L. Bean designated the NPF as the charity of choice, which lets the company’s Visa cardholders donate “Coupon Dollars” earned through purchases to the Foundation. The Thompson’s Company has donated its products (including

Thompson's Water Seal) to parks to help protect wood surfaces such as walkways and benches. After Hurricane Sandy ravaged the East Coast in 2012, Musco Lighting made a donation of equipment and services to the NPF to provide temporary lighting for the Statue of Liberty during the restoration of the site. Previously, the company had provided in-kind equipment and services for the White House, the Washington Monument, the Flight 93 Memorial, and at other parks, with the NPF as the conduit for its donation. And still smaller companies (Peace Cereal, Tom's of Maine) have joined the bigger corporations as partners, sensing the positive public relations value of being associated with national parks.

Some corporate partnerships have drawn the ire of national park supporters, such as the December 2010 announcement by the NPF that it was joining the United Four Wheel Drive Association and the BF Goodrich Company's Outstanding Trails Program (as in off-road vehicle trails) to promote the Xplore Adventure Series FJ Cruiser National Parks Edition. The Toyota sport utility vehicle, with after-market kit-packaging (sold to consumers after the vehicle is purchased) that brings the price tag to \$24,000, is designed to nurture a "new set of supporters," according to the NPF. Critics noted that the otherwise well-intentioned effort would spotlight a product that did not reflect park values or the NPS mission of protecting fragile ecosystems and wildlife habitats—the same landscape likely to be damaged by an off-road vehicle.³¹

Similarly, the NPF faced criticism for choosing the Reckitt Benckiser air freshener brand Air Wick as its licensing partner in March 2012 when the company launched its new National Park Collection. "Each of the four new scents," the company said, "Hawaii, Virgin Islands, Yellowstone and Glacier Bay—focuses on one famous national park, helping families remember vacation memories or generate excitement and inspiration for new trips." The copy for Yellowstone, for example, noted that consumers could "bring outdoor freshness into your home with Wildflower Valley, inspired by the green grass and summer meadows of Yellowstone National Park's unspoiled natural habitat."³² The National Park Fall Collection included Acadia National Park, Shenandoah National Park, and Great Smoky Mountains scents. A commentary in *National Park Traveler* (an Internet publication posting news and commentary about national parks) questioned whether the licensing agreements raised "questions of what is an appropriate connection between a corporation and a national park. Park Service policies preclude the Foundation from getting involved with tobacco and alcohol companies, but is everything else fair game?"³³ Similar

criticisms were raised by a columnist in the liberal magazine *Mother Jones* who asked “Should corporations bankroll national parks?”³⁴

Other criticisms related to corporate support have come from the watchdog group, Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility (PEER), which has accused the NPF of concentrating on a small handful of corporate donors, and of lacking accountability or transparency. Referring to the NPF’s 2011 Annual Report (covering the period of FY 2011), PEER alleged that “most individual gifts to the official fundraising arm for the National Park Service never reach the parks themselves. Personal contributions to the National Park Foundation are far more likely to be absorbed by overhead, fundraising expenses or the care and feeding of corporate donors.” PEER’s executive director criticized NPF for making sure that “corporate donors get a return on their investments by delivering market support and promotional support such as ‘special visitation opportunities’ for executives and key customers or ‘in-park activities including tours, events and interpretation.’”³⁵ The Foundation’s president and CEO disputed PEER’s critiques, saying that 40 percent of NPF’s revenues come from corporations, 30 percent from individuals, and 30 percent from foundations.³⁶ He noted that the organization hopes to redirect corporate support from in-kind donations to cash, stating that sometimes, the NPF gets “sucked into” partnerships where the donor wants to donate items or products that the Park Service might not need or prioritize as essential to its operations. Instead, the Foundation sometimes chooses to provide a donor with a menu of projects that need financial support so that a corporation can match its identity or brand to a park need. Aurora Foods, for instance, owner of the Log Cabin syrup brand, became part of the NPF’s “Restoration of America’s Log Cabins” program; over 400 of the national parks’ 700 log structures are in need of restoration work.

Concessioners

A different form of philanthropic support for the national parks is provided by private companies that contract with the Park Service to provide food and lodging, transportation and tours, and other visitor services to the more than 281 million persons who now visit the parks each year. NPS Commercial Services Management is responsible for more than 500 private sector concession contracts grossing more than \$1 billion annually, and employing more than 25,000 persons in gift shops, bicycle rentals, and restaurants.³⁷ Concession contracts have been heavily criticized and scrutinized since passage of the 1965

Concession Policy Act (Public Law 89–249) and the 1998 Concessions Management Improvement Act (Public Law 105–391).³⁸

In a May 2007 paper produced by the Concessioners Centennial Council, the concessioners themselves point with pride to their efforts to provide “a pillar of support to national parks.” The group cites activities ranging from ARAMARK’s Trash Tracker program to clean up Lake Powell’s shoreline, donations of supplies, equipment and services by companies including Forever Resorts and Xanterra, and environmental management efforts such as Guest Services, Inc.’s investment in solar-powered trash compactors. Concessioners also take credit for initiating programs in the 1990s to encourage lodging guests at Grand Teton and Yellowstone national parks to add a dollar a day to their bills, with the funds going to local foundations.³⁹ The effort evolved in July 2000 into the NPS’s National Park Guest Donation Program (also known as the Lodge Check-Off Program). Lodging concessioners, who voluntarily choose to participate, tell guests about the program at various contact points, such as check in and checkout. Typically, the concessioner encourages guests to make a \$1 per day, or more, per room donation to support the national park they are visiting. The donation is not connected in any way to the room rate, and guests must be advised of the program, its benefits, and how to opt out of the program should they choose not to participate. At Yosemite, where DNC Parks and Resorts at Yosemite, Inc. is the authorized concessioner, the approach is low-key. Guests are offered an opt-out provision on the website, informing visitors that 100 percent of their donation goes to the Yosemite Conservancy, “but if you prefer not to make a donation to YC at this time, please just let us know. Simply notify the front desk at any time during your stay, and we will remove the donation from your account, or you can send an e-mail.”⁴⁰

All of the monies collected through the program are deposited in a restricted account managed by the NPF. A park superintendent may request that the funds collected under the Guest Donation Program be given to a local partner, such as a friends group, to benefit the park. The program requires a concessioner to submit several documents that indicate voluntary participation, working with the NPF to make deposits into the restricted account on at least a quarterly basis, and taking responsibility for notifying park guests about the program.⁴¹

Interior Secretary Gale Norton extended the Guest Donation Program in October 2003 after an evaluation of its effectiveness showed that it “has operated successfully and is growing. There has been broad acceptance of the program by the public, partners and concessionaires. Our partners and park managers support the permanent

authorization of this program and encourage its expansion.” In a memorandum to the director of the National Park Service, Secretary Norton also authorized the NPS to expand the guest donation program to other non-lodging activities as long as safeguards were instituted to maintain ethical standards similar to those established for the Guest Donation Program.⁴²

Obtaining details about the actual operation of the guest donation program is difficult and the data are often conflicting. The most recent figures listed on the NPS partnerships website are for FY 2005, identifying guest donation programs by concessioners at 12 national park units. The NPS notes that donations during that one year period ranged from \$112,410 to \$7,804 at the individual parks, although there is no way to tell which park units generated the funds because they are not identified by name. The NPS notes that the funds were used for a variety of purposes during that year, including support for seasonal staff and an SCA intern at Utah’s Bryce Canyon, seasonal interpreters at Zion National Park in Utah, desert clean-ups, and operational funds for the Forever Earth houseboat at the Lake Mead National Recreation Area that straddles Nevada and Arizona.⁴³

It is difficult to determine exactly how successful the program has been. The NPF tracks and distributes the donations, and individual park concessioners and the organizations they support seldom share how much they receive or where the money goes. Yellowstone’s lodging concessioner, Xanterra Parks and Resorts, which reported supporting the “Dollar-per-Night” program since 2000, exhorts visitors to “Help Support Yellowstone While You Sleep,” and the Yellowstone Park Foundation’s 2011 Annual Report states that the organization received \$82,994 in Xanterra’s Dollar-per-Night Guest Donation Program. Like most organizations, however, the funds become part of the Yellowstone Park Foundation’s \$5.34 million sources of revenue.⁴⁴ Other partners self-report their contributions, as does the Grand Teton Lodge Company, which operates Jackson Lake Lodge, Jenny Lake Lodge, and Jackson Hole Golf and Tennis. The company, which is owned by Vail Resorts, was the first park concessioner to create a check-off program in a national park, reporting in 2012 that it had contributed \$600,000 to the Grand Teton National Park Foundation since 1999. The funds have been used to restore trails in the park and for the Craig Thomas Discovery and Visitor Center.

The National Park Hospitality Association, the trade association representing concessioners at 100 of the nation’s national parks, reported in February 2013 that ten concessioners at 19 national parks were participating in the program: Bryce Canyon, Crater Lake, Death Valley,

Everglades, Glacier, Glen Canyon, Grand Canyon, Grand Teton, Hawaii Volcanoes, Lake Meade, Lassen, Mesa Verde, Mt. Rainier, Olympic, Sequoia, Shenandoah, Yellowstone, Yosemite, and Zion. In a press release, the group said that the guest donations of \$1 per stay at national park lodges and other overnight facilities had generated \$1 million for the national parks since 2012. These numbers represent a substantial increase in participation by both concessioners and the parks themselves. The 2003 memorandum from NPS Director Fran Mainella announcing the permanent extension of the program gave regional directors responsibility for implementation, with the associate director of Partnerships, Interpretation and Education, Volunteers, and Outdoor Recreation responsible for monitoring. The trade group expects to increase donations to \$10 million annually by 2016.⁴⁵

National Parks Conservation Association

When the National Park Service was authorized in 1916, initially there was no corresponding appropriation to fund the newly formed agency. A supplementary appropriation, approved several months later, barely funded the organization, and the position of the chief of the Educational Division, held by former reporter Robert Sterling Yard, was not accompanied by a salary. Yard's vision of an organization with education central to its mission that would work with the NPS to protect and expand parks, began as the National Parks Educational Committee. Organizers included leading scientists, civic-minded men including a former member of Congress, two explorers, and the secretary of the Smithsonian Institution, Charles D. Walcott, who became the chairman of the group in June 1918. The objectives of the 25 founding members were to "educate the public in respect to the nature and quality of the national parks; to further the view of the national parks as classrooms and museums of Nature; and to use existing publicity and educational systems so as to produce a wide result." It also aimed "to combine in one interest the sympathy and activity of schools, colleges and citizen organizations in all parts of the country" to accomplish its objectives, and "to make every effort to keep political influence out of national parks." Lastly, the group sought "to study the history and science of each national park and collect data for future use."⁴⁶

At the urging of the small NPS staff, six members of the National Parks Educational Committee signed the articles of incorporation for a new organization, the National Parks Association (NPA), on May 29, 1919. Funded with a \$5,000 donation from NPS Director Mather, the NPA had a broader vision than its predecessor: "To interpret

and popularize natural science by using the conspicuous scenery and the plant and animal exhibits of the national parks, now prominent in the public eye, for examples; To help the development of the national parks into a complete and rational system; To thoroughly study the National Parks and make past as well as future results available for public use; To encourage travel in every practicable way.”⁴⁷ Initially, the NPA’s projects were small, such as soliciting donations to buy hay to help feed starving elk in Yellowstone National Park in the winter of 1919; the funds NPA raised were passed on to the Park Service. But the effort was important because it demonstrated how the organization would operate, and how it could be part of a significant issue its members cared about.⁴⁸ “The founders thought that there was national park work that the National Park Service could not (and perhaps would not) do.”⁴⁹

Over the next 50 years, the NPA struggled with internal divisions, often over the issue of what it called “standards” for designating national parks. One 1927 resolution called for national parks to be unmodified and natural: the finest example of their kind of scenery in the country; of national significance; and with boundaries drawn so that park values might be protected and effectively administered.⁵⁰ While that standard might have applied in 1900 when there were only seven national parks, Congress moved rapidly to expand the park system with passage of the Antiquities Act in 1906 that added 17 national monuments, and some sites that in the NPA’s opinion, were not worthy of the designation as national parks. Historic sites, added in 1933, compounded the standards issue, and NPA unsuccessfully sought creation of a separate system for what it termed “National Primeval Parks” for units like the Grand Canyon and Yellowstone. NPA revised its standards again in 1945 as the number of national monuments grew, retreating from its original preservation-oriented objectives to recommend that wilderness should remain unmodified “except insofar as the public shall be given reasonable access to outstanding spectacles.”⁵¹

The 1950s presented new challenges for both the NPA and the NPS: increased visitation, more demands on park resources, and reduced funding for parks. One historian had called the parks created prior to the enactment of the 1916 NPS legislation “the stepchildren of federal conservation policy.”⁵² The phrase seemed appropriate in October 1953 when *Harper’s Magazine* columnist Bernard DeVoto referred to the NPS as an “impoverished stepchild of Congress,” going so far as to suggest that the park system “be temporarily reduced to a size for which Congress is willing to pay.”⁵³

As the “watchdog of the parks,” the NPA actively promoted the national parks and monitored legislation affecting the NPS. But that activism led to a 1958 review of the group’s tax-exempt status by the Internal Revenue Service, and for the next decade, the organization was caught in an identity crisis. Should NPA stick to its traditional mission of national park protection, or broaden its interests to embrace the burgeoning environmental movement? It chose the latter course, changing its name in 1970 to the National Parks *and Conservation* Association [emphasis ours], and embarking on a globalized mission that included pollution, pesticides, and the United Nations Law of the Sea negotiations. While the name change stuck, the president of NPCA was ousted and a new executive director was hired to shepherd the organization through the next decade.

Three important actions mark the contemporary NPCA: the development of the NPT in 1983 to deal with inholdings and land acquisition for the NPS, an issue of great importance to the NPCA; the 1988 publication of a nine-volume National Park System Plan that included 147 recommendations related to new units, boundary adjustments, and resource management—a return to its “standards” mission; and the development of a system of local “park watchers” who were encouraged “to participate in park planning processes, monitor inappropriate uses of parklands, identify threats from activity on adjacent lands, review park budgets to identify deficiencies, publicize threats to the parks, and encourage other citizens to support the parks,” a goal that was similar to the NPS policy of encouraging friends groups.⁵⁴

Today, the NPCA retains the acronym but there was a third name change in 2000, when the organization’s name became the shorter National Parks Conservation Association. Some elements of NPCA’s identity crisis of the 1970s remain; the group continues to conduct research on air pollution and new challenges such as climate change, but from a more narrow perspective of the impact of these threats on national parks. NPCA has also recognized the importance of group partnerships. Its Center for Park Management, established in 2002, published a best practices report for friends groups in September 2005, which noted that in addition to their value as fundraising mechanisms for individual park units, friends groups “provide community legitimacy and access to key business and political leaders. Friends fundraise, friend-raise and advocate.”⁵⁵

More recently, NPCA’s National Parks Second Century Commission, convened in 2008, was charged with developing a twenty-first-century vision for the NPS as the agency approaches its hundredth anniversary. Twenty-six national leaders from the NPS,

public agencies, and the private sector met as a group and in public meetings to produce a final report calling for “dramatic enhancements to the National Park System, and the National Park Service’s ability to protect our breathtaking landscapes and historic and cultural treasures.” The report’s recommendations return the organization to its 1919 roots, seeking enhanced educational opportunities within the park system, and promoting education as an explicit part of the NPS mission. The Commission also called for “a sweeping revitalization of the National Park Service, including strengthening the management, research, and community assistance capacity of the agency, along with significant steps for the Park Service to become a more innovative, diverse, and responsive organization prepared for the expanded vision of the system.” To do this, the Commission also recommended that Congress and the Administration “fully fund park needs through existing federal programs that benefit the Park Service,” and seek “enhanced permanent and sustainable funding from public and private sources.”⁵⁶

NPCA’s financial reports indicate that the organization is well-suited to meet the goals of both the Commission and its more general mission of improving national parks. In 2010, NPCA reported \$43.2 million in revenue, expenses of \$8.1 million, assets of \$59.5 million, and liabilities of \$4.5 million, for a net income of \$8.1 million. The number of members—325,000—has held steady despite what the group’s annual report called “challenging economic times.”⁵⁷ NPCA also leverages support for national parks by providing grants to other organizations. For instance, in 2009, the group gave nearly \$1.3 million to the NPF, National Wildlife Federation, and the South Florida Parks Trust. The three groups received NPCA grants “awarded to others who are partnering in the same projects toward [the] mutual goal of benefitting national parks. These organizations provide budgets to national parks that detail the expenditures that grant funds are used for.”⁵⁸

National Park Trust

Several park-supporting organizations have similar names—National Park Foundation, National Parks Conservation Association, and National Park Trust—making it difficult for donors to distinguish one from the other. The NPT, for example, calls itself “the only organization dedicated to the completion, and the full appreciation, of the American system of National and State Parks through the identification of key land acquisition needs and opportunities.” It is understandable why members of the public might not know which organizations are

“official” and which ones are not, or which ones might make the most effective and efficient use of a donor’s contribution. The NPT notes that it does not seek to build out the park system, but instead to get people, especially young people, into parks. The organization, based in Rockville, Maryland, was started in 1983, and the group’s website notes the Trust has worked on 200 projects, most associated with building “an awareness and appreciation” of parks and to “introducing successive generations to this uniquely American heritage.”⁵⁹ In its most recent annual report, the organization’s leaders refer to a merger between the Trust’s park preservation projects with its youth education programs. The Buddy Bison school program involved students from 30 underserved school and communities in 12 states and Washington, DC. At the same time, the group focused on protecting in-holdings (privately owned lands now within the boundaries of a national park), and the preservation of a 1800s school building in California.⁶⁰

From a financial perspective, the National Park Trust operates on a somewhat limited budget, especially in comparison with the National Park Foundation and the National Parks Conservation Association. The organization’s accounting report for the years ending June 30, 2010 and 2009 indicated the group had been losing assets, estimated at \$165,000 in 2010 and \$212,126 in 2009, mostly from the reduced value of its investments. In the 2011 annual report, with an audited statement of activities for the year ending June 30, 2011, the NPT showed \$635,288 in revenue and support, 80 percent of which came in the form of grants and contributions, and \$677,729 in expenses, 84 percent of which was for its programs. The report also listed \$3.3 million in assets, primarily real estate and mineral rights holdings, including a conservation easement known as Johnnycake Ranch in Arkansas worth \$1,465,100, and donations of mineral rights it received in 2003 and 2008.⁶¹

The NPT is not as well known as the two larger organizations, and its programs are smaller in scope. The group did create the first annual National Kids to Parks Day in 2011, and does recognize national conservation leaders with its Bruce F. Vento Public Service Award. But even with a new logo and a new leadership council, the Trust’s support is more symbolic than substantive.

Student Conservation Association

Many official NPS websites for individual parks list the SCA as a partner. The organization’s roots began in 1955 when Elizabeth Cushman, writing her senior thesis at Vassar College, responded to

Bernard DeVoto's essay in *Harper's Magazine* that recommended national parks be closed until the federal government could adequately staff and fund them. She and a friend, Marty Hayne, sought support from what was then the National Parks Association (now NPCA) in 1957 for a Student Conservation Program (SCP) to help alleviate the NPS staff shortages. The concept was designed to interest students in conservation and NPS careers, and gave 53 students an opportunity to work during the summer at Washington's Olympic National Park, and, with a \$7,400 contribution from Laurance Rockefeller, at Grand Teton National Park. The program "permitted the accomplishment of work that could not otherwise have been done with present personnel."⁶² But tensions with the National Park Association led the organization to question whether the summer internship program deviated from the group's preservation mission.

The SCP expanded its reach to include Utah's Cedar Breaks National Monument and Zion National Park in 1960, adding the USDA Forest Service as a partner in 1961 when interns began work at Utah's Dixie National Forest. Upon incorporation in 1964, the group changed its name to the Student Conservation Association and established its headquarters at Sagamore Hill National Historic Site, the home of Theodore Roosevelt in Oyster Bay, New York.

Over the next 50 years, SCA gained a reputation as "America's Conservation Corps" as it expanded its internship program to the BLM (1981), the US Fish and Wildlife Service (1982), the US Navy (1990), the US Army Corps of Engineers, and the US Geological Survey (2003), and outside of federal public lands (to Merck Forest and Farmland Center in Vermont, 1967). Its first international project began in 1986 through an exchange with Germany, later expanding to the Soviet Union, Canada, and Mexico. The SCA has also played a major role in responding to natural disasters. After the 1988 Yellowstone wildfires, SCA created the Greater Yellowstone Recovery Corps, bringing 600 of its members to the park over a three-year period. Similar projects were undertaken after Hurricane Hugo damaged the Everglades in 1993, the 2003 wildfire siege that engulfed Southern California, and the devastating flooding at Mt. Rainier and other parks.⁶³

The SCA depends on corporate partnerships to provide direct financial assistance. As the group's website notes, such partnerships also provide its corporate supporters with "opportunities to reach new audiences and advance the youth conservation movement. By forging a sustainable partnership with SCA, you clearly demonstrate your company's corporate social responsibility while funding our vital

programs to protect and restore America's precious parks, forests and urban green spaces."⁶⁴ SCA has a director of corporate relations, and works with a variety of corporate partners ranging from companies selling outdoor gear, to an airline, a soft drink company, automobile manufacturers, rental car companies, national park concessioners, and corporate giant Wal-Mart.

Just as national park friends groups can provide "extra" staff and other necessary resources, the SCA sends thousands of students into national parks, augmenting limited park budgets and completing projects that would otherwise go unfunded and uncompleted. The organization also generates increased awareness of the NPS and other agencies and organizations with which it partners, such as AmeriCorps and the Corporation for National Service. It served as the model for the NPS Volunteers in Parks program in 1972, and over its 50-year history has received numerous awards including ones from the Department of the Interior, the National Fire Plan Council, and Chevron Texaco.

Linking Past to Future

The national parks historically have relied on philanthropy, to varying degrees, for their support. From the very beginning when Steven Mather sought out his wealthy friends for donations, to now, when the Park Service encourages partnerships with corporate sponsors, finding sufficient funding to support all of the myriad park units beyond what Congress appropriates remains a challenge. The Rockefellers and other families who have provided long-term support through foundations are now being joined by individuals such as David Rubenstein, one of the nation's wealthiest individuals, who represents the "new money" of private equity firms. Like other donors to the national parks who admit to wanting to enjoy the fruits of their labors while they are alive, Rubenstein says he doesn't want to be buried with his wealth. "I'd like to have the pleasure of giving it away to things I think are good while I'm alive."⁶⁵

But in a tough economy, the Park Service, and its individual parks, need a lot more than a David Rubenstein to keep up with the backlog of infrastructure repairs, existing educational and cultural programming needs, and plans for expansion. Each park now develops its own toolbox of funding sources, rather than relying upon a family of influence, or a friends group, or supportive businesses, to meet the needs it identifies. That toolbox might include a donation box into which visitors drop spare change or a few dollars. It might mean

a superintendent cultivates a friendship with a local company that is the beneficiary of tourist dollars and explains how the park needs its help. Although it is unlikely (and against its own policies) that the Park Service will return to the strategy of providing catered tours of national parks on the private railroad cars of Mather's time, it is clear that fostering activities that promote private and voluntary action in support of the parks public purposes will remain essential to the agency's work. It will be up to NPS leaders to decide whether they will rely primarily on corporate supporters who give to the NPF for what some believe are reasons more related to product marketing than the great outdoors. Or will the agency's leaders look to private philanthropy for margin of excellence programming, services, and facilities that go beyond congressional appropriations?

In the 2012 presidential campaign, candidate Mitt Romney made a politically damaging statement saying 47 percent of the people are dependent upon government and he wasn't going to worry about them, triggering outrage on the one hand, but, on the other hand, adding fuel to the debate about the extent to which government entitlements and programs were at the root of the nation's deficit problems and its inability to reign in government spending. The flow of money from government to citizens is well documented—sometimes embraced, other times lamented. In the area of natural resource management, for example, considerable scholarship exists that criticizes the government largess that has historically flowed from the nation's natural resource agencies to private interests, whether it has been the Forest Service's below-cost timber sales to benefit timber interests, BLM's subsidized grazing fees for ranchers, the Army Corps of Engineers and Bureau of Reclamation pork barrel water projects for local and regional water users, or, indeed, the NPS's promotion of parks for recreation and tourism interests.⁶⁶ In the case of the Park Service, however, what is often overlooked is how much agency history is also intertwined with money voluntarily flowing from the citizenry to the agency. Whether it has been cash, tangible assets such as land, or time, the transfer of resources has been done freely and enthusiastically. Although some giving, such as by the early railroads, or today's corporate marketers, may also have self-serving goals, much is done without concern for private benefit, perhaps other than achieving a sense of personal well-being from contributing to a worthy cause. Although as chapter 1 illustrated, other resource agencies also foster private partnerships for philanthropic purposes, the magnitude, scope, and very long tradition of park charitable giving, if not unique, is certainly a significant Park Service distinguishing characteristic.

One fundraising expert notes that \$8 trillion will transfer into the hands of the Baby Boomer generation and then to their descendents, a transfer of wealth that is unprecedented in human history.⁶⁷ The challenge for the National Park Service of the future will be to build upon its rich philanthropic heritage, sustaining its ability to attract resources so willingly given, and to improve upon its organizational and administrative structures and capabilities to effectively manage those monies for the public park benefits that its donors and supporters have long advanced.

Chapter 3

The Legal and Organizational Framework

The National Park Service (NPS) administers a very complex, and often confusing, organizational landscape. While many people might readily identify Yellowstone, Yosemite, and the Everglades as national parks, they might not realize that in official NPS nomenclature, sites such as the Mount Rushmore Memorial, Gettysburg National Military Park, and the Cape Cod National Seashore are not. Actually, properties labeled “national parks” number only 59 of the 401 official units that are included in what is called the national park system. Making up the other units of the national park system are national battlefields (11), national battlefield parks (4), national battlefield sites (1), national military parks (9), national historical parks (46), national historic sites (78), international historic sites (1), national lakeshores (4), national memorials (28), national monuments (79), national parkways (4), national preserves (18), national reserves (2), national recreation areas (18), national rivers (15), national scenic trails (3), national seashores (10), and other designations (11).¹ Despite the technicality that only 59 units are really officially categorized as national parks, it is common practice to refer to all units administered by the Park Service as national parks. Friends groups and cooperating associations serve all NPS designations.

Among the over 400 units in the national park system, some are in reality two units. For example, several areas in Alaska have simultaneous designations: Denali, Gates of the Arctic, Glacier Bay, Katmai, Lake Clark, and Wrangell-St. Elias National Parks are both national parks and national preserves; Aniakchak National Monument is also a designated national preserve. In the lower 48, there is Craters of the Moon National Monument and Preserve in Idaho, and the Great

Sand Dunes National Park and Preserve in Colorado. To add to the confusion, there are also other agencies that administer sites that have the same unit designation as what the NPS administers, such as national historic sites. For instance, the USDA Forest Service manages Grey Towers National Historic Site in Milford, Pennsylvania, and the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) manages Fort Craig National Historic Site in New Mexico. Of the nation's 108 national monuments, only 79 are managed or comanaged by the Park Service. These non-NPS units may also have friends groups; as noted in chapter 1, friends are not exclusive to the Park Service.

In addition to national park system units, there are 24 affiliated areas. The Park Service neither owns nor directly administers affiliated areas, but it does provide financial and technical assistance. Affiliated areas are just as diverse as the units in the national park system, ranging, for example, from the Aleutian World War II National Historic Area in Alaska in affiliation with the native village Ounalashka Corporation,² to the Roosevelt Campobello International Park in New Brunswick, Canada, owned and managed by the Roosevelt Campobello International Park Commission and affiliated with both the NPS and Parks Canada. Affiliated areas may be served by friends and cooperating associations, but because several of the sites are owned by nonprofits themselves there is no need in those for an additional nonprofit friends group fundraiser.

The Park Service also administers a number of programs that include sites that visitors might assume are national parks. Of 21 trails in the National Trails System managed by the Park Service, only three, for example, are official units of the national park system and included in the official 401 unit total. The Park Service also has management responsibilities along with the US Army for a few, but not all, national cemeteries; national cemeteries are not included as part of the national park system. In addition, the agency has administrative responsibilities for more than 79,000 entries on the National Register of Historic Places, over 2,500 national historic land marks, 600 national natural landmarks, and 45 of the 203 rivers in the wild and scenic rivers system. It also provides assistance to 40 National Heritage Areas.³

Since its establishment, the Park Service has disbanded seven national parks, although each of those units has either been redesignated as another type of park unit with a different name, incorporated into another national park unit, divided into two parks, or transferred to another federal or state agency. Another 17 national monuments, four national historic sites, one national military park, two national memorials, and six national recreation areas have been disbanded.⁴

The two most recent examples include the Minidoka Internment National Monument that was incorporated into the Minidoka National Historic Site in 2008, and the Oklahoma City National Memorial (now an affiliated area) that was disbanded in 2004 and transferred to the Oklahoma City National Memorial Foundation; there the Park Service continues to provide interpretation.

While relatively few areas are disbanded, new areas and sites are constantly being added or proposed as additions to the national park system. President Ronald Reagan's boyhood home has been congressionally authorized to become a new national historic site but a dispute with the Ronald Reagan Boyhood Home Preservation Foundation over the cost of acquiring the site has delayed the project. Two other planned memorials honoring presidential legacies have received congressional go-ahead and are awaiting design approval: one honoring President Dwight D. Eisenhower, the other honoring the two Adams Presidents (John and Quincy) and their families. In his first term, President Barack Obama used the 1906 Antiquities Act, which enables a president to establish national monuments without the approval of Congress, to create four new monuments, including two now managed by the Park Service: the Cesar E. Chavez National Monument in California honoring the co-founder of the United Farm Workers, the nation's first agricultural labor union; and Fort Monroe National Monument in Virginia. In March 2013, Obama added another five national monuments, including three NPS-administered sites. Two of the NPS sites honor prominent African Americans: the Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad National Monument in Maryland, and the Charles Young Buffalo Soldiers National Monument in Ohio. Also included among the NPS sites was First State National Monument in Delaware, giving that state its first ever park unit.⁵

Congressional legislation has also been introduced to have the Park Service contribute \$20 million per year—approximately one-third of the total operating costs—to help run the September 11 memorial and museum at the former World Trade Center site. The agency testified it would not be able to absorb such costs since the \$20 million in annual funding is larger than that appropriated for nearly 99 percent of the units of the national park system.⁶ Congress has also directed the NPS to consider other new sites for inclusion, and in 2013 both the House and Senate approved similar versions of bills to establish a Manhattan Project National Historical Park. If approved, the park would include facilities at Hanford, Washington, Oak Ridge, Tennessee, and Los Alamos, New Mexico, that were involved in the top secret US effort to produce an atomic bomb. Committee Chair

Doc Hasting (R-Washington) noted, “By establishing this park we seek to fully open the doors to the American people, as well as the world, to provide enhanced public access to these facilities where history unfolded.”⁷

Other areas are still in the pre-congressional action stages. At the request of Senator Joseph Manchin (D-West Virginia), the Park Service initiated a reconnaissance survey for the establishment of the High Allegheny National Park in West Virginia, but in 2012 the senator asked the agency to end the survey and withdrew his support for the park.⁸ Proponents are also pushing for a 3.2 million acre park in Maine that would be larger than Yellowstone and Yosemite combined,⁹ but this park has also yet to receive any congressional traction. Citizens groups are also pursuing national park status for Washington’s Mount St. Helens, Oregon’s Mount Hood, Utah’s Glen Canyon, New Mexico’s Valles Caldera, and an Ancient Forest National Park of 3.8 million acres in California and Oregon, among others.

The issue of adding additional park units has been contentious, even among those who support the NPS. Although James Watt, President Reagan’s secretary of the Interior, has been roundly criticized for his often bizarre, contentious, and anti-park policies, he did rightfully point out that the government could not continuously add additional units to the park system without first thinking about the integrity and maintenance of existing units. With declining budgets the problem is magnified. President Obama made his 2013 national monuments designations despite the sequester and the new NPS budgetary cuts it required.

Within the 401 official units, there are interesting and complex management schema, some involving friends groups themselves. The Claude Moore Farm that is part of the George Washington Memorial Parkway in Virginia, for example, is managed and operated by the Friends of the Claude Moore Colonial Farm, making it the only park run by an organization. The NPS owns the land at the Moore Farm, while the situation is the reverse at the Tallgrass Prairie National Preserve in Kansas, where most of the land is owned by the Nature Conservancy and cooperatively managed with the Park Service. Wolf Trap National Park for the Performing Arts is managed in partnership with the Wolf Trap Foundation, a friends group as well as a congressionally mandated partner. The Park Service provides security, interface with patrons, and facilities maintenance (“front of the house” responsibilities), while the Foundation manages the artistic programs, publicity, the box office, and concessions (“back of the house” responsibilities); both partners provide interpretation and education. The Foundation

also separately owns its own property and performance venues in the Wolf Trap area.

In 1970, Congress passed legislation (the National Park Service General Authorities Act of 1970) emphasizing that all units of the national park system are “united through their inter-related purposes and resources into one national park system as cumulative expressions of a single national heritage,” and therefore implied that all units of the national park system would have equal status. That, however, has never been the case. With the passage of the Antiquities Act in 1906, the Department of the Interior (DOI) was able to defer national park designation on parcels it did not want by convincing the president to call less worthwhile sites national monuments. Initially established as a mechanism for protecting Southwestern ruins and artifacts, the national monuments were added somewhat belatedly to the NPS’s jurisdiction.¹⁰ Later, monument status became a sort of holding category for places that were mostly inaccessible, undeveloped, and unsuitable for extensive visitation, while tourism became the *raison d’être* for the national parks.¹¹ The differentiation between national parks and national monuments gave the latter second-class status, with supporters limited largely to local promoters and chambers of commerce.

It is not uncommon for many supporters of particular park units to seek to have their unit upgraded so they can join the ranks of the units that are today designated as “national parks.” For example, the designation of Pinnacles National Monument in California was changed to a national park in 2013, an action supporters felt will draw more visitors, especially foreign visitors who plan vacations around a national park, but have no idea what a national monument is. “People come down there and say, ‘Where’s the statue?’ thinking they will see something like the Washington Monument,” asserted a member of the local board of supervisors.¹² Park status, it is expected, will make it easier to highlight the park’s geologic features and the role it plays in the recovery efforts for the endangered California condor.

Despite restrictions on the ability of friends and cooperating associations to advocate and to lobby Congress for funding, some groups have nonetheless weighed in on this issue for their units. The Ocmulgee National Monument Association, a cooperating association, has on its site a reprint of an article titled, “Why Ocmulgee National Monument Should Be Designated a National Park.” National monument designation of the Georgia site that preserves traces of southeastern Native American culture, the reprint author argues, has “condemned Ocmulgee to chronic under-funding and

underexposure.”¹³ An older version of the website for the Colorado National Monument Association, the cooperating association for the site, similarly included a “call to action” for upgrading the monument to a national park, expressing frustration that many travelers expect to find a roadside stone marker instead of red rock canyons.¹⁴ For those concerned about the park system’s pecking order, it is also not without notice that several scenic areas—mostly in the West—such as the truly spectacular and world famous Yellowstone, Glacier, and Grand Canyon national parks, are commonly referred to as the nation’s “crown jewels.” Or that Ken Burns’ 2009 six-episode documentary film “The National Parks: America’s Best Idea”¹⁵ only focused on the officially designated national parks in the national park system.

Efforts to have all parks esteemed equally have also not been aided by past “park barrel” politics in which there was a rush to add new—and often questionable parks—that were the pet projects of congressional members. The railroad museum and operating heritage railroad, Steamtown National Historic Site near Scranton, Pennsylvania, has often been cited as one of the most egregious examples of a unit that did not merit park status in the first place when it was established in 1995.¹⁶ By 2008, declining attendance had prompted some to propose privatizing some or all of the park. The more the quality of the system is diluted, the more pronounced the distinctions between the historically revered parks and their second-class relatives.

The executive director of the George Wright Society (which was founded in 1980 to foster communication among protected area professionals with a focus on the scientific or heritage values of parks) has called the Park Service’s nomenclature a “national disgrace. It is a parade of distinctions without a difference. It is a towering tower of bureaucratic babble. It is by turns oversubtle and underinformative. Most damningly, it is unintelligible to the average person and the expert alike.”¹⁷ To eliminate the caste system created by the agency’s nomenclature, the executive director proposed that Congress pass a National Park System Unity Act designating all park units as national parks.

Legislative Authority and Management Policies

It is highly unlikely that a National Park System Unity Act will be enacted any time soon. If it were, it would join several kinds of legislation that define the agency’s mission and its general administrative authorities. These include, for example, the agency’s 1916 Organic Act; all the legislation that establishes the several programs the agency

administers such as the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act of 1968, the Wilderness Act of 1964, the Historic Sites Act of 1935, the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, legislation and executive orders (through the Antiquities Act) that establish and often impose special conditions on individual park units, and legislation that regulates agency actions, such as the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), the Endangered Species Act, the Clean Air Act, and the Clean Water Act.

In addition to the above authorities, there are several other legislative authorities that govern the Park Service's ability to partner with both public and private entities, including provisions that enable the agency to enter into cooperative agreements, memoranda of understanding, and memoranda of agreement with governmental entities, corporations, groups, and individuals, as well as provisions specific to historic preservation, and jointly managed research, training, and educational activities.¹⁸ Some legislation and authorities apply across the agency as a whole, while others are regional or site specific. Groups operating under all of these kinds of arrangements can be found.

In addition to legislation, agency policy is guided by administrative rules. Congress sometimes mandates or grants permission for agencies to write "substantive rules" that make new law. The provision in the Organic Act that authorizes the Park Service to "regulate the use" of the national parks, for example, is an example of its authority to engage in substantive rulemaking. "Interpretive rules" further explicate existing legislation, while "procedural rules" define agency organization or procedures.¹⁹ Agencies supplement regulations, which are published in the *Federal Register* (the document that contains all rules and decisions made by federal agencies), with various policy statements, agency directives, manuals, and handbooks. The Park Service operates under a three-tiered system of directives to provide further instruction and guidance for carrying out the agency's functions and responsibilities.

Level 1 is the NPS publication *Management Policies 2006*, a directive that includes the agency's service-wide management philosophy and its policy framework. Level 2 directives include Director's Orders that set forth new or revised policy on an interim basis between republication of *Management Policies*, further prescribe operating policies and standards, and specify delegations of managerial authority and responsibility. Park superintendents are a principal audience for the more than 100 Director's Orders in place. Level 3 directives provide more comprehensive information in the form of handbooks, reference manuals, videos, or other informational formats that program

and field employees can access to learn more about how to carry out their duties. These spell out recommended activities as well as provide more information concerning mandated requirements, but they cannot impose new requirements.²⁰

Cooperating associations have a firmer basis in legislation and the agency's directive system than do friends groups. Building upon the early collaborative efforts of park personnel and private citizens in promoting national parks, and a 1920 Appropriations Act that recognized that cash, lands, and buildings could properly be donated to the NPS by private groups, the first formal cooperative association, the Yosemite Museum Association (now Yosemite Conservancy) was established in Yosemite National Park in 1923 to help raise funds for a museum. During the next decade, other parks established similar organizations. The first congressional recognition of the role of cooperative associations occurred, however, in the DOI's FY 1937 appropriations act, which included a provision enabling appropriations to be used for field employees to cooperate with scientific and historical societies that were engaged in educational work in the parks.

In 1946, the DOI requested that specific and permanent legislation be passed to authorize what appropriations legislation had permitted on a year-to-year basis for a number of its agencies. Identical bills were introduced in the House and Senate, and included in the legislation was subsection (e)—authorization for the NPS to expend funds for work with cooperating nonprofits. The wording of subsection (e) was almost identical to that contained in the FY 1937 appropriations act in that appropriations could be authorized for: “educational lectures in or in the vicinity of and with respect to the national parks, national monuments, and other reservations under the jurisdiction of the National Park Service; and services of field employees in cooperation with such nonprofit scientific and historical societies engaged in educational work in the various parks and monuments as the Secretary of the Interior may designate.” The House Committee on the Public Lands reported out House Bill 6629 by dropping one subsection pertaining to land acquisition, changing the wording of another subsection to meet Department of Agriculture/Forest Service objections that it gave the Park Service superior jurisdictional authority over certain recreational areas, and making several other minor and mostly editorial changes.²¹ The committee also added a new subsection relating to the payment of tuition for children of park employees, but that provision was subsequently dropped on the House floor prior to passage.²² The Senate substituted the House-passed version for its own bill,²³ and House Bill 6629 became Public Law 79-933 on August 7, 1946.

During this legislative process subsection (e) engendered no controversy. No discussion of subsection (e) is contained in the report of the Committee on the Public Lands, or reflected in the floor debates of either the House or the Senate. Consequently, there is scant legislative history as to congressional expectations about the functions of cooperating associations, the scope of their permissible activities, limits on their activities, or the procedures under which they would be expected to operate. In 1953, subsequent legislation pertaining to cooperative associations enabled the NPS to provide facilities for use by cooperating associations on a reimbursable basis, and in 1970, Congress specified that income from living history and interpretive demonstrations could remain with the benefiting park. Although there is a dearth of explanatory legislative history about cooperating associations, they nevertheless have a legislative basis; no such authorizing legislation exists that pertains to Park Service interactions with friends groups.

Section 7.6.2 of *Management Policies 2006* addresses cooperating associations. This section briefly summarizes that cooperating associations may produce or resell educational or interpretive items under terms of a standardized, nonnegotiable agreement, offer approved interpretative services and support research, accept donations on behalf of the agency if done in accordance with approved fundraising efforts, and be housed in Park Service space.²⁴ *Directors Order # 32: Cooperating Associations*²⁵ further lays out the policy and procedural requirements that govern the working relationships between cooperating associations and the agency. For example, the order stipulates that cooperating association agreements will remain in effect for five years with automatic renewal for five years unless notice for termination is given by either party. The order also details the responsibilities for gaining approval of items sold in parks or in conducting interpretative activities, an association's administration responsibilities for annual audits, financial reports, and insurance coverage, and association usage of park facilities and equipment. Further guidance pertaining to cooperating associations is provided in the Level 3 *Reference Manual, Director's Order #32: Cooperating Associations*.²⁶

There is no separate Director's Order covering friends groups, although one section of the cooperating associations' reference manual addresses the distinction between cooperating associations and friends groups. The stronger legislative basis for cooperating associations is emphasized: "Associations are established under specific legislative authority and a Cooperating Association Agreement that clearly defines their role in working with the Service."²⁷ The section

also acknowledges that some cooperating associations simultaneously fulfill functions of a friends group, by specifically engaging in fundraising, which then subjects the cooperating associations to *Director's Order #21: Donations and Fundraising*.²⁸ Although Director's Orders #21 and #32 can be considered the main guidance documents, at least 13 other orders affect the work of cooperating associations.²⁹

Director's Order #21: Donations and Fundraising applies to all entities that raise funds or donate monies to support NPS programs or units, including cooperating associations, friends groups, the National Park Foundation, commercial entities, and individuals. This Director's Order, while prohibiting Park Service employees from soliciting funds, lays out the parameters for in-park donations, corporate and business donations, fundraising campaigns, and donor recognition. For example, any organized fundraising campaign (Section 8) claiming that proceeds are for the benefit of the Park Service, can only do so after a written fundraising agreement is made with the agency and there is a clear fundraising plan. The order distinguishes between two types of agreements: friends group agreements for supporting ongoing needs, and fundraising agreements for supporting specific projects.³⁰ Fundraising activities cannot be authorized in cooperative association agreements. Section 7 addresses corporate activities and distinguishes between two kinds of donations: philanthropic and corporate campaigns. "The primary difference between the two forms of support is the use of advertising and marketing in corporate campaigns to promote a donation and a relationship between the business and the NPS or an NPS partner."³¹ Philanthropic donations must adhere to the same guidelines as all other donations, while corporate campaigns have a separate set of guidelines.³² Director's Order #21 is also supplemented by the *Reference Guide to Director's Order #21: Donations and Fundraising*.³³

Friends Agreements and Templates

Although friends groups function under a number of different kinds of agreements, the most common is the General Agreement that establishes a long-term relationship between the NPS and a partnering organization. Over time, friends agreements have evolved to become more centralized and standardized, and as some friends group leaders have noted, very *unfriendly*.

With a new administration in Washington in the late 1990s, NPS policies and procedures began to change, with some of that change attributed to congressional pushback about friends group leaders

who were coming directly to members of Congress for park funding. Some observers credit NPS Director Jon Jarvis with the move to standardize policies and procedures, including friends group agreements. Sometimes, for instance, friends group agreements were just extended, rather than rewritten, and agreements were often short and uncomplicated. The 2000 General Agreement between the NPS and the Friends of Homestead, for example, which supports Homestead National Monument of America in Nebraska, was a five-page document whose first page was taken up with six “whereas” clauses that led to a second page article identifying the role of the friends group as “an organization suited to provide volunteer services and/or raise funds for the benefit of the park.”³⁴ The document called for the park superintendent to have the authority to make final decisions on prioritizing funds raised for the park, and for the Friends of Homestead to keep its records using professionally accepted standards, including an annual audit. One section somewhat unique to the agreement gave the friends “representation and input” into plans for interpretive exhibits its fundraising paid for. If the group were to engage in a formal fundraising campaign, the NPS had to approve a plan of operations identifying the roles and responsibilities of both parties, including bi-annual status reports. Sections also dealt with requirements that the group could not build any structures or buildings of its own without written permission from the NPS, and that any materials prepared for public consumption by the friends would require formal review and approval by the superintendent—a requirement that some groups would later find problematic. The term of the 2000 agreement was three years, with either party given the option of terminating with six days written notice.

Friends group agreements also varied in tone, length, and requirements. The 2003 General Agreement between Oregon’s Crater Lake National Park and the Friends of Crater Lake National Park, for instance, was similar to the four-page long document used by the Park Service in 1983: succinct and lacking in the kinds of legal jargon that would typify later agreements. The Crater Lake document did not include any “whereas” clauses, but began with a similar statement of background and objectives. One interestingly worded sentence stated that the friends would “seek to provide funding for [such] programs and to attempt no program or project beyond its financial capability,” a commitment that might seem obvious on its face. Park staff agreed to assist the friends group with projects, programs, and training sessions for volunteers when its staff was available, including the appointment of a staff member to serve as liaison between the superintendent

and the board of directors of the friends group. The friends agreed that volunteers would have to complete an individual Volunteer-in-Parks agreement, perhaps another unique element.

Guidelines on fundraising by the friends groups took up only one short section of the agreement, requiring the group to obtain written approval in advance. The friends could propose how funds it raised could be used, and the board president and the superintendent would jointly decide on how those monies would be used, or the park could make a proposal to the friends. The process was simple, and required primarily that the friends group maintain accounts of the fees and donations it received, and make them available for inspection and audit. For its part, the NPS would make park facilities or equipment, such as office space or furniture, available at the discretion of the superintendent, and if the agreement was to be terminated or the friends group dissolved, the agreement described the disposition of any remaining funds.³⁵

Several factors may have contributed to changes in how the Park Service viewed friends group agreements, including the growth of friends groups with a larger financial capacity, and more groups engaged in major capital campaigns, such as the one for the Statue of Liberty and Ellis Island. With assistance from the Kennedy School of Government there were also efforts to perfect partnership management by adopting professionally recognized best practices. In many cases, park-level organizational changes may have influenced how agreements were handled.

The Statue of Liberty-Ellis Island project is a unique case study. In 1982, President Ronald Reagan named Chrysler Corporation chairman Lee Iacocca to lead a campaign—the Statue of Liberty-Ellis Island Centennial Commission—to raise private sector funds for restoration of the two sites. The goal was to provide funding to restore the Statue of Liberty and four buildings on Ellis Island, along with several affiliated projects such as the American Immigrant Wall of Honor and the American Family Immigration History Center, which the DOI estimated would cost \$103 million. The Commission, which included as members comedian Bob Hope and his wife, Dolores, baseball commissioner Peter Ueberroth, and industrialist Pierre DuPont, rarely met and accomplished little, providing only limited advice. The group met only five times in four years, producing only two recommendations. It was replaced by the Statute of Liberty-Ellis Island Foundation (SOLEIF) to raise funds for the centennial, guide the restoration, and oversee the project under a contract with DOI.

SOLEIF not only took on responsibility for fundraising, but also assumed contracting duties so that the restoration could be completed in time for the Statue of Liberty's centennial in July 1986. In June 1985, Congress held oversight hearings on the restoration project amid allegations by an official within DOI that the government was exercising too little control over the project. A subsequent General Accounting Office (GAO) report found that the effort had exceeded its original goals, and although the DOI had maintained oversight, it was not always done well. The GAO was critical of the NPS's failure to approve construction contracts in writing, and the Foundation's failure to submit required reports and to submit promotional materials for review. One of the advertisements produced for the campaign, apparently without NPS or SOLEIF review, was considered offensive because it pictured the Statue of Liberty lying on its back in a serious state of repair, which the NPS felt suggested the government was guilty of neglect.³⁶

Because of mounting criticism, and because the projects were so complex and involved so many different stakeholders, the Foundation became subject to several subsequent agreements; in 1993, the Foundation established an endowment to provide for ongoing maintenance of the facilities, and in 1999, signed a memorandum of agreement for operation of the History Center. The 2006 General Agreement for the site used the same "whereas" format as the 2000 Friends of Homestead agreement, but even without the attachments, the Statue of Liberty agreement was 17 pages long. It included three sections that outlined guiding principles for the implementation of the agreement, mutual goals and objectives, and obligations and understandings that spelled out what the NPS agreed to do and what the Foundation agreed to do. Perhaps one of the most interesting aspects of this friends agreement was the lengthy section dealing with corporate sponsorships, material that would find its way into future agreements for other friends groups. The agreement held the Foundation responsible for submitting all materials related to a corporate sponsorship campaign to the NPS for approval, and included mention (but little definition) of intellectual property rights.³⁷ The Foundation started another campaign, initiated after the events of September 11, 2001, to obtain funding for safety and security upgrades to the Statue of Liberty, which was closed after the attacks.³⁸

In the case of Grand Canyon National Park, the NPS's relationship with its friends group, the Grand Canyon Foundation, had disintegrated, and it had been "de-friended." The Grand Canyon

Association (GCA), which had operated bookstores and a field institute since 1932, had an existing cooperating association agreement that had been signed in December 1999 and extended in 2004 until December 2009. The Association became the park's official fundraising partner in May 2008 with a supplement to its cooperating association agreement. This agreement also allowed the GCA to develop specific project agreements in the future that would "tier off" their friends group agreement. In comparison to other friends groups discussed previously, GCA's 2008 agreement was longer and more comprehensive, covering topics such as liability, insurance, and financial security that had not appeared previously.³⁹

In 2008, the Park Service sought to formalize even more the relationship between itself and its partners, specifically in regard to fundraising. The *Director's Order* #21 reference guide contained two model fundraising agreements, required when a friends group sought to initiate a project or program-specific fundraising activity, such as a capital campaign for a new visitor center. Nonspecific fundraising, such as membership drives or events that help support a park, did not require the additional fundraising agreement.

It is also around this time that the Park Service began to include provisions in friends group agreements that represented a more legalistic approach to the partnership. One draft—the 2008 Discussion Draft—of what was beginning to look like a template for future agreements included a provision on the enforceability of an agreement in court. The language itself changed dramatically from the more conversational tone of the 2003 Crater Lake agreement to a more formal, legalistic one. For example, "Now, therefore, in consideration of the mutual promises and covenants contained herein, and for other good and valuable consideration, the receipt and sufficiency of which are hereby acknowledged, the parties, intending to be legally bound, hereby agree as follows."⁴⁰ The proposed draft agreement also included a substantial number of references to statutory authority, and in a section that would later become one of the more controversial aspects of the template, there were references to how partners could use intellectual property, such as the use of the NPS arrowhead logo. Other sections of the 2008 Discussion Draft followed the earlier friends group agreements, with provisions limiting the terms of an agreement, outlining termination and expiration and the subsequent disposition of assets and identifying key officials.

The increasing emphasis on protecting the NPS through the legal provisions embedded in the template can also be seen in the addition or expansion of sections on liability and insurance. Often, organizations

are limited in the types of activities they can engage in because of the necessity (and to some, the burden) of finding appropriate insurance. This is especially true for small groups new to charitable activities, whether that means a bake sale, casino night, or raffle. Some states have added innumerable regulations that limit the ability of organizations to engage in anything that involves food and food handling, games of chance, and seemingly simple and time-honored events such as school carnivals.

The NPS, in noting that the type and amount of insurance coverage that it required of its partners should be determined by the nature of the risk involved, nevertheless introduced the specter of legality with terms and phrases such as “subrogation,” “defend and indemnify,” and most frightening of all to some friends groups, by placing the responsibility for paying for insurance on the friends group. In an increasingly litigious society, both the Park Service and friends groups had a right to be concerned. Actions taken against deep pocket agencies and corporations were becoming fodder for talk show hosts who used examples of what they considered scurrilous lawsuits on every program, which made everyone skittish about being caught in a similar quagmire. Some partners felt, however, that many of the provisions in the template gave all the advantages, and power, to the Park Service, since the agency often retained the right to approve or disapprove of the partner’s choices. With regard to insurance, for instance, the NPS required “appropriate insurance coverage from a responsible company or companies in coverage amounts and upon terms acceptable to NPS.”⁴¹ The agency also reserved the right to require the partner to acquire additional or supplemental insurance or other security such as a bond, if the NPS determined that the insurance was not adequate to cover liability associated with in-park activities. In addition to requiring that the friends group seek and obtain approval for its choices, language in the template required the partner to assume liability for, and relieve the United States and its agents and employees from, the many types of liabilities that have now become standard insurance-ese. Partners were also responsible for paying the government for any damages to federal lands or property, for obtaining fire and hazard protection, and providing worker’s compensation insurance, which is governed by state rather than federal law.

Although it is difficult to tie the evolution of the template to events that had already happened involving a park unit and its friends group, the 2008 draft document definitely tightened up prior agreements’ responsibilities for accountability. One section referenced the need for separate accounting systems if funds raised under the friends

agreement were commingled. Another called for detailed reports on in-kind donations, and another mentioned investments and endowment accounts. These provisions were not necessarily designed to be punitive, but were more a reflection, it appears, of the agency's desire to respond to friends groups that were growing both in mission and in financial capacity.

The issue of prior approval surfaced again in the draft template in several areas and raised the ire of friends groups whose agreements were coming due for renewal. One section that was mentioned by several of the interviewed group representatives was one requiring prior approval before the release of "any public information releases which refer to the Department of the Interior, any bureau, park unit, or employee (by name or title), or this Agreement."⁴² The clause included a requirement that the partner also submit the specific text, layouts, or photographs to be used. While some representatives might have interpreted the provision as a type of gag order on their ability to work with the media or to publicize the group's activities on social media (a growing presence by late 2008), the Park Service did acknowledge that while some of the prior approval clauses could be found in many NPS agreements, "they may not be appropriate for inclusion in all agreements."⁴³

One of the gray areas dealt with the template's section dealing with lobbying for federal funds. The Park Service made very clear in this section that partners were not to seek appropriations from Congress to support their ongoing or proposed projects, part of an existing NPS policy that barred that sort of lobbying unless the project was already included in the president's budget to Congress. But as will be discussed later, some friends group representatives either rationalized their actions or flaunted the policy by approaching a member of Congress for projects they wanted to have funded.

As a result of this type of discussion, the template grew to 19 pages from the five-page agreement that the Friends of Homestead had signed in 2000, or the four pages that Crater Lake had signed in 2003. In addition, under the 2008 Discussion Draft template, a friends group was required to attach a series of other documents to the agreement, such as its articles of incorporation, bylaws, and the letter from the Internal Revenue Service recognizing its tax-exempt status.

For park units caught between the older version of agreements and the development of the template, length still mattered. The Kansas Park Trust Inc. (KPT), a now-defunct group that benefited Tallgrass Prairie National Preserve, worked through a 21-page document

(without attachments) that the group signed in November 2009. Their agreement, which was separate from the cooperating association agreement they had signed in May 2009, looked very much like the 2008 Discussion Draft, with only a few changes. The latter document did not specify how much comprehensive general liability insurance a friends group would be required to carry; the KPT agreement required not less than a limit of \$1,000,000 per occurrence and \$3,000,000 general aggregate. The issuer of the KPT insurance also had to meet additional industry standard as set forth by the NPS.⁴⁴

Two years later, the template had evolved into a format that often just required a friends group to fill in the blanks for most of the required information. For the most part, the November 2010 version resembled much of what had been included in the December 2008 Discussion Draft, with a few exceptions. First, the language had softened in some places in the document, reflecting a slight change from the initially very legalistic tone to one that recognized that friends groups and the NPS were not adversaries. For instance, the section that referred to the responsibilities of the parties read like a laundry list of who does what in the 2008 Discussion Draft, but in the 2010 version, the agreement started out by referring to the relationship as much more mutually beneficial, as seen in the following template language: “NPS and Friends Group shall: 1. Promote this relationship as a way of accomplishing mutual goals pursuant to this Agreement, and recognizing the relationship as a way of leveraging scarce resources so that together, more is accomplished than either party could do on its own; and 2. Increase partnering skills and management capacity and motivate and empower NPS and Friends Group employees and board members to develop a supportive and collaborative culture for the benefit of the park resources and the public.”⁴⁵ The wordsmithed agreement goes on to refer to building on successes, having goals of mutual interest, and respecting the role that donors, volunteers, philanthropy, friends groups, and NPS staff contribute to the agency. The latter phrase may have come from those who reviewed the 2008 draft and who felt that the Park Service was failing to recognize what friends groups brought to the table.

Second, the November 2010 version also added a new section that called for the Park Service and friends groups to jointly develop an annual work plan that identified what projects and programs they agreed to undertake that year. Each friends group would be allowed raise up to \$1 million for each “identified project” in the plan. This change eliminated the sometimes burdensome approval requirement that some friends groups felt made them spend too much time

responding to bureaucratic paperwork rather than getting things done.

Third, instead of standardizing the term of the agreement at five years, the revised template allowed the parties to insert a term specific to their agreement. This change may have benefited the NPS more than a specific friends group, since it allowed the agency to, in effect, give organizations a probationary period where problems in the language of the agreement could be worked out or changed.

Including signature pages, the template was now down to 11 pages instead of 19, eliminating much of the language the groups had found confusing in the agreement's initial incarnation. One of the issues, intellectual property, remained in both the agreement itself and in language in attachment A, where coverage now included authorization and limited license use of trademarks, service marks, logos, phrases, images, and a whole host of other forms of brand identification. What had been alluded to in the 2008 Discussion Draft in the context of the Model Corporate Campaign Agreement used for corporate partnerships had grown like Topsy in attachment A of the template, taking up an additional three pages.

Some sections of the intellectual property attachment did not appear dispute-worthy, such as language granting each other permission to include hypertext links between each other's websites. But what drove the ire of some friends group leaders was the requirement that destination Web pages be reviewed and approved by the other party. Even more disturbing to some friends groups was the last section of the attachment, which gave the NPS ownership of all data and materials the partner produced, a continuation of the dispute over intellectual property that had drawn the ire of larger friends groups that also published field guides and other books and pamphlets in their dual role as cooperating associations.

Reaction to the template varied from one group to another, and even within the NPS itself. Some friends group representatives felt that the template took too much of a "one-size-fits-all" approach. The executive director of one friends group said the organization had refused to sign the initial version of the template, calling it "onerous." The group strongly disagreed with provisions that would give all assets to the NPS if the group ceased to exist, fearing the agency could terminate the agreement at any time. The group also felt that the template kept them from speaking to their congressional representatives without NPS consent and that under the intellectual property provisions, anything they produced became property of the NPS. "The intent was maybe OK, but the language wasn't acceptable."

After more than two years of negotiations, compromise appeared to have been reached, even though there were costs on both sides. From the perspective of the friends group “the new standard agreement sets up a mechanism for collaboration, something that was missing from the first draft,” but “trust has been eroded and needed to be rebuilt.” A new superintendent said there had been marching orders to get a new agreement signed and to improve communication with the friends group. “Working through the process of developing the new friends group agreement, and the constant revisions of the document took many months and was tense.” The park staff’s whole life had revolved around the issues associated with their relationship with the friends group, and it had been hard for them to step back. “There are hurt feelings on the staff.”

As new groups were being formed, and existing group agreements came up for renewal, the template seemed to have survived almost intact. Groups that had disagreed with some of the provisions relating to intellectual property during the negotiation phase signed off, although it is also fair to say the issue has not gone away. Agreements for new groups conformed to the November 2010 NPS document, and seemed to follow the template exactly. The 2011 agreement for the Friends of the Monuments, a group that supports Walnut Canyon, Sunset Crater Volcano, and Wupatki national monuments, for example, was only 11 pages long without attachments. Other groups working to renew agreements appear to be somewhat resigned to the bureaucratic nature of the new template, but it is doubtful that some of the lack of trust between the NPS and its partners has disappeared entirely.

In April 2012, the NPS had a new document, an 89-page guide on the use of philanthropic partnership agreement templates. The Park Service appeared to have paid heed to what it termed “field requests,” and incorporated changes in policies and legal requirements that had been vetted by the DOI’s Solicitors Office. Accompanied by instruction sheets, the 2012 version provided templates for fundraising by groups supporting national parks that did not have a friends agreement; a friends group agreement; a friends group annual workplan; a fundraising agreement for friends groups that were seeking to raise between \$25,000 and \$100,000; a fundraising agreement for those groups seeking to raise between \$100,000 and \$1 million; and a fundraising agreement for friends groups seeking to raise more than \$1 million. Groups seeking to raise less than \$25,000 were not required to sign an agreement. Groups were also provided a list of contacts for assistance, along with links to two sets of training materials on how to complete the templates, an estimated 80 percent of

which was pre-written and to be used in all agreements. The remaining 20 percent of each agreement, such as background information on the park and its partner, was to be inserted by the group, along with a specific description of the activity or project being undertaken in support of the park unit.

The document addressed most of the concerns of both friends groups and the NPS, eliminating much of the sometimes questionable discretion employed at the park unit level. It also placed responsibility for assistance to friends group with NPS regional coordinators, decentralizing some of the top-down bureaucratic involvement that some individuals considered micro-managing or downright meddling. It is likely that there will be more changes to the templates as new groups form, or as old agreements are replaced with new ones. But it is impressive to see the Park Service become more user-friendly toward its partners, and answering calls for change that have been decades in the making.

Administrative and External Assistance for Park Partners

Like most federal agencies, direction is provided by the national office in Washington, DC, where the Office of the Director and two deputy directors are located. It seems that with each new administration, and sometimes even within the same administration, there is an agency reorganization, shuffling the boxes on an organizational chart. As of 2012, the assistant director for Partnerships and Civic Engagement, under the deputy director for Communications and Community Assistance, coordinates the activities of friends groups, while the cooperating association coordinator reports to the associate director for Interpretation and Education under the deputy director for Operations. The Washington Office deals with advocacy and leadership, formulates policy, provides program guidance, develops a budget, and provides legislative support and accountability for field and program offices. There are also National Program Centers that provide technical support and professional assistance to the parks, such as training. Regional offices provide another organizational layer between the national level and park units. At the regional level of the Park Service, there are seven regions: Northeast, National Capital, Southeast, Midwest, Intermountain, Pacific West, and Alaska. Regional offices have specific geographic jurisdictions and each is headed by a regional director who reports to the deputy director for Operations. Each regional office also has a partnership coordinator who serves as a liaison between the NPS and its external partners.⁴⁶

In 2007, a group of 30 cooperating associations wrote to the Park Service requesting that coordination with cooperating associations be placed within the partnership office instead of the interpretation office, noting that “misunderstandings about the National Park Service’s goals for national park cooperating associations are becoming a source of friction between cooperating associations, the National Park Service, and other park partners,” arguing that they would be better served under the partnership office. The Park Service declined to make the change, arguing that because the law establishing the associations speaks to the role of cooperating associations in supporting interpretation, education, science, and research, cooperating associations would remain with the office—interpretation—that focuses on that mission.⁴⁷

A number of organizations external to the Park Service provide support for friends groups and cooperating associations. As discussed in chapter 2, the National Park Foundation, for example, is both a friends group in its own right as well as an organization that provides support and assistance to other friends groups. The NPF manages several funds for specific parks or groups of parks to which donors may direct contributions, and has initiated programs to help establish friends groups as well as programs, such as Park Partners, that seek to build capacity among groups. Two other important support groups that exist for friends and cooperating associations are the Association of Partners for Public Lands (APPL) and the Friends Alliance.

Initially named the Conference of National Park Cooperating Associations when it was created in 1976, the APPL serves a varied constituency out of an office in Wheaton, Maryland, with national parks now only one of its emphases. The group’s formation stems from a 1958 meeting of the board of directors of the Eastern National Park and Monument Association, where a resolution was passed requesting the director of the Park Service to call together the growing number of cooperating associations so they could exchange ideas. The first meeting was held in 1960, and in future years, the Park Service facilitated periodic conferences and established a service-wide position of Cooperating Association Coordinator in 1989. The NPS initially funded training courses in cooperating association management and several publication seminars, and in 1996, the two groups signed a formal cooperative agreement. A year later, organizations that support any public land management agency were invited to join the group, which changed its name to the APPL. Its mission includes three areas of programmatic emphasis: capacity building, government relations, and information and dialogue, while its nearly 90 current members

represent state parks, friends groups, cooperating associations, and other public land sites and agencies.

APPL struggles, at least to some extent, with its identity as representing “the bookstore people,” a reference to its early days representing cooperating association members. From an initially narrow relationship with the Park Service, collaboration is increasing, in part due to the organization’s attempts to include friends groups and other public land agencies within its membership. Among its recent accomplishments, APPL has lobbied the NPS to create a partnership office that would bring cooperating associations and friends groups together within the agency, its executive director testified at a congressional hearing on partnerships, and in 2012, APPL was represented at America’s Summit on National Parks in Washington, DC. The organization publishes a newsletter, organizes webinars, operates a website, provides training on topics such as board governance and financial management, and, through its Bridge to Tomorrow program, seeks to mentor and develop the skills of young professionals from the public lands community.

APPL’s primary niche, though, is its annual convention and trade show, where it offers seminars and speakers along with more than a 100 vendors seeking to get their products into park bookstores. The NPS’s cooperating association reference manual specifically notes that APPL’s conventions are recognized as an appropriate training experience for agency personnel.⁴⁸ In most years, the convention has provided APPL with additional revenue that can be reinvested into operations and training programs. But many NPS friends groups—especially smaller, volunteer groups—are unfamiliar with APPL. Even those that are familiar with the organization often find the dues are too expensive for their limited budgets, since travel, hotel, and registration expenses for the annual meetings can easily cost a single registrant several thousand dollars. APPL may also be competing with the National Park Foundation as a provider of group training since both groups are mining the same population, an issue that has not escaped the notice of either organization.

Likened to a confederation, the Friends Alliance is an informal collection of national park friends groups whose purpose is primarily information sharing. The Alliance was formed by a small handful of friends group executive directors in the mid-1980s as a way of providing opportunities for networking. The members have historically consisted of friends groups with one or more paid staff members, which has limited membership to about 40 or so. There are no dues, but

meetings are held twice a year, once in Washington, DC, in order to meet with NPS staff, and once in another city.

The Friends Alliance is not well known among all-volunteer friends groups, although they have become the beneficiaries of its efforts. Alliance members met informally and communicated electronically when the NPS unveiled the friends agreement template, making their objections known to what many considered to be an overly legalistic document. They were helpful in helping groups determine what other groups were having similar problems with the new template, and they actively participated in negotiations to make the agreement more friends friendly. Although the Alliance exists in an unofficial capacity in the national park world, it was very successful in having the NPS remove some of the more controversial elements of the template.

Even friends need friends. The National Park Foundation, the Association of Partners for Public Lands, and the Friends Alliance assist friends groups and cooperating associations by augmenting the staff assistance available from the NPS's national and regional offices. In the case of APPL and the Friends Alliance they can aggregate issues affecting localized group operations onto a national stage. Moreover, they provide significant mechanisms for communication and coordination. Groups can network with each other, and share strategies and ideas. Such linkages are significant components of the overall institutional framework in which friends groups and cooperating associations are embedded.

Chapter 4

Friends Groups: “You Get By with a Little Help from Your Friends”

In Glacier National Park in Montana, visitors can cross the park and the Continental Divide using the Going-to-the-Sun Road, a National Historic Landmark and a Historic Civil Engineering Landmark constructed from 1921 to 1932 at a cost of \$2.5 million. The two-lane road is narrow and winding, one of the first National Park Service (NPS) projects specifically designed for tourists in automobiles when it was conceived by Superintendent George Goodwin in 1917. Considered one of the most difficult roads to snowplow each spring—up to 80 feet of snow can be found at Logan Pass—it often takes ten weeks to plow completely with crews sometimes able to clear as little as 500 feet of snow per day. The Park Service hires seasonal employees who work as avalanche spotters for the crews plowing the road, and once the road is open, an additional 350 to 370 seasonal employees are added to the park’s 135 full-time, year-round staff.¹

The opening of the Going-to-the-Sun Road, which usually occurs in early June, is critical for visitation and the communities adjacent to the park. In 2012, local businesses praised the Park Service for its ability to open the road on June 19, boosting their bottom line; in 2011, crews were not able to plow the road completely until July 13.² But the impact of the federal sequester loomed over the park in 2013 as the acting park superintendent faced a \$700,000 budget cut that had to be absorbed by the end of the fiscal year on September 30. The Park Service noted that the cuts would be spread out throughout the park, affecting trail access, maintenance work, employee training, and equipment purchases. The budget cuts also meant there would be less money available for employee overtime, impacting the road opening. “We’re trying not to make any one area take too big of a hit. We also

recognize that around the park are communities. If you focus all your cuts into one geographic area, one community over another is going to suffer financially.”³

The Coalition of National Park Service Retirees said that it had obtained internal NPS memos that outlined the specifics of sequestration impacts, including information that showed the road’s opening would be delayed by two weeks. “In previous instances, closures of Going-to-the-Sun Road have resulted in financial distress for surrounding communities and concessions well into millions in lost revenues.”⁴ Business leaders said that Glacier National Park is the biggest economic driver in the region and the main draw for nonresident visitors, the life blood to neighboring gateway communities dependent on summer visitors. “That road is so important to our summer season and when businesses only have a couple of months to make their money, they suffer. It is like turning on a faucet. As soon as that road opens, visitors start booking rooms.”⁵

But Glacier National Park has a lot of friends, and they care about the opening of Going-to-the Sun Road, too. The Park Service received an unexpected bailout of sorts from the Glacier National Park Conservancy, a nonprofit organization whose philanthropic mission supports the park. The friends group made a last minute \$10,000 donation to the park that allowed road crews to begin the plow schedule so that the road could be opened by June 21. The Glacier Conservancy said that the group made the funds available because it understood that the road is critical not only to the visitor experience, but also to gateway communities and local businesses that depend on the road’s opening and the sudden uptick in visitation. “We understand the importance of opening the Sun Road on its normal trajectory, so we asked how we could help.”⁶

America’s national parks, both large and small, have become increasingly dependent on such nonprofit philanthropic organizations—friends groups—for their help. This chapter analyzes the demographic make-up of friends groups and how they operate to raise funds and provide other goods and services. To further illustrate the diversity of groups and their strengths and weaknesses, this chapter examines a range of group types from wealthy and healthy groups to those whose challenges were so great they are no longer considered friends.

The Demographics of Friends Groups

Friends groups are as varied as the park units they serve. At least four survey studies have been conducted since 1990 compiling data on

the demographic characteristics of the groups as well as their relationship with the NPS, and their programmatic, financial, and planning operations.⁷ These surveys provide a useful statistical snapshot of friends groups, and with one important caveat, enable changes in their makeup and activities to be compared over time.

First, the caveat. It all depends on who is considered a friend for the purposes of the survey. Studies in 1993 and 1996 found that the lists of friends groups obtained from the Park Service were in error, incomplete, or reflected the dynamic, changing world of friends organizations. Some groups on the list were no longer active; others were not friends groups but cooperating associations, concessioners, or employee groups. Additional groups would be identified by the researchers. After corrections, the 1993 survey identified 163 organizations and received 121 responses (74.2%); the 1996 survey narrowed its list to 160 and received 147 responses (92%). As a result of the work of each of these surveys, new directories of friends groups were compiled in 1994 and 1996. For surveys in 2010 and 2012, the National Park Foundation (NPF) opened its samples to any nonprofit organization that included park philanthropy as essential to its mission, “regardless of longevity, tax exemption status, or formal affiliation with the NPS.”⁸ The Foundation thus identified a sample size of 246 groups in 2010 and 217 in 2012, but only received a response rate of 45 percent ($n = 111$) and 46 percent ($n = 99$), respectively.⁹

There are also considerable differences in the two lists of friends groups compiled by the NPS in FY 2009 and FY 2011. For example, 40 groups on the FY 2011 list were not listed on the FY 2009 list, and 31 groups on the FY 2009 list were not on the FY 2011 list. In some instances, those on the 2009 list, but not on the 2011 list, are still highlighted as a friend on the park’s website, or the group’s website continues to refer to itself as a friend. All of this either speaks to considerable group churn or inconsistencies in the agency’s record keeping; it is probably a little of both. The 2011 friends list obtained from the NPS website consists of 184 names. But the list also includes groups such as the Wolf Trap Foundation for the Performing Arts, the St. Thomas Historical Trust, the Appalachian Trail Conservancy, and the Trust for the National Mall that do not have friends agreements, but some other form of agreement with the NPS (such as a fundraising agreement), as well as groups such as Friends of Peirce Mill in Rock Creek Parkway, whose agreement appears to have lapsed. The 2011 list also omits friends who do not have friends agreements but still do philanthropic work for park units, such as, for example, Rock Creek Conservancy in the District of Columbia, Virginia, and Maryland, or

the Friends of the Well in Arizona. One might also quibble with the inclusion of the NPF, unless it fits under the category of Super Friend. The organization does support the national parks, according to the NPS Friends Group Directory, although there is language on the NPF website that notes its mission is to support the National Park *Service*.¹⁰ Since May 2011, when the NPS directory was updated, several organizations have also changed in one way or another, although we have this information primarily because of our research, not because of any notices or an updated NPS list. The NPS partnership website, as of September 2013, still retained the FY 2011 friends group list. Since its posting, new friends groups have emerged but have not been added to the listing, such as the Friends of Timpanogos Cave, formed in 2012 to assist the Utah national monument. The park was established in 1922 due to local interest in the cave's preservation, and local residents are continuing to support the monument through the new organization.

Who is on a list and who is not, and what criteria are used to list a group is not, however, merely a perplexing methodological problem for those interested in doing statistical surveys. The inconsistencies in tracking and monitoring—following the money—pose a fundamental problem of accountability and transparency. We shall return to the further implications of this in chapter 6.

The NPF surveys found that most of the surveyed groups were relatively new; three-quarters had been established since 1980.¹¹ Certainly if one uses the NPF's broad definition of "friend" it can be said that the number of groups interested in park philanthropy continues to grow. A more restricted definition, however, might lead one to argue that the number of "official" friends has remained somewhat steady or has grown only slightly (from 160 identified in the 1996 survey to 184 in the FY 2011 NPS directory). Again it depends on who is counted, and how much confidence there is in whoever compiles the lists.

Geographically, the eastern states have the most groups; the Northeast, National Capital, and Southeast Park Service regions currently account for 57 percent of all groups; this eastern concentration is evident in all of the surveys. Most friends groups have small memberships (fewer than 500 members). Volunteer boards of directors (which range in size from 6 to 20 members for about 70 percent of the groups) oversee group operations with the extent of board engagement in day-to-day operations a function of whether or not there is paid staff.¹² As with so many other small nonprofit groups, friends report that recruiting and engaging board members can be a challenge.¹³

In the NPF surveys, about one-half of the groups reported having less than one full-time paid staff,¹⁴ a reflection of budgets that for

the great majority of groups continue to remain modest. In 2012, one-third of the groups had operating budgets less than \$50,000; only one-quarter of the groups had operating budgets in excess of \$1 million.¹⁵ With largely modest budgets, it is therefore not surprising that fundraising continues as a central group activity as well as the most frequently cited significant organizational obstacle.¹⁶ While a variety of sources provide revenue, donors and membership have remained frequent sources of funding for those friends groups with budgets under \$50,000.¹⁷ Wealthier groups have a wider base of revenue sources, including foundation and corporate support, earned income, and interest and dividends from investments and endowments.

In 1996, 31 percent of the groups reported that they provided no direct cash contributions to park units, while about another third provided over \$10,000 in support.¹⁸ By 2012, the NPF reported 25 percent made no financial contributions to a park unit, an increase from the 9 percent it reported in 2010.¹⁹

Determining the total value of friends groups' contributions is not an easy task since there is no centralized record keeping or required reporting of a group's finances, an issue we will return to in chapter 6. Again, there is the problem referred to above about deciding what groups to include. Does one include only those groups with an official friends agreement or, like the NPF researchers, does one include groups with other kinds of agreements, and those who also provide park philanthropy but do not have any kind of agreement?

Because there is no centralized and systematic reporting system in place, one might be tempted to use a group's Internal Revenue Service (IRS) forms to collect data. However, that brings its own set of problems. For example, a 2012 NPS compilation of data retrieved from 2009 IRS forms available on Guidestar (which gathers and publishes information on nonprofits) illustrates some of the problems of using IRS data to come up with an aggregate figure for the value of group contributions. Because not all friends groups are required to file either IRS Form 990-EZ (for groups with gross receipts more than \$50,000 but less than \$200,000 and total assets less than \$500,000) or Form 990 (for groups with receipts over those amounts), data could only be gleaned for about 98 of the 184 groups listed in the agency's FY 2011 directory of friends groups. The NPS could not use IRS data from the remaining 86 groups because nonprofit groups with revenues under \$50,000 need only file 990-N (e-Postcard) to verify the information the IRS has on file. E-Postcards, however, do not contain information about revenues, expenses, or assets.

There are other problems using IRS information to analyze group operations. For example, the NPS reviewed data from the IRS forms on four items: functional program service expenses, net assets, revenue, and donations. Totals for 98 groups show that they reported \$119,073,950 in program service expenses, \$427,078,352 in net assets, \$140,714,861 in gross revenue, and \$16,464,400 in direct donations. But does that mean these groups actually contributed \$119,073,950 in program services to the NPS? No. Although the NPF alone reported \$14,037,237 in functional program service support (almost 12% of the total), other groups provide functional program support for other programs, agencies, or levels of government besides the Park Service. For example, the Potomac Appalachian Trail Club works on trails other than the Appalachian Trail, and raises funds to maintain cabins on its own lands as well as those on NPS lands; the Herbert Hoover Presidential Library Association supports the Herbert Hoover National Historic Site in Iowa as well as the Herbert Hoover Presidential Library and Museum, which is located on the NHS grounds but managed by the National Archives; the Alice Ferguson Foundation's program focus on the Potomac River watershed extends well beyond its work with the NPS; and the Fort Mason Foundation's dollars largely support the Fort Mason Center in San Francisco that it independently operates within the confines of the Golden Gate National Recreation Area. Likewise, the donations attributed to Friends of Hubbell Trading Post go directly to Navajo and Hopi student scholarships and not to the NPS National Historic site; and the Appalachian Trail Conservancy's donations do not go to the NPS but to affiliated organizations of volunteers and allied local organizations.

Moreover, the friends list also includes several groups that are both cooperating associations as well as friends groups, excluding a number of dual-purpose groups such as the Golden Gate National Parks Conservancy, National Parks of New York Harbor Conservancy, and the Grand Canyon Association. In cases where these dual function groups are listed, there is no way to discern from IRS statements what is aid to parks for education and interpretation related to cooperating association purposes and what is support for fundraising projects or other friends group functions.

Finally, in addition to monetary contributions, friends also provide in-kind contributions, although it is difficult to track the actual amount of in-kind contributions with any great accuracy since reporting can be unreliable and inconsistent from group to group. There does also not appear to be a standard measure of what a well-trained volunteer docent's work is worth, in comparison to, for instance, the work of

a summer crew of students doing trail maintenance. Nonetheless, in-kind contributions can be sizeable.

What all this means is that one needs to be somewhat guarded about either making statements, or in accepting the veracity of statements made by others, about the total amount of support provided by official friends groups or all nonprofit groups engaged in park philanthropy. We can say it is substantial; we can safely say it represents several millions of dollars in program support, and several millions of dollars worth of in-kind contributions. But without better grips on the population one is talking about, and a clear identification of which dollars are for the NPS versus other group activities, making precise calculations is virtually impossible.

One significant shift from the 1993 survey was revealed in the 2010 and 2012 NPF studies. In 1993, interpretation and education was ranked six among nine group objectives—preservation of natural and cultural resources ranked number one. By 2012, youth programs and education was the most frequently mentioned program of work.²⁰ Advocacy activities had dropped in importance—from 55 percent to 23 percent in 2012, although two-thirds of the 2012 respondents did report that they occasionally communicate with their congressional delegations.²¹ The 2010 study accounted for this shift by indicating that the emphasis on education and interpretation “correlates with the national movement as the strategies by which NPS and other environmental preservation groups are ensuring the future integrity of and access to natural, historical and cultural resources.”²²

Since the 1996 survey, the number of groups with IRS nonprofit designation as 501 (c)(3) status grew from 79 percent to 94 percent, and the number of groups that reported some sort of formal agreement with the Park Service, such as a friends agreement, cooperating agreement, or a memorandum of understanding, also increased.²³ In the 2012 NPF survey, 46 percent of the groups indicated that they had a friends agreement, up from the 31 percent in its 2010 survey.²⁴

In 1993, 61 percent of the groups rated their relationships with their park staff as excellent and 30 percent as good; only 5 percent said their relationships were poor to very poor. Although generally favorable, relationships with national and regional offices rated somewhat lower, and varied by region.²⁵ In 2010 about 23 percent of the groups reported that their relationship with the NPS was a significant obstacle to the group’s success,²⁶ while in 2012 most groups (91%) reported that their relationship with the NPS was either excellent or very good. Between 1993 and 2012, the number of groups that reported collaborating with cooperating associations increased from

37 to 68 percent.²⁷ Groups also continued to report collaborating with a range of other interests, including concessioners, local governments, environmental organizations, and local businesses.

Although not forsaking traditional direct mail for delivering newsletters and fundraising appeals, social media is becoming increasingly important. By 2012, almost 95 percent reported website use and maintenance activities. Other social media tools such as Facebook and Twitter had also become popular communication tools, increasing significantly between 2010 and 2012.²⁸ The growth of social media has been so rapid that the 1993 and 1996 surveys would probably not even have considered asking about such activities.

How Friends Groups Operate

Partners are extremely diverse in how they operate and what they do for the Park Service. There is no “one-size-fits-all” model of how partners function as organizations. Although the surveys conducted in prior years do provide statistical information on friends groups, they do not provide the type of robust portrait of group functions and operation that is necessary for full understanding of their role in park philanthropy. In addition to fundraising and revenue generation from a variety of sources, friends groups engage in a number of other projects and provide several other services, including: interpretation, education, and research; special events and activities; equipment and supplies; volunteers; and advocacy.

Fundraising and Revenue Generation

Friends groups are no different than other types of nonprofit organizations in how they generate revenue, although it could be argued that raising money for a national park confers some distinct benefits on how they attract potential donors. Hosting an event in a national park unit, such as the weekend of activities for higher-end individual donors sponsored by the Yosemite Conservancy in fall 2012, is hard to match. The event included a cocktail reception one evening, a second day of presentations and nature walks, with a buffet lunch on the lawn of a historic hotel, an afternoon wine and cheese reception followed by a silent auction, raffle, and, later that evening, an old-fashioned barn dance in a historic park building. The donors, who paid \$250 per person to participate and who give at least \$1,000 per year to the Conservancy, were also given an exclusive report about the Conservancy’s activities. In addition, participants attended a dinner

with the park superintendent and his wife and were updated about Conservancy projects alongside NPS staff. The events occurred during one of Yosemite's most beautiful seasons, against a scenic backdrop that was quite different from stodgy board meetings or hotel ballroom pitches to "give 'til it hurts." There were no high pressure sales tactics, and those who attended did not get cornered to give more than before. The only real material perk participants received was a copy of the recently published guidebook to the park. The events over the course of the weekend were more focused on friend-raising than fundraising. Donors are cultivated for an "ask" further down the road. Events such as this one are part of a friends group "toolbox" that may include more than a dozen different fundraising strategies and events. As this section illustrates, some of those strategies involve traditional fundraising activities, while others are more innovative in nature.

Memberships

Friends groups do what other groups do that is easy and relatively low cost—they generate revenue through memberships. But money is not the only reason why memberships are important; groups also develop a constituency of individuals who support what the group is trying to do. Almost all of the friends groups in this study used some variation of a traditional membership program, asking supporters to contribute specified amounts of money. The Assateague Island Alliance illustrates one of the most simple membership arrangements, asking \$25 for an individual membership and \$40 for a family membership. In most cases, there are only a few, if any, direct benefits to membership. The Grand Teton National Park Foundation, like some other friends groups, gives its members a discount at all of the bookstores operated by the Grand Teton Association. Members often gain access to an online newsletter or receive updates on a group's activities, such as annual meetings, although few groups allow members to vote. Those who join a friends group are expected to give because they have the satisfaction of supporting the park and making a difference, rather than receiving anything material in return.

Donation Boxes

Groups may also use an old-fashioned method of seeking donations, although they do not have to pass the hat to get spare change or a few extra dollars from visitors. The Park Service reports that more than a quarter century ago, donation boxes were a rarity, but now, most parks have at least one and often more. There are specific policies, covered under Director's Order #21, that explain who can place a

donation box inside park boundaries, the signage text, box placement, and accounting for donated funds. Friends groups can utilize donation boxes, but so can the NPS, allowing the superintendent to keep the funds for the park. Friends of Great Smoky Mountains National Park has placed them not only within the park boundaries, but also at local airports and in surrounding cities.²⁹ While the use of a donation box might seem like a low cost and risk-free method of raising money from park visitors, it is not without its complications. There is, in fact, a “politics” of donation boxes that includes disagreements about who the money actually belongs to and other accounting responsibilities.

Corporate Donors and Foundation Grants

NPS friends groups have had to become less reliant on government sources for funding over the past decade as grants, a traditional revenue source for many nonprofit organizations, have been decreasing. In response, some have sought out new sources of funding and donations, especially grants made possible by corporate partners. The former Glacier National Park Fund (now the Glacier National Park Conservancy), for instance, received over a half million dollars in less than a decade from the Burlington Northern Santa Fe Foundation, including \$55,000 in 2011 to support educational programs within the park. Groups have applied for Every Day grants, administered by the National Environmental Education Foundation, and made possible by Toyota Motor Sales, USA, Inc. Although the grants are relatively small (up to \$5,000), they are important to friends groups because they are designed to help fund capacity building projects such as staff and board training, fundraising, and technology and website development—activities that are essential to smaller and newer groups.

Toyota Motor North America, Inc. also awards major grants, including a three-year, \$500,000 award given to the Grand Canyon Association in 2008 for educational outreach, service learning, and visitor safety programs. The grant included five Toyota cars and trucks for the Park Service to use for delivering environmental education programs at schools throughout the state. In 2010, the monies from the grant enabled the Association to fund 35 schools, and 1,719 students—some from as far away as Kentucky—to come to Arizona for a ranger-led curriculum about the canyon.³⁰

Not all grant support comes from corporate funders, however. Another large friends group, the Golden Gate National Parks Conservancy, partnered with the Richard and Rhoda Goldman Fund to launch an effort in 2004 to restore and revitalize the trails, forests, and native habitats at Lands End, with the San Francisco Bay Area

philanthropy donating \$8.6 million to the project. Not every friends group has access to major donors such as these, but non-governmental grants have become vitally important for capital programs and campaigns.

Many nonprofit organizations have found that they can benefit by partnering with other groups who reward participants or customers with a contribution to a favorite charity. Friends of Big Bend National Park partners with Reliant Energy and Earthshare of Texas in a program designed to reduce customers' carbon footprints through the purchase of carbon offsets. The utility's customers can pay a flat monthly cost of \$3.95: Earthshare receives \$1 dollar, and 500 pounds of carbon offsets are purchased. For \$5.95, Earthshare of Texas receives a \$2 donation, and 1,000 pounds of carbon offsets are purchased. Friends of Big Bend benefits as one of Earthshare of Texas' participating organizations. In another non-park-related partnership, Friends of Big Bend earns a penny each time a supporter searches the Internet using GoodSearch.com, a Yahoo-powered search engine that distributes half of its advertising revenue to user-designated charities. In April 2012, Friends of Saguaro National Park announced that the group had established a partnership with 1% for the Planet, an alliance of nearly 1,400 member companies in 43 countries that give 1 percent of their revenues to environmental causes. The partnership allows the friends group to apply to the member companies for donations. These types of partnerships give friends groups, especially those with a minimal corporate or individual donor base, an opportunity to gain visibility and diversify their income stream. The amounts can be significant. SmartBank donated nearly \$50,000 to Friends of Great Smoky Mountains National Park and the Great Smoky Mountains Association through its SmartGreen Account, which makes donations to the two groups each time a SmartBank account holder uses a debit card for signature-based transactions. The bank also allows its clients to make additional contributions through an automatic deduction from their account.³¹

Planned Giving

Planned giving is an income-producing strategy used by many philanthropic organizations, and offers park supporters a way to contribute through beneficiary designations of retirement plans and life insurance policies, and through bequests of real estate, appreciated securities, and checking and savings accounts. The Yosemite Conservancy, for example, offers those who include the friends group in their estate planning membership in the Joseph Le Conte Legacy Society, whose perks include invitations to special events both in and outside the

national park, while the Grand Canyon Association provides donors with lifetime membership in the Bright Angel Circle.

Some groups provide planned giving donors these types of perks without asking about specifics, while others do not. To join the Bright Angel Circle, for example, donors fill out a confidential membership information form that asks the type of planned gift, the amount of a bequest or death benefit, and whether the friends group is the primary or secondary beneficiary. The future gift may be unrestricted or directed toward a specific purpose, such as arts and culture or trail restoration. While donors need not provide a copy of their will, it is requested, along with an indication of whether or not the Association is authorized to use the donor's name.

Planned giving programs offer many advantages to donors, since bequests to friends groups holding nonprofit status are entirely free from federal estate tax, and sometimes, from capital gains taxes. This can offer, as the Grand Canyon Association notes, substantial estate tax savings since there is no limit on the amount that can be bequeathed. The group provides sample language for donors to include in their will or trust, and explanations on how the Association can benefit by being named the beneficiary of a retirement plan, life insurance policies, or appreciated securities. Lest the process seems overly legalistic or coldhearted, the Association softens the financial jargon with this: "For many of us, there is a compelling desire to make a difference—to leave a lasting impact on the world in which we live. The search for significance and desire to plan for the future leads many to ponder their legacy. What kind of legacy will you leave?"³²

Endowments

In order to maintain funding beyond the short term, many of the larger friends groups have set up endowment funds. The intent of endowments is to provide a steady source of income year after year. Often endowments are the recipient of a planned giving bequest since they provide the donor with the opportunity to provide a gift that will keep on giving well into the future. Generally there are three types of endowments. Permanent endowments are funds held in perpetuity with the income generated from the principal being applied to operating expenses (typically only interest and dividends but sometimes also unrealized gains). Term endowments are those held for a period of time. Finally, there are board-designated endowments. Similar to permanent endowments, the funds are set aside with the intent that only the earnings they generate can be spent, but unlike permanent endowments, boards may for any reason unrestrict the endowment

and use any or all of the funds as it chooses. At the end of 2011, the Friends of Acadia had an endowment and investments valued at about \$18 million, with endowment funds distributed among the three endowment types. On the other hand, the Grand Canyon Association's endowment funds are all permanently restricted. This endowment had begun under the former Grand Canyon Foundation, but when the Foundation was essentially de-friended by the Park Service, the Foundation's fundraising work was absorbed by the Grand Canyon Association in 2008. At this time, endowment funds totaled \$21,456. Under a new executive director, the fund, which is invested in and managed by the Arizona Community Foundation on behalf of the Association, grew by the end of 2011 to \$1,630,137.

Capital Campaigns

The larger friends groups, especially those with a significant number of corporate sponsors and sources of private funding to assist them, are best positioned to engage in major capital campaigns. In these instances, a friends group needs a special fundraising agreement with the NPS, especially when the project reaches a specific dollar threshold. Aging visitor centers are often targeted for major campaigns, since the Park Service has seldom been able to provide funding for renovations or new buildings. At Mount Rushmore National Memorial in South Dakota, the friends group, the Mount Rushmore Society, took the lead in organizing fundraising toward a \$56 million capital improvement project and complete renovation of the park's visitor facilities after a general management plan determined the need for larger and improved facilities. In 1989, the Mount Rushmore Preservation Fund campaign began with a \$2 million challenge by the state's governor, promising a match with state funds. After the groundbreaking in 1992, the campaign raised \$25 million to complete the project, adding to the \$14 million from concessioner Amfac (now Xanterra), and \$17 million in investments from the parking facility the Society also ran under a separate concessioner contract. Without any tax dollars being spent, the project was completed in 1998 with the addition of accessible buildings and walkways, an interpretive museum, an outdoor performance amphitheater, and a walking trail.

At Yosemite National Park, the Yosemite Fund (now the Yosemite Conservancy) has initiated several major, multi-million dollar fundraising projects. In 2006, the group launched The Campaign for Yosemite Trails, with \$3 million from the Park Service and over \$10.5 million in private donations. In 2012, it announced another major project to raise additional millions to restore the Mariposa

Grove of giant Sequoia redwoods where social trails threaten the trees' roots systems, which lie close to the surface. Also in 2012, the Grand Canyon Association set a goal of raising \$1.5 million to revitalize a trailhead, including landscaping, shade structures, restrooms, and signage. While some friends groups conduct major fundraising efforts for highly visible projects like visitor centers, this is not always the case. The Yellowstone Park Foundation committed \$1 million in 2012 to help the Park Service start a native fish conservation program that visitors are not likely to notice.

Other Innovations

In addition to these traditional fundraising strategies, many friends groups have turned to more innovative and original ways to add to their coffers. Friends of Virgin Islands National Park (FVINP), for instance, runs an online auction on BiddingForGood.com for goods and services donated by supporters of the national park, ranging from the services of an officiate for a beach wedding, jewelry, a barefoot charter on a 54-foot boat, to lodging at a local resort. The group's 2013 online auction raised \$43,000, with total sales 50 percent greater than those of the previous year. Online auctions allow local groups to put together packages that "go where the money is" attracting bidders outside of the local circle. It is likely that online auctions will be more widely used in the future to enable local groups to reach far beyond their local spheres of interest. BiddingForGood.com, an e-commerce company that operates in the newly emerging sector of "charitable commerce," connects fundraisers with individuals who are affluent, well educated, and motivated to support causes they care about. Since its founding in 2003, the company has helped nonprofits, schools, and corporate foundations raise \$140 million.³³

In recent years, friends groups have looked to another revenue source that has become popular among non-park-related groups as well. Vanity license plates, also known as personalized plates, allow a vehicle owner to choose a word, phrase, or other alphanumeric on a specialty plate that supports a national park or a national park friends group. By paying an extra fee (usually about \$25 to \$50, depending on the state), a supporter can sport a park image on a car, truck, or motorcycle along with a vanity element. About ten states and the US Virgin Islands now offer national park plates, the majority of them boosting well-known parks including Yosemite, Yellowstone, Crater Lake, and Big Bend. The Blue Ridge Parkway Foundation and the Appalachian Trail Conservancy are also the beneficiaries of license plate revenues, as are Washington's National Park Fund, the Glacier National Park

Conservancy, Friends of Great Smoky Mountains National Park, and the Zion National Park Foundation. The Zion plate was authorized by the Utah legislature to celebrate the national park's centennial in 2009, and the fees from the sale of the license plates go to the Zion National Park Foundation, the philanthropic arm of the Zion Natural History Association, to support visitor programs, resource management projects, and facilities.³⁴ Friends groups receive about \$20 per year, on average, when the license plates are sold or renewed. Some friends groups, such as Washington's National Park Fund, have also held online auctions when their plates were first made available, with some plates going for more than \$1,000.³⁵

The Park Service has recognized this revenue source, but notes that park supporters have an upfront investment because states vary in what a group must do initially to show there is sufficient interest to get the plate approved, produced, and sold. In Arizona, for instance, the state legislature must enact a bill supporting the specialty plate, and the bill must be signed by the governor. Then the group must pay \$32,000 for programming costs and production. The group works alongside the state to design the plate, which must be visible at 100 yards and have a color offset between the numbers/letters and the background design. Then seven prototype plates are produced and reviewed by the group and state officials before they are made available to the public.³⁶ Although Arizona's license plate does include the slogan "Grand Canyon State," there is no specialty license plate promoting the park itself or benefiting the Grand Canyon Association, the park's friends group.

Specialty plates have become so ubiquitous that at least one state, Florida, has declared a moratorium on new plates until 2014. Florida does offer a plate picturing the Everglades, but the special \$20 annual fee (plus registration fee) goes to the Everglades Trust Fund, which is not a park friends group. But in those states with less rigorous requirements than Arizona, the promotion of the park can have clear financial benefits: Yosemite's iconic image of Half Dome generated \$1.2 million for the Yosemite Conservancy in 2011, according to the group's annual report.

Another way to raise funds is to market a specific park need in a way that might be more attractive for donors. For example, the Glacier National Park Conservancy's Trees of Remembrance program assists the park in its reforestation efforts. For a \$60 donation, the Conservancy sends the recipient a certificate that explains who purchased the tree for them and in what section of the national park the tree was planted. When ten or more trees are purchased, the Conservancy can arrange for a special ceremony in honor of the person who is memorialized.

While potential donors might not be attracted by a general plea to fund restoration activities, this program recognizes that linking donations to something personal and meaningful to the donor enables the donor to reap personal as well as altruistic rewards. The Conservancy has also started an Adopt-A-Trail program, with virtual recognition of donors rather than trail signage, an example of a way in which new technology can replace traditional ways of donor recognition.

One of the more unique strategies—and one that has been controversial—involves the Mount Rushmore Society, which took out a \$17 million loan in order to build a parking garage at the entrance to the monument. Visitors are charged \$11 to park. While the substantial risk the Society took to fund the parking has returned good rewards for the group, the garage has also created some tension among visitors who have national park passes, such as the annual, senior, military, or disabled passes that allow free entry to NPS sites. These pass holders are unaware that gaining access to the memorial means parking in the garage, and that their passes do not apply, meaning in essence to them that they are being charged to enter the park. When the loan expires in 2016 and the garage is transferred to the national park, the society will reap the benefits of having its endowment funded.

Art shows and sales of park-themed artwork are a regular part of many friends' revenue plans. Proceeds from the Adopt-a-Lion program at Grand Canyon National Park provided \$30,000 in financial support in 2010, with the funds used for tracking collars on mountain lions and bighorn sheep. Donors receive a plush lion in exchange for their support of the park's wildlife program. A similar program is conducted by the Assateague Island Alliance, which allows donors to participate in a program to help out the island's famous wild horses. The Friends of Big Bend National Park sells bronze sculptures of wildlife found in the park, including jack rabbits and javelinas.

The takeaway is that friends groups must build a toolbox of revenue sources in order to expand and be successful. Those that limit themselves to membership-only programs spend a great deal of time in managing lists and reminding members to renew their dues, usually for small monetary rewards. Memberships can be useful if they are mined for additional gain, such as inviting members to donor events where they can be encouraged to give more. The most successful membership programs develop into planned giving campaigns with a potential for substantial rewards. Innovative fundraising programs, which may be more fun than fundraising in nature, sometimes involve high labor costs, but can involve a different set of volunteers than those who might participate in trail maintenance or other outdoor activities.

Projects and Services

While projects and expenditures at some national park units, such as the traditional use garden of heirloom vegetables planted by Friends of the Well at Montezuma Well National Monument, are quite modest, others, such as the capital improvements of the Yosemite Conservancy, are identified and expanded every year. In 2012, for instance, the Conservancy identified 27 projects and budgeted \$4.7 million to pay for six types of projects: cultural and historic preservation; habitat restoration; scientific research; trail repair and access; visitor services and education; and wildlife management. The projects ranged from \$8,500 for the Youth Photography Program at the lower end of the funding spectrum, to \$1 million for the inaugural restoration of Mariposa Grove. Friends groups may not consciously divide the types of projects they fund into the following categories, but this does help to show the expansiveness of their philanthropy.

Interpretation, Education, and Research

Some groups, especially those that started out as historical or museum associations, or those that merged with a park's cooperating association, emphasize their role in assisting the parks by providing funding or expertise for exhibits, reenactors, cultural demonstrations, community lectures, art exhibits, artifact procurement, and event coordination. For example, at Fort Smith National Historic Site in Arkansas, a 34-acre park unit consisting of historic buildings and grassy areas, the friends group Old Fort Militia raised funds to purchase a historically accurate replica of the 100-foot flagpole once used at the Fort. At Gettysburg National Military Park, \$300,000 from the Gettysburg Foundation was used to conserve more than 150 Civil War artifacts, including a torn, 1865 military telegram announcing General Robert E. Lee's surrender at Appomattox, Virginia, and a pocket diary from a New York resident recounting Abraham Lincoln's assassination. The friends group donation helped to pay for experts at the NPS's Harpers Ferry Center in West Virginia to conserve valuable items, as well as allowing other items that are currently on public display to be returned to more protected storage conditions.

Among the types of educational and interpretive services and materials friends groups provide are wand rentals for audio tours, library acquisitions, and exhibit cases for park curatorial items. The Friends of Peirce Mill, with less than 100 members who pay dues, exemplifies what even a small group can provide. The organization's primary goal since it was formed in 1996 is the restoration of the mill to operating condition after

it ceased working in 1993 when the wooden machinery failed. Prior to that time, Peirce Mill served as one of eight water mills along Rock Creek in the District of Columbia, and the core of an estate of about 2,000 acres founded by Quaker emigrants. The mill was built in the 1820s by Isaac Peirce, but the property was condemned in 1892, just after Congress established Rock Creek Park. Between 1904 and 1935, concessioners operated the site as a tearoom. In 1935, the mill was restored as a Works Progress Administration project and its three pairs of millstones, each weighing about 2,400 pounds, continued to supply to government cafeterias into the 1940s. It closed again in 1958.

Additional restoration began in 1967, and the mill was reopened to visitors in the 1970s; wheat flour and corn meal could be purchased at the site in the 1980s. Damage to the gears led to the closure of the mill again in April 1993, and a lack of federal funds ended any likelihood that the government would repair and restore the site.³⁷ Engineering surveys showed a need to replace supporting beams and columns, repair or replace the water wheel and wooden gears, and strengthen the milling machinery. Estimates for the restoration portion of the project, along with the development of new educational materials and programs, exceed \$3 million.

The small group of enthusiasts was successful in obtaining funding under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, whose stimulus dollars have paid for projects across the country. Two foundations provided in excess of \$350,000, the Government of the District of Columbia added \$100,000, and several other smaller grants and \$41,000 from the Park Service made the project a reality. The friends group retained a specialized contractor to excavate a pit for new recirculating pumps; new beams were installed and heating ducts added. Additional site work to improve drainage and the building of bio-retention ponds to filter the water from a slope above the mill was initiated, along with removal of an old parking lot. Once the grist mill is restored and operable, the Friends of Peirce Mill plans to cover a portion of the site's operating costs to maintain machinery, supplying corn and wheat for grinding, and paying utility costs, as well as to develop educational materials in concert with the NPS. The group also expects to hire a full-time miller and pay for the services of an NPS ranger. Friends group members and volunteers trained by the Park Service serve as docents at the site. Without the friends group, it is unlikely that the Park Service would have chosen, or been able to fund, a project of this magnitude.

Friends groups also raise funds for research projects, many of them involving wildlife. The Grand Canyon Association has assisted with

projects involving bighorn sheep at Grand Canyon, and the Yosemite Conservancy funds several researchers monitoring bears and studying songbirds. FVINP provides major assistance for the restoration of archaeological sites on the island of St. John, projects NPS staff say would not have been possible without the group's help. In some parks, the friends group also serves as a conduit for funding and contracting with researchers on projects that otherwise would have to go through the difficult task of gaining approval from the federal Office of Management and Budget (OMB). Researchers admit that sometimes friends group funding might appear to circumvent federal oversight, but they also point to the fact that getting OMB approval is an onerous task, one in which projects might be stuck in the bureaucratic pipeline for years.

Due to the emphasis on youth as future park stewards, friends groups are increasingly focusing on ways to integrate schools, educators, and students into the national parks. These programs range from week-long immersion programs for underserved Arizona youth at Grand Canyon National Park to the fellowships given annually by the Friends of the Longfellow House to doctoral students who travel to Cambridge, Massachusetts, to research documents. As the survey data show, youth programs and education has become an increasingly important program of work.

Special Events and Activities

Innovative friends groups have sometimes used the setting of a park unit to increase their visibility and to market the park beyond traditional audiences. One of those organizations, the Mount Rushmore Society, held a naturalization ceremony in 2010 in which 100 people became new citizens at the historic site, an event that could easily be replicated by almost any park. In 2009, the Society held a forum on Native American tribal courts and another on energy independence. The Grand Canyon Association sponsors a commentary by a local anthropologist on public radio, and the Friends of Arches and Canyonlands Parks works with local civic leaders to help them develop policies to protect southern Utah's dark skies through outdoor lighting policies.

Friends groups also assist the NPS in developing projects that build on other partners' resources. For instance, the Shenandoah National Park Trust worked as part of a planning committee for the seventy-fifth anniversary of Virginia's Shenandoah National Park, joining a wide range of park partners including the park's cooperating association, the Potomac Appalachian Trail Club (PATC), the concessioner Aramark, and city and country representatives. The events were too large for any

one entity to have planned the celebration on its own, and bringing the various stakeholders together enhanced goodwill for all involved. The PATC, for instance, helped manage parking for events, freeing up park staff members for other duties and enhancing its own visibility.

Equipment and Supplies

Because each national park unit is unique in what it needs to operate, the types of items a friends group provides vary and are targeted to each park's specific needs. Commonly requested items are trees to enhance landscaping, American flags, interpretative signs and waysides, and audiovisual equipment. Other expenses covered by friends groups have included a new ambulance, folding chairs, propane heaters, rugs, and a grill for park potlucks. Several friends groups have paid for a film to be made about the park, an expense seldom covered by the Park Service. The Grand Canyon Association has purchased and installed dark sky compliant lighting and tracking equipment for the park's condor program, while the Yellowstone Park Foundation approved a \$65,000 expenditure in 2012 for new horses, mules, and related equipment.

Volunteers

Almost every park unit depends on volunteers, whether they be members of a friends group, corporations whose employees turn out for National Public Lands Day or Make a Difference Day, participants in the official NPS Volunteers-in-Parks program, or simply park supporters who decide to show up for a service activity. They supplement, but say they do not replace, regular NPS staff members, in a variety of tasks from serving as reenactors at military battlefields to answering questions at kiosks and visitor centers. Many of the litter and trail cleanup events at national parks are organized and publicized by friends groups. One of the unique partnerships is with the Appalachian Trail Conservancy (ATC); the group has an agreement with the NPS not only to maintain the 2,184 miles of trails, but also to provide interpretation along the trail. It is tasked with providing assistance in every area except law enforcement through 31 "maintaining clubs" that maintain segments of the Appalachian Trail. The group does not run any concessions, and it often works with other federal agencies, such as the USDA Forest Service, to do service projects related to the trail. Its 6,000 volunteers produce over 250,000 volunteer hours a year, which the group says is equal to 350–400 employees or about \$15 million worth of donated labor to the Park Service. The ATC goes far beyond the kind of volunteer services most friends groups provide, issuing grants for trail work, providing training to clubs, and

handling federal environmental impact assessments. With only nine NPS employees assigned to the Appalachian Trail, the ATC volunteers clearly outnumber their federal colleagues.

Sometimes the friends group works alongside larger volunteer efforts. At Pea Ridge National Military Park in Arkansas, the park started building 17 miles of worm rail fencing in 2002 to mark the sites of skirmishes at the battlefield, a project that cost \$1 million and was completed in 2008. The project would have taken much longer, however, were it not for the National Parks America Tour sponsored by Unilever, which brings volunteers to parks, often for several years in a row, to work on a major project.

Advocacy

There are differences of opinion on what groups can do in their support for a national park. This became an issue when the NPS attempted to use a template friends agreement that prohibited friends groups from talking to the media or members of Congress without first getting the approval of the Washington Office. Despite what might appear to be efforts to control what partners do or say, some have contacted their congressional delegation when an issue that affects their park arises. Some friends groups, recognizing the limitations that their legal agreements and the IRS place on their activities, have separated out their advocacy functions from the more philanthropic aspects of their work. Other groups ask members and staff to support their park by writing letters to Congress, providing testimony, or working on policy issues. For instance, at Acadia National Park, the Friends of Acadia Advocacy Network is not a separate nonprofit group, but a subset of the friends group with a different name. The friends group staff sends network members e-mail updates on issues that affect the park. Alerts have included opportunities to submit comments to members of Congress and the state legislatures on guns in national parks, funding of the federal Land and Water Conservation Fund, and proposed changes in Maine's environmental laws.³⁸

The Big and Small of It: From Rich and Thriving to No Longer Friends

As the overview of friends groups shows, friends come in all shapes and sizes, with no two organizations alike. They vary in how they raise money to what they provide for the parks. The following snapshots explore this theme further, examining in more detail variances in group resources, capabilities, situations faced, and relationships

with park superintendents and staff. For this purpose, the profiles divide groups into a somewhat arbitrary, but yet reasonable, division of six sub-groups: Rich and Thriving, Middle of the Roaders, On Life Support, Outliers, Almost Friends, and No Longer Friends.

Rich and Thriving: Friends of Acadia and Friends of Virgin Islands National Park

The Rich and Thriving sub-group includes friends groups with a solid financial basis, a track record of financial and volunteer support for a national park, a growing or stable membership and donor base, strong leadership and staff, and a workplan that emphasizes growth.

One example of a thriving friends group started with the first national park east of the Mississippi River, discovered and named by Samuel de Champlain in 1604. Before it was designated as Sieur de Monts National Monument by President Woodrow Wilson in 1916, Acadia consisted of land on Mt. Desert Island, Maine, that was held by a nonprofit holding trust, the Hancock County Trustees of Public Reservations. As noted in chapter 2, lands in the Trust had been donated by wealthy landholders, and in 1913, one of the leaders, Charles B. Dorr, went to Washington, DC to offer 5,000 acres to the federal government to form the monument. Additional land was donated by John D. Rockefeller in 1919, and the site became Lafayette National Park, with Dorr as its first superintendent. The name was changed to Acadia in 1929.³⁹

The park now consists of 45,000 acres, 44 miles of historic carriage roads, the Wild Gardens of Acadia, and a 130-mile footpath system. Friends of Acadia, formed in 1986, is located in Bar Harbor, Maine. The group notes on its website that it adds “a margin of excellence to park and island protection beyond what the government can do.” Like most traditional groups, Friends of Acadia is a membership-based organization comprised primarily of volunteers seeking to protect the area’s beauty and cultural resources. In 2012, the group had about 3,600 members, and a paid staff of ten, with more than 140 seasonal staff.

Support for Acadia National Park began with its earliest donors—families like the Rockefellers, Elliots, and Kennedys—with a history of philanthropy, later enhanced with corporate supporters. Within its first 20 years as a nonprofit organization, the group raised \$3.4 million in endowments; from 1999 to 2005, Friends of Acadia raised \$13 million to rehabilitate the 130-mile trail system, making Acadia the first national park with an endowed trail system. Companies like

L.L. Bean have also supported the group, awarding it \$2.25 million to support and expand the island's propane-powered bus system.

With an operating budget of \$2.9 million, Friends of Acadia's 2011 annual report showed \$19.7 million in assets, \$18.3 million of which were investments and endowment monies, against \$209,154 in liabilities.⁴⁰ Well-funded, thriving groups are different from most traditional friends groups because they have the resources to engage in major capital campaigns that fund activities such as building a visitor center or purchasing land that can be donated to the Park Service. In 2005, Friends of Acadia entered into agreement with the Maine Coast Heritage Trust to establish a fund whose proceeds could be directed to acquire land adjacent to or within the boundaries of the park. Since then, many acres of private inholdings have been purchased, or conservation easements signed, allowing Acadia National Park to expand far beyond the initial 5,000 acres offered to the federal government.

While Acadia had the advantage of a long history of park philanthropy that served as the platform for its friends group, another Rich and Thriving group, FVINP, did not. But as is the case with Acadia, the friends group has taken advantage of several factors, including a large donor base and major philanthropic gifts, to become a successful, resource-rich nonprofit organization.

The Virgin Islands' history is believed to have started 3,000 years ago with hunter-gatherer people who relied on the sea. By 100 CE, the local Tainos people had a small population on the island of St. John, making pottery and relying on agriculture. Although Christopher Columbus is believed to have named the islands in 1493, Europeans did not establish settlements until the 1720s. Sugar cane and cotton became important exports for the Dutch settlers, who brought in slaves from West Africa to work the fields. After a slave revolt in 1733, the population of the island decreased, and cattle and rum replaced the sugar cane as exports through the 1900s. The United States purchased what was then called the Danish West Indies from Denmark in 1917 for \$25 million. By the 1930s, the tourist industry exploded and, in 1936, the NPS conducted an official appraisal of the island of St. John as part of the process of national park designation. At the time, officials believed the island did not qualify for park status because decades of sugar cane cultivation had destroyed St. John's natural state, and there was no evidence that commercial development was forthcoming. After a second appraisal in 1939, the Park Service recommended that St. John be made into a national park, but the proposal languished with the start of World War II.⁴¹

The subsequent creation of Virgin Islands National Park, which covers about two-thirds of the island of St. John, is largely the result of the philanthropy of families like the Rockefellers, Wadsworths, and others who donated property to the NPS to create the park. Laurance Rockefeller and his wife Mary sailed to the islands in 1952, and wondered whether there could be “a modern alliance between commerce and conservation, whether man could, as his father (John D. Rockefeller, Jr.) had done at Acadia, still aesthetically improve upon nature’s views.”⁴² Rockefeller took advantage of the tourist boom and began purchasing over \$1 million in land options on the island, eventually acquiring more than 5,000 acres. Rockefeller built an exclusive resort hotel, the 500-acre estate at Caneel Bay, hoping to attract wealthy visitors to St. John.

Another family, Julius and Cleome Wadsworth, purchased Denis Bay, part of a former sugar plantation, in 1939, using the large estate as a vacation getaway. The Wadsworths donated a seven-acre parcel to the NPS in the 1950s with the deed of gift stating: “The grantors have for some years maintained Wadsworth’s Peace Hill as a place where the public is invited to enjoy great beauty and quiet. It is their wish that Wadsworth’s Peace Hill be perpetually dedicated as a place where people might meditate and find inner peace, in the hope that in some way this might contribute to world peace.”⁴³ President Dwight D. Eisenhower established Virgin Islands National Park in 1956, and in 1962 the park expanded as 5,650 acres of marine habitat was added. Nearby Virgin Islands Coral Reef National Monument was proclaimed in 2001; the unique park consists of 12,708 acres of federally owned submerged land.

Initially an all-white and all-volunteer group that started in the late 1980s to purchase benches and waysides for the park, the friends group was incorporated in 1988, hiring its first development director in 2000. By 2012, it had more than 3,000 members, two-thirds of whom live on the mainland or in foreign countries, with annual membership dues of \$30 to \$100. Many of the members are tourists who receive their membership as part of a stay at an eco-tourism campground. Members receive a newsletter, discounts at the Friends of the Park Store, and invitations to events. The FVINP has an office in the tourist heart of St. John, and staff members wear colorful shirts and flip flops rather than suits and ties. There are five paid staff members and an academic summer intern. Although the cooperating association Eastern National operates the official park bookstore in the visitor center, the FVINP operates the more extensive, well-staffed, and stylish Friends of the Park Store that competes in many ways with the Eastern National operation.

What, then, does this friends group do that is different from others? FVINP does not do any single activity better than others, but it does have a broad array of fundraising activities, multiple opportunities for volunteer participation, and a president who has been with the group since 2001. In advocating for the park, he makes an effort to build a close working and often social relationship with each superintendent, as well as with members of the territorial government and congressional representatives. These relationships have allowed the friends group to undertake projects that the nonprofit organization can do more quickly and often more cost effectively without getting bogged down in federal regulations and policies. For example, the FVINP was able to do the repair and expansion of a boardwalk within a week, hiring its own contractors and purchasing materials—another example of something that would have taken the Park Service months to accomplish.

FVINP's fundraising is not especially unique; there are the usual planned giving opportunities, an annual gala, and ways for wealthier supporters to sponsor a major project. As part of its membership benefit program, it has numerous affinity partners that offer member discounts for powerboat rentals, hotel rooms, sailing, and even beach wedding ceremonies. The group's activities differ from some friends groups because of its island location (they sponsor a beach-to-beach power swim) but like many others, they do trash pickups, offer summer youth camps, participate in Earth Day activities, and present seminars.

Since the initial donations of land were made to the NPS, the FVINP has worked with groups such as the Trust for Public Land to purchase additional acreage on the island to add to the park. In 2000, the two groups arranged for the transfer of about two acres of waterfront property, negotiating with the landowners to sell the land at less than fair market value, using \$1.25 million in federal monies from the Land and Water Conservation Fund and \$750,000 from the NPS. They are working to preserve the currently undeveloped areas within existing park boundaries, rather than areas that are ripe for commercial development.

The process of deciding what projects to raise money for is slightly different from other friends groups. Each fall, the superintendent submits a prioritized list of needs to the 13-member FVINP Board of Directors, and the friends group decides which projects it wants to prioritize for funding. In one instance, the superintendent explained the need to protect the island's coral from destruction from boats, and the friends group turned to one of its largest donors to fund the project. Sometimes, the friends group makes its own decisions on where its money should go, such as collaborative projects with school

districts. The friends group's priorities are environmental education, natural resource protection, and cultural preservation, which includes major archaeological projects. At any one time, the FVINP funds about 20 projects; it does not fund operational support or items used by the NPS for its everyday activities, such as a new boat motor.

But the wealthy donor base that makes up an estimated 70 percent of the \$700,000 to \$950,000 annual budget is largely from off-island supporters, a group that includes country singer Kenny Chesney. Another donor, financier Donald Sussman, gave more than \$600,000 to the group in the late 1990s to establish an archaeology program and to pay for 200 day-use moorings. The group's endowment was started in 1999 when another wealthy donor gave the friends group several acres of land on St. Thomas that was then sold for \$2 million—seed money that is beyond the experience of most other friends groups.

While it is thriving from the perspective of financial resources and capacity, not all is going well. There is some competition between the FVINP and the St. Thomas Historical Trust, which is not an official friends group but does have a memorandum of understanding with the NPS. The Trust, which was established in 1965 and headquartered on the island of St. Thomas, focuses on nearby Hassel Island, added to the Virgin Islands National Park in 1978. In addition to serving as defensive fortifications for the Danish and British military, Hassel Island once housed a leprosarium, a lime kiln, and a marine railway. The Trust has considerably less interaction with the Park Service than the friends group, due in part because the NPS has no funding for the island's restoration and the group has only about 200 members. Trips to Hassel Island from St. Thomas could, someday, become a major revenue source for whichever group is selected to manage them.

Another source of tension on St. John is the mere presence of the NPS and the friends group on the island. Some local islanders resent not only the federal government's presence there but especially the Rockefeller family, who local kids believe now owns the entire island of St. John. The animosity toward the Park Service and the FVINP goes so far that one person said "Sometimes I can't get served in a bar here because people know who I am and who I represent." One researcher found that many of the local Afro-Caribbean residents view the FVINP as asserting undue influence on the Park Service, facilitating activities, programs, and volunteer opportunities that its members and donors prefer, rather than those of interest to the native population. "A few of the most skeptical argue that the group is a mouthpiece for the real estate industry."⁴⁴ This animosity has created problems for the Park Service, but the bottom line is, as another NPS staff member

noted, “Without the FVINP’s financial assistance, I would not be able to set up the kinds of projects I can do now.”

***Middle of the Roaders: Washington’s National Park Fund
and Friends of the Apostle Islands National Lakeshore***

Somewhere in between the Rich and Thriving and the groups On Life Support are the friends groups that carry on despite changes in organization, changes in leadership, changes in mission, changes in superintendents, or changes in style. This subset of Middle of the Roaders makes up the majority of the official NPS friends groups, although there is no specific dollar threshold that sets them apart from others, only that they go about their work every day with perhaps less media attention or publicity for their efforts.

Among this group is Washington’s National Park Fund, founded in 1993 to support the state’s three national parks: Mount Rainier, North Cascades, and Olympic. Established in 1899, Mount Rainier National Park includes the 14,410 foot volcanic peak for which it is named and more than 200,000 acres of wilderness. The North Cascades National Park Service Complex, established in 1968, comprises three units (North Cascades National Park, and Ross Lake and Lake Chelan National Recreation Areas) about three hours from Seattle. Over 93 percent of the park complex is managed as the Stephen T. Mather Wilderness, established by Congress in 1988. Olympic National Park is arguably the oldest of the three, designated the Olympic Forest Reserve by President Grover Cleveland in 1897. In 1909, President Theodore Roosevelt designated much of the reserve as Mount Olympus National Monument, and in 1938, President Franklin Roosevelt proclaimed it a national park. In 1953, additional coastline was added to the park, which now preserves 73 miles of Pacific Coast. Now, all three parks are almost entirely made up of lands designated as wilderness.

With the tagline, “Connecting People Who Care to Washington’s National Parks,” the friends group is traditional in its approach to philanthropy, relying on individual and corporate donations, grants from foundations, and special events, as well as proceeds from Washington’s national park license plates. In 2004, the organization gave up its non-profit status to become part of the NPF in a move that ended unsuccessfully two years later. Changes in leadership brought the group into line with park priorities so that park projects are mutually agreed upon after bubbling up from the NPS staff and presented to the Fund by each superintendent. Donations pay for two full time staff members, and eventually, the group hopes to move its operations from Fircrest

(near Tacoma), Washington, to Seattle, which has a wealthier donor base to draw from.

The friends group splits its donations up almost equally among the three parks. In 2010–2011, Mount Rainier received \$136,500 for six projects including meadow restoration, a climate change study, and restoration of a volunteer campground; Olympic National Park received \$168,478 for its six projects, which included spring surveys of the Roosevelt Elk, a marmot study, and Elwha River restoration; and North Cascades received \$128,974 for six projects, including programs to connect tribal youth to the North Cascades, studies of the effects of climate change on pika, and trail and campsite improvements. In 2012, the Fund's grants included 9 projects at Mount Rainier, five at North Cascades, and eight at Olympic National Park, with individual grants ranging from \$1,500 to \$50,000. The latter amount covered the second year of a five-year volunteer program at Mount Rainier, and an additional \$50,000 went toward the second year of a winter access road at Hurricane Ridge in Olympic National Park. Dealing with three large national parks presents challenges for a single friends group, including the usual revolving door of superintendents. For many friends groups like the Fund, the basic strategy is just to keep things going while interim superintendents come and go, preparing for the next in line and developing a new set of priorities and relationships. In 2012, the Fund faced a different type of challenge when ranger Margaret Anderson was fatally shot by a gunman at Mount Rainier. The Fund began receiving inquiries about memorial gifts and donations in honor of the ranger. A delicate balance had to be maintained because donations could not be made directly to the NPS, and because separate funds to benefit the ranger's children were also set up at a local bank and at the NPF. In another instance, the wealthy family of a hiker killed at North Cascades wanted to do something in his memory, and a park staffer told the parents "We could use a coffee pot." Eventually, they gave a \$20,000 gift to the Fund, but the situation was a reminder that most NPS staff are not skilled fundraisers, and why parks are dependent on friends groups who have the know-how to make donor requests match donor resources.

Like some other Middle of the Roaders, the Fund has not survived without controversy. In the past, the organization has been criticized because its donation level has been perceived as not commensurate with its potential. It has also been criticized because the Fund only focuses on the three park units in the state designated as national parks, not other designations. But the hiring of a new executive director who

is seeking to expand the group's potential and donor base is seen by observers as a positive shift from its past.

Of a more recent vintage but with similar opportunities and challenges, Friends of the Apostle Islands National Lakeshore formed in 2002 as a result of the mentoring of an aide to former Wisconsin Senator Gaylord Nelson. Believed to have been created due to glacial action that formed a depression that became Lake Superior, the islands, composed of red sandstone, resulted from erosion. Indian tribes may have visited the area in the fourteenth century; French explorers seeking a new route to the East Indies also made their way to the region. The name Apostle Islands was given by Jesuit missionaries.

The national lakeshore actually consists of 21 islands and 69,372 acres of shoreline on the northern tip of Wisconsin. Several of the islands are home to historic lighthouses, and many are also used for camping and boating. The area became a part of the Park Service in 1970 under the sponsorship of Nelson, who supported protection of the lakeshore. The twenty-first island—Long Island—was added to the national lakeshore in 1986, and in 2004, 80 percent of the site was designated the Gaylord Nelson Wilderness.

Nelson's aide had been interested in the area's cultural history, and helped the eight individuals who became the board of directors form the friends group in 2002. The organization's primary focus is on supporting park visitation, which it interprets as assisting the Park Service with projects and activities that will help visitors enjoy their trip to the area. In the past, that has meant raising money for a park ranger and a Student Conservation Association intern; printing a newsletter out of its base in Bayfield, Wisconsin, three times a year; sponsoring a lecture series; and funding the match needed to purchase bear boxes. One of the park's needs was for a real-time wave monitoring system for the Mainland Sea Caves. The group purchased the system to give kayakers additional information before they launch into Lake Superior, and plans to fund a second phase to assist University of Wisconsin—Madison researchers working at a different site. In its first ten years, the group raised over \$200,000. The friends group also provides volunteers to the Park Service, helps deliver park brochures to local motels, and attends events where it sets up an information table. Perhaps most interesting in terms of donor recognition is the fact that the friends group purchases toilet paper for the park's out-houses; a sign says that it has paid for the amenity.

One of the largest projects involves the restoration of the Raspberry Island Boathouse, and although the group ended up raising \$52,000 for the project, that amount was considerably more money than

either it or the Park Service had anticipated the project would cost. Restoration is expected to begin sometime in 2013. As a result of the lesson learned through the boathouse project, the board decided in 2012 to shift its attention to educational activities for children, who are viewed as the future park stewards. The group has partnered with Northland College to bring fifth and sixth graders from throughout Wisconsin to Stockton Island for a three-day, two-night stay. The NPS provides interpretive services for the program, in which students learn more about the Ojibwe culture and the area's resources.

The Friends of the Apostle Islands started out, as most friends groups do, as a membership organization with different levels of membership dues to join. But as the organization grew, it found that the tasks of recruiting members, sending out renewal notices, keeping their membership contact list updated, and other administrative tasks related to membership became too time consuming and cumbersome. The board decided instead to eliminate memberships and become a strictly donor-based group. There is a mailing list of about 600 people that is used for soliciting donations and mailing invitations to group events, including the once-a-year annual meeting. In 2011, the annual meeting consisted of a boat cruise to one of the islands, a boxed dinner, and a short business meeting on the dock. There are no paid staff, only volunteers who take on specific tasks such as marketing or finances.

One of the factors that differentiate this friends group from other Middle of the Roaders is that in 2008, a wealthy donor set up a \$100,000 endowment in honor of the Senate aide who had assisted the group in becoming established. The endowment's net earnings of about \$4,000 to \$5,000 a year are funneled from the Duluth Superior Area Community Foundation directly to the friends group. The group has also found a unique fundraising strategy that has netted another \$50,000 for the coffers. In 2009, its website began selling photographs of the Milky Way as it appears over the islands' lighthouses.

Fundraising is made more complicated by the fact that there are 70 nonprofit organizations that operate in the same geographic area the friends group uses as its donor base, so there is a lot of competition for a few dollars. It has received only one small grant, and competes against a group with a similar name that may be confusing to some potential donors. Because of the proliferation of nonprofit groups in the region, many board members of the Friends of the Apostle Islands also sit on boards of other groups, finding themselves in competition with their own board. Few board members have grant writing experience or the time or expertise to go after other sources of external funding.

The challenges facing this group are generally the same as those facing other Middle of the Roaders. The membership and board members may share an interest, or even a passion, in supporting a park unit. But they are also volunteers with real jobs and real families placing demands on their time and resources. They give what they can to superintendents and Park Service staff who appreciate their efforts, but they may also feel as if what they do is never quite enough. They wish they could offer more, but there are limitations to what their region or population can afford, so they stick to tried-and-true fundraising methods, work as closely as they can with park leadership, and try hard not to succumb to burnout.

On Life Support: Friends of Tumacacori National Historical Park and Friends of Montezuma Well

While most of the publicity and interest in friends groups has gone to the majority of the nonprofit organizations—those that are Rich and Thriving or Middle of the Roaders—the smallest and least successful groups are also important in developing a portrait of park philanthropy. These groups' resources are not large enough to warrant paid staff, and they operate with a small group of core volunteers but few if any members. Groups designated as On Life Support are ones that easily could disappear without some type of life-saving intervention. Two of those groups, coincidentally located in Arizona, survive almost on a month-to-month basis.

Tumacacori National Historical Park, about 17 miles north of the international border between Arizona and Mexico, was established as a national monument by President Theodore Roosevelt in 1908. The park preserves three units established by Jesuit missionaries, led by Father Eusebio Francisco Kino, between 1691 and 1756: the Tumacacori Mission, which initially consisted of a ten-acre site; and the eight-acre Guevavi Mission and 22-acre Calabazas Mission, both of which were added to the park in 1990, when the park's designation was changed. In 2002, Congress authorized the addition of 310 acres to preserve the Tumacacori Mission as well as the riparian area and historic mission agricultural lands located along the adjacent Santa Cruz River. The park's visitor center was built in 1937, and includes a small bookstore operated by the Western National Parks Association. The site also houses a museum, patio garden, and elsewhere on the grounds, a historic orchard.

The initial nonprofit organization, Los Amigos de Tumacacori, formed in 1982 to provide financial support to the national monument

and to assist with the park's annual Fiesta de Tumacacori, an annual celebration of the cultures historically associated with the Santa Cruz Valley that includes a mariachi Mass at the Tumacacori Mission. After obtaining nonprofit status, a small committee of volunteers operated informally, selling dried chilies each year during the fiesta. When membership dropped off, the group became dormant until 1997, when supporters realized the fiesta needed financial assistance in order to continue, but after only a year, it lay dormant again. In 2003, volunteers revitalized their efforts to support the park, rewriting bylaws that had initially been written in the 1980s, and establishing a presence officially as the Friends of Tumacacori National Historical Park. It became an official Arizona corporation in 2005 and has, on average, about 90–100 members.

In 2004, the friends group was given a \$40,000 bequest from the estate of a Denver resident to establish a historic orchard on the Tumacacori Mission site after a fossilized peach pit was found in a decaying mud wall. The project was initiated in 2007 as a partnership between the Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum and Desert Survivors Nursery. The Kino Heritage Fruit Trees Project includes quince, pomegranate, and fig trees that are cared for by master gardener volunteers from the Tucson area. Friends of Tumacacori committed \$15,000 for interpretation at the site, including trails, signage, and a dedicated entrance to the orchard. The friends group also provides funding and volunteers for the annual fiesta event. Among the educational activities supported by the friends group is a classroom presentation on the historic meeting between Father Kino and the Tohono O'odham Indians in 1691, and transportation funding for students, teachers, and parents to visit the Mission as part of Junior Ranger Day. It has organized a juried amateur photography show that required considerable volunteer time but did not yield significant dollars, concerts, art auctions, and a booth at the fiesta. With funding from about two dozen donors, the friends group collected recipes from park staff and its members in 2012 for a Tumacacori cookbook that is available at the park's visitor center and several local businesses. From an initial \$1,500 in financial assistance to the park in 2005, the Friends of Tumacacori increased its support to \$25,000 in 2010.

Friends of Tumacacori is struggling for reasons that do not necessarily mirror other friends groups. Its members and supporters are primarily older, retired snowbirds—residents who live in the northern tier of states and Midwest and flock to the warm desert Southwest for the winter. Their investment in the group is seasonal, and once they leave, the organization's resources dry up, both in terms of donations

and volunteers. To accommodate the departure of many of its residents during the summer months, the friends group meets only from October through May. The Green Valley/Santa Cruz County area is geographically and politically distinct from the more heavily populated and wealthier Tucson community 45 miles to the north, and the group has had difficulty attracting not only members, but also board members willing to take on a leadership role. Most of the active members are already part of the NPS Volunteers-in-Parks program; others have little time or willingness to devote to the group. The friends group has a good relationship with the Park Service, but no contact with other friends groups or organizations within the community. Conflict between the two has been minimal, although the group's board of directors has sometimes focused on park operations, such as unilaterally deciding to buy flowers to plant in front of the visitor center. At times, there appears to be confusion about the role of the friends group, which has questioned or tried to influence the decisions of park management.

The group appears to lack both sufficient leadership and the skills needed by a nonprofit organization, from fundraising to capacity-building. The orchard project, for instance, was a major undertaking for the friends group, which was established without consideration of the costs of maintaining the trees, either by its own volunteers or NPS staff. The group's dollars for the orchard project are almost exhausted and the park will need to continue to find ways to maintain it. Although the friends group has considered applying for various grants to help support the park projects, it does not have anyone available who knows how to write grants, and it would have to hire someone to do it, as it did with the website designer. The group maintains a minimal website presence that lacks many of the features that larger friends groups have, with no listing of its board members, no information on its financial status, and no annual reports. This is not uncommon with small organizations, where a website gets created but is not updated or expanded once a web designer's initial efforts (and funding) are over. Despite overtures to the nearby Tohono O'odham nation and its casinos, the tribe has not responded to the friends group's efforts to bridge the gap with the Indian community. Should the Friends of Tumacacori fail to attract new members and board members, the group is in danger of becoming dormant once again. The park will continue to work with its other partners, but the visibility that the friends bring will be missed. "It's really a shame if there are not viable partners."

A few hundred miles to the north, Friends of the Well is another unofficial friends group that is hanging on by a mere thread, or a small

handful of loyal supporters. The well in this instance is Montezuma Well, a unique, natural sinkhole thought to have been created about 12 million years ago that was part of a gigantic Lake Verde. About 11,000 years ago, when underground streams dissolved the limestone sedimentation of the lake, a cavern collapsed creating the sinkhole. Every day since that time, over 1.5 million gallons of 74 degree water flows into the well, fed by underwater vents, and then flows out again through a 300-foot-long cave into a system of irrigation ditches created about 1,000 years ago by the Sinagua people of Arizona's Verde Valley. A pioneer family gained title to the area from 1888 to 1947, when it was added as a sub-unit of Montezuma Castle National Monument. It is considered a sacred place by several tribes, including the Apache, Hopi, and Yavapai people. It has also become a popular tourist attraction, not only because of the well itself, but because admission is free and the site includes several acres of mature trees and green grass that becomes an oasis in the desert for travelers and picnickers.

Friends of the Well was formed in 2006, primarily to oppose a developer who wanted to build a mini-mall near the site. The small group brought its concerns to county government and was successful in stopping the project. Members decided to stay together to protect the local aquifer, and continued to do presentations to local residents about the well. The group now has about 25 members and a mailing list of 100; its small budget paid for the filing for nonprofit status, a post office box and a website, and dues the group pays to be part of a regional organization. Although listed as a friends group on some lists, it does not have an official friends agreement. Its major project has been the development of a traditional-use garden adjacent to the picnic area where crops are grown and the seeds of heritage gourds, corn, and melons are harvested. The project is an attempt to recreate an ancient Sinagua garden, and the Yavapai-Apache nation has become involved, as has a local private school. In addition, the friends group has assisted the Park Service in planting nearly 2,000 native plants, along with riparian tree species and native grasses as part of an ongoing revegetation program. It plans to expand the pollinator garden, and has helped move fencing as part of the Martin Luther King Day of Service observances. Park staff has helped the friends group in these efforts, which include weed management and programs for Junior Rangers.

The group usually meets monthly for presentations on topics such as open space, watershed preservation, or the area's local history. In the past, a newsletter has announced these events and encouraged volunteers to participate in planting activities, and they have had some visibility within the community by staffing tables at the local wine and

pecan festival and giving away seeds from the garden at local Fourth of July events. In addition to its on-site work, the group has participated in the state's Adopt-A-Road roadside cleanup near Montezuma Well and given interpretive programs on request. As was the case at Tumacacori, Friends of the Well has a website in need of updating, and lacks the transparency of other groups by not posting information on its financial status or board of directors on the site. The news archives are rarely current, and it is difficult to determine the scope of the group's activities.

Why is this small group struggling? Montezuma Well is a poor step cousin of the better-known cliff dwellings at Montezuma Castle, 11 miles south, and nearby Tuzigoot National Monument, the site of a Sinagua pueblo. Montezuma Castle has a visitor center and bookstore operated by Western National, and considerably more signage directing visitors to the site. The 42-acre Tuzigoot is managed by the same superintendent as Montezuma Castle, and geographically closer to Phoenix, but neither one has a friends group. The two monuments were awarded grants as part of the NPF's Park Stewards program in 2012, which brings high school students to the parks one day per month throughout the year. But the official Park Service press release did not even mention Montezuma Well, the third party in the triangle of monuments. The parks' superintendent retired in 2012 after ten years in the area, and Friends of the Well remains dependent on a few diehard volunteers. Given the new NPS requirements outlined in the friends group agreement template discussed in chapter 3, Friends of the Well appears to lack the necessary organizational capacity to move from being an informal support group for the site. If the current superintendent chose to commit more resources to the development of a friends group serving one or more of the units (as happened when the superintendent of the three monuments in northern Arizona helped establish the Friends of the Monuments that now supports three units), there is a potential for a friends group to succeed. But under the existing structure, Friends of the Well is likely to continue to have a limited impact on this park.

***Outliers: Rock Creek Conservancy and Friends of
Glacier Bay National Park***

Included in the category of Outliers are groups that do not match the characteristics of Rich and Thriving groups or Middle of the Roaders, but which appear to be more successful in efforts to support a national park unit than those On Life Support. Some Outliers are new to park

philanthropy, and may eventually become a friend, while others operate under conditions unique to friends groups.

The Rock Creek Conservancy, located in Bethesda, Maryland, is one of the newer, wannabe, or unofficial friends groups, not listed in the NPS 2011 directory. Founded in 2005, the Conservancy started out as an environmental organization, funded by a grant from an individual who thought Rock Creek ought to have an organization to protect its resources. The group's members do volunteer projects without any formal agreement with the Park Service, and can mobilize as many as 2,000 volunteers for a single project, such as planting daffodils and wildflowers along the Rock Creek Parkway. Many of its efforts involve physical labor, such as organizing a bucket brigade to get fish over a dam, doing trash pickup along the 33 miles of the park's roadways, or projects specific to a single location. For projects involving large groups, an NPS staff person is usually on site to supervise volunteers. Several past projects have involved removing invasive species of plants such as garlic mustard, for which the group gets permits and training from the NPS, or the removal of English ivy from the park's trees. The group's website is extensive and up-to-date, including a listing of its staff and board of directors, and a link to its most recent IRS filing that indicates its organizational structure and finances. There are pages that include maps of the area, examples of news articles that mention the Conservancy's work, and perhaps unique among the groups studied, a separate section of the site written in Spanish. From that perspective, the Conservancy's operations are sophisticated and transparent, in the same league as some of the Rich and Thriving groups, except for the fact that it is not an official friends group.

Why hasn't this unofficial partner consummated its relationship with the Park Service by taking the needed steps to become a formal partner as a friends group? One reason deals with jurisdictional issues. Only a part of the Rock Creek area is managed by the NPS, and the Conservancy seeks to conduct projects throughout the entire, largely wooded area. Second, leaders who have spoken with other Washington-area friends groups say that they are aware of the hurdles, bureaucratic mostly, that official groups have faced. The Conservancy believes it can do much of what it seeks to do within Rock Creek with a handshake, rather than with a formal agreement or document that might limit its activities. Lastly, becoming a friend would mean moving away from its advocacy roots, and will be a controversial board decision. While the board is transitioning, and shifting more of its focus away from environmental advocacy, the Conservancy has begun a series of traditional and non-traditional fundraising events.

In October 2013, the group held an evening reception at the New Zealand Embassy, part of its efforts to not only expand its fundraising, but also to involve foreign embassies that abut Rock Creek Park in its stewardship. Rock Creek is adjacent to many wealthy neighborhoods with embassies and members of philanthropic families that could potentially provide support. In a more unique effort, the Conservancy used social media to get out the vote in a successful 2013 campaign that “won” \$100,000 in historic preservation funds for Meridian Hill Park and Dumbarton Oaks Park, two units within Rock Creek Park. The funds were part of a community-based initiative sponsored by the National Trust for Historic Preservation and American Express. The Conservancy’s leadership is hopeful but patient in moving forward, continuing its partnership with the National Park Service and other local organizations without the need for a formalized alliance.

Another Outlier, Friends of Glacier Bay, Alaska, is unique for more reasons than the fact that it is located so far from a major economic center. Unlike the Rock Creek Conservancy, the Friends of Glacier Bay does appear on the 2011 Friends Group Directory. Yet the organization does not conduct any fundraising activities, sometimes advocates against the NPS when it comes to management plans for the national park, does not recruit members, sometimes misses its annual meeting, and works with a park with more than sufficient operational funds. As one leader notes, “It’s different up here.”

Glacier Bay started as a national monument, becoming a national park in 1980 in the waning days of the administration of President Jimmy Carter. The Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act of 1980 vastly expanded the national park system’s lands, and coincided with the May 1980 *State of the Parks* report to Congress by the NPS. The report, responding to congressional requests, cited specific threats endangering the resources of individual parks and the sources of those threats (internal or external to park boundaries), including, for example, pollution, visitor activities, exotic species, industrial development, and other activities having the potential to cause significant damage to park resources, values, or experiences.⁴⁵

Friends of Glacier Bay was established in 1979 by former and current National Park employees, coincidentally, 100 years after conservationist and traveler John Muir had been to Glacier Bay. The group formed because there was agreement among participants that there were projects the NPS needed to do, but for which there was insufficient staff. One of those projects was an ecological shoreline assessment of the entire area to determine the potential impacts of cruise ship traffic, and what would happen if there was an oil tanker spill. The group is

adamant about protecting the ecological intactness of the area, and defending opportunities for solitude. Another activity the group has sponsored is a science symposium, now held about every five years. Originally focused on glacial recession and primary plant succession, the symposia now focus more on marine issues or the native Huna people. The focus on science is not accidental, because, as one member said, “scientists made this place.” A more recent project involves a “soundscape” that partners the friends group and a researcher, which will provide a digital library of sounds within Glacier Bay.

Friends of Glacier Bay is most unique, though, because the group has no need to do any fundraising. Glacier Bay National Park receives a substantial income from a head tax of \$8 to \$10 charged to each cruise ship passenger entering the bay. Ships enter the bay from mid-May to mid-September, and each ship carries 900 to 2,600 passengers. Some of the money goes to the NPS, with the remainder to the Huna Indian Association and corporate giant Aramark, which serves as the joint concessioner. Unlike other friends groups, the Friends of Glacier Bay does not have a website and does not recruit members; it estimates that there are 100 or so members, some of whom are life members. There is a Facebook page with only a few postings and few followers, and virtually nothing about the group itself is available online. Like other nonprofit organizations with limited revenues, it does not need to file detailed IRS statements. The active leadership communicates electronically, and has little communication with the Washington Office of the NPS or even the Alaska regional office.

Direct advocacy, a sensitive subject for many friends groups and contrary to NPS policy, does not appear to be a stumbling block for the Friends of Glacier Bay. Although the group tries to support the NPS, it also advocates against a park recommendation when it feels it is in the best interests of the park to do so. In 2012, the friends group actively opposed a policy that would allow sport charter fishing during the summer, and wrote a position paper on the topic. Leaders felt that in addition to the potential ecological damage the fishing would cause, sport fishing would also damage the aesthetic values of the park if cruise ship guests would pull up to the dock to see fishers filleting fish in front of them. In other cases, the group has participated in a letter writing campaign, taken positions on halibut fishing and its impact on the ecosystem, and strategized with the NPS about oil spill preparedness or a possible cruise ship accident similar to the July 2012 *Costa Concordia* grounding off the coast of Italy. Sometimes, the friends group will work with another environmental organization, or groups such as the Southeast Alaska Conservation Council (SEACC); some of

the group's board members are also active with SEACC. The friends also work with the Denali Citizens Council but have very little contact with national organizations such as the NPF or other friends groups. "We often go months without meetings. But when issues do arise, we lift our sleepy heads and make noise."

It is difficult to determine if Friends of Glacier Bay operates differently than other friends groups because of its distance from Washington, DC, or because the group does "not stress over money." It definitely is, however, an Outlier when it comes to the more traditional model of nonprofit friends groups.

Almost Friends: Fort Monroe National Monument and Wind Cave National Park

Not every park unit has a friends group, and an argument could be made that not everyone needs one. NPS Director Jon Jarvis, however, has publicly indicated that he considers partnership skills to be essential, and a successful partnership track record is "at the top of [his] list" in selecting park superintendents. "NPS has shifted from a position of trying to do everything ourselves to one of empowering others through partnerships to help us do more."⁴⁶ This philosophy is leading superintendents to work toward establishing a friends group at parks without one, creating situations where there are Almost Friends.

Two park units exemplify superintendent efforts to get a friends group started, and illustrate the process and timeframe for doing so. The newly appointed superintendent of Fort Monroe National Monument, named after President Barack Obama established the new park unit in November 2011, took an initial wait-and-see attitude toward friends groups. Having worked with the Park Service for more than 20 years, the superintendent had experienced what happens when a park rushes in to form a group while serving as a ranger at Mojave National Preserve in California. The superintendent did not feel under any pressure to form a friends group right away at Fort Monroe, wanting to take advantage of all the training and resources available to a superintendent new to the job and to have time to explore alternatives.

Fort Monroe posed several challenges for the superintendent, including the fact that there were many different stakeholders, any of which might someday form the core for a NPS friends group. The Fort Monroe Authority was established as a political subdivision of the Virginia Commonwealth as part of the federal government's Base Realignment and Closure Commission, with the power "to oversee

the preservation, conservation, protection, and maintenance of the Commonwealth's real property interests at Fort Monroe and the renewal of Fort Monroe as a vibrant and thriving community."⁴⁷ The closing of the former Army base was controversial for many reasons, but primarily because some supporters felt that only about half of the site had been included in the national monument. Another organization, Citizens for a Fort Monroe National Park (CFMNP), started in 2006, had served as the primary group advocating for park creation, and clearly identified itself in this role. One leader noted that it was continuing to try to save from development about 80 acres of prime real estate that separated the two parts of the monument. As a result, it did not yet see itself as a friends support group because of its continued advocacy of having the acreage used as green space. One of CFMNP's cofounders left the group and started his own website, FortMonroeNationalPark.org, with the goal of creating "a self-sustaining, revenue-generating, taxpayer-minimally-burdening, innovatively structured Grand Public Place built on the foundation of a substantial national park."⁴⁸ Confusingly, the breakaway group continued to use the former website and URL of CFMNP, noting that CFMNP is "a self-appointed, no-public-membership grassroots committee of about a dozen."⁴⁹ CFMNP now uses a different web address, FortMonroeCitizens.org.

In addition, there is a Fort Monroe National Park Foundation, formed in June 2007 by the leaders of CFMNP as a conduit for donations (it is identified as "a separate nonprofit, educational foundation dedicated to educating the public and promoting better understanding nationally, regionally and locally of the importance and potential of the 565 acres constituting Fort Monroe." The Fort Monroe Authority also has a similarly named, but different entity, the Fort Monroe Foundation, that sponsors summer concerts and reviews plans for renovating and converting buildings at the site. And there is also a Casemate Museum Foundation, which began in 1983. Its primary role has been to protect some of the Fort's historical artifacts and to lead tours of the Casemate Museum, home of the US Army's Coast Artillery collection. The Army uses the Foundation to run its gift shop as an entity similar to what a cooperating association might be to the Park Service. The monument's superintendent could work with all or some of these groups to form a new friends group, or look to an entirely different organizational model and start from scratch.

Starting an official NPS friends group is not for the timid, or for those who are in a hurry. At Wind Cave National Park in South Dakota, a change in superintendents meant a change in support for

a friends group. In early 2011, the park superintendent began hand-picking a core group of community leaders to work with, seeking an organization that would advocate on behalf of the park. The superintendent recognized the value of having a partner that could be used to match NPS grants and to fundraise. Having seen the success of a friends group while posted at Big Bend National Park, the superintendent picked individuals at Wind Cave who would support new exhibits in the visitor center, an updated park film that visitors would enjoy, and equipment and purchases the park could not make. Recognizing the financial benefits that would accrue, the superintendent also noted that a friends group could help tell the NPS story and that the park's budget would be based, in part, on whether partnerships were involved.

By the summer of 2011, the new Friends of Wind Cave National Park had become incorporated as a nonprofit organization by the State of South Dakota, achieving federal nonprofit status in 2012. On National Public Lands Day in 2011, the newly formed group replanted trees and helped the superintendent unveil a bronze plaque honoring Stephen Mather; the plaque had been in storage since 1979. The group's website sought members and donations through its post office box, and listed eight "projects and dreams" that included studying the feasibility of a transportation system to transport visitors to the park, volunteering for the cleanup of newly acquired historic ranch lands and at park events, and providing "a voice in the public arena to underscore the value of Wind Cave National Park to the local community, the region, the nation and to future generations."⁵⁰ But without a signed friends agreement from the NPS, the group's name does not appear on the park's website, decreasing its visibility and subsequently, its ability to grow.

No Longer Friends: Friends of the Everglades and Friends of Indiana Dunes

Breaking up is hard to do, as the song goes, but the NPS has defriended some groups when circumstances demanded it do so. Two examples, representing different types of park units in different parts of the country, illustrate what can go wrong when an organization's purpose or operations differ from what the Park Service needs or wants, or when a friends group agreement is not working. In most cases, something else (such as a new friends group) steps in to fill the vacuum.

Friends of the Everglades was founded in 1969 by 79-year-old Marjory Stoneman Douglas, author of the best-selling book, *The*

Everglades: River of Grass, who had supported the creation of the Park years before it opened in 1947. She was a vocal critic of the US Army Corps of Engineers' program that began in the 1950s to build a major system of canals and levees to protect agricultural and developed land from seasonal flooding. Efforts to undo what the Corps has done are now known as the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan. After Douglas stepped down from the group, the friends group leaders built the organization's membership to nearly 4,000, operated with a budget of around \$100,000, and opened an office in Miami with two part-time employees in 1994. But by 2009, when the group's president resigned, membership was down to about 500, revenues had dropped, and the Miami office closed, with only one part-time clerk remaining.⁵¹ An interim president stepped in, board members began working at home, and the group continued to hold annual meetings and soliciting donations to support its projects, but not as an NPS partner. Instead, the Friends of the Everglades continued its advocacy role, fighting plans that would allow off-road vehicles in the Everglades and supporting youth outreach programs.

Enter the South Florida National Parks Trust, which had been established in 2002. The Trust receives funding from the traditional sources of individuals, businesses, and foundations. It uses those funds for five programmatic areas: environmental education, resource protection, visitor services, volunteer activities, and community outreach. Its website notes that since its inception, more than three dozen projects representing an investment of more than \$3 million have been funded.⁵²

Now listed on the NPS website for Everglades National Park as its primary fundraising partner, the Trust supports not only the Everglades but also Biscayne National Park, Dry Tortugas National Park, and Big Cypress National Park (added in September 2006). A website tab allows visitors to make a donation, and there is a list of park benefactors (contributions of \$100,000 or more), patrons (\$25,000), park stewards (\$10,000), and supporters (\$5,000). In the case of Everglades National Park, in April 2010, the Trust established a separate stewardship fund along with the Park Service and the National Parks Conservation Association. The Florida Bay Stewardship Fund will provide monies for resource protection and boater education, including the installation of 81 signs in park waters designed to protect wildlife habitat. It has also paid for two seasonal rangers to patrol Florida Bay.⁵³

Another case where a park partnership ended involved Friends of Indiana Dunes, Inc. The group had a long association with the

national lakeshore, one of the largest urban parks in the United States. Friends of Indiana Dunes had been incorporated in 1986 to specifically assist with historical, educational, scientific, and interpretive activities at Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore. The group had a General Agreement and an associated Fundraising Agreement with the Park Service that expired May 19, 2011, and in a letter to the group's chair dated one day before the expiration was to take place, the superintendent told Friends of Indiana Dunes the agreements would not be renewed. The NPS had repeatedly asked the group to develop a system "to assure that funds be tracked in a manner consistent with federal regulations." Part of the problem stemmed from the fact that the organization, which had initially developed a relationship with the National Park Service in 1982, supported two different entities: the national lakeshore and Indiana Dunes State Park. The two sites had differing governing laws and regulations, and in the superintendent's letter to the group's president, the NPS noted that funds raised for the NPS must be tracked separately from funds raised on behalf of the state park. The superintendent noted that since the friends group had failed to develop an annual fundraising plan, had failed to develop a financial management plan for its administrative expenses and donated funds, and had maintained an endowment without defining its purpose or submitting a professionally developed investment policy, the NPS was allowing its agreement with the group to expire.

Despite the ongoing legal challenges between the Park Service and its former friends group, only a year elapsed before a new "friend" appeared: the newly formed Dunes National Park Association. Although the group's nonprofit status was pending, and it was not yet listed on the NPS website as an official friends group, someone unfamiliar with the dispute would not have noticed any difference. The new group touted its sponsorship of the seventh annual Duneland Celebration, "Party in the Park" even though 2012 was the first year it had been involved. The Association said its three initial projects would include the purchase of 500 backpacks for children participating in the new Nature in My Neighborhood program; the purchase of equipment to create a distance learning program in the park; and the purchase and installation of signs depicting the Century of Progress Historic Homes District within the park. In this case, the new friends group stepped in almost immediately after the de-friending took place, picking up the pieces of the former group's activities along with developing its own. De-friending is not common among park partners, but it does happen, one of the many challenges the NPS faces in building support and finding supporters.

Helping Friends

Friends groups have become increasingly important to the NPS in an era of declining resources, bringing both financial and human resources to support units of all sizes. As one former friends group director put it, “The only problem with Friends Groups in the National Park System is that there aren’t enough of them.”⁵⁴ To that end, the Park Service has made several attempts to assist those seeking to start or increase the capacity of a friends group, from a comprehensive how-to guide developed by a regional partnership coordinator to training for superintendents new to working with partners. Technical assistance is available through the regional partnership coordinators and the Washington Office. Emerging groups, such as Arizona’s Friends of the Monuments, have the benefit of learning from seasoned veterans who now lead large, well-established organizations like the Grand Canyon Association, or from other supporters such as the National Parks Conservation Association, the Friends Alliance, or the Association of Partners for Public Lands. Well-organized friends have more sources of potential funding than ever before, from the NPF to corporate sponsors eager to associate with a successful groups that support the popular park system. Nonprofit organizations in other philanthropic spheres, including the American Institute of Philanthropy, the Association of Fundraising Professionals, and the Foundation Center provide templates and guidelines for friends groups to assist with mission development, marketing, board development, event coordination, transparency, cost-saving programs, grant writing, planned giving, and a host of other practices to help groups thrive.

With all these resources, how can partners like friends groups and cooperating associations not succeed? The challenges these partners face, and how they are being addressed internally and by the NPS, becomes the core of the concluding discussion in chapter 6.

Chapter 5

Cooperating Associations: “The Bookstore People”

Like friends groups, cooperating associations play an essential role in assisting the National Park Service (NPS) and in helping the agency fulfill its mission. As noted previously, they have an entirely different legal basis for their operation, and for the most part have been in existence longer than most friends groups. However, there have been no known studies (outside of the NPS) that detail their operations, nor the challenges they pose for the Park Service. Nonetheless, it is possible to provide a rather detailed perspective on their operations for several reasons. First, there are fewer of them, and their numbers tend to be more stable over time than the ever-changing lists of friends groups with the attendant confusion over who is or who is not a friend. Second, because cooperating associations generate sufficient revenue to require filing IRS forms 990 or 990 EZ, records of their finances are publicly accessible. Third, unlike friends groups that participate in dozens of different kinds of projects and activities that support national park units, cooperating associations' main functions are educational in nature, centered on the operation of bookstores and the sale of interpretive materials. This makes it easier to compare apples to apples when analyzing how they work. Lastly, cooperating associations have a strong ally organization, the Association of Partners for Public Lands (APPL), that serves as a sort of trade association to promote their interests, and provides more up-to-date information than the NPS makes available for friends groups. These factors combined to make study of cooperating associations somewhat easier and less complicated. However, as the last section of this chapter illustrates, cooperating associations have their own share of misfits and challenges, and they are by no means boring.

The Demographics of Cooperating Associations

Sixty-nine cooperating associations are included on the NPS's April 2012 list of cooperating associations. These associations are considerably older than friends groups. Although the first cooperating association, the Yosemite Association, was established in 1923, almost half (46%) of today's associations came into being in the 1950s and 1960s. Not all associations, however, became cooperating associations upon being formed. For example, Preservation Virginia, which serves the affiliated Park Service unit Historic Jamestowne, along with its 21 other non-Park Service properties, dates back to 1899, but it did not become a cooperating association until much later. All cooperating associations are required to be 501(c) (3) organizations, and as indicated previously, cooperating associations have a firmer legal basis than friends groups, with congressional authorization and significant operational guidelines contained in agency directives.

Two cooperating associations, Eastern National and Western National Parks Association (WNPA) serve multiple parks and multiple Park Service regions. Eastern National, the largest cooperating association, serves more than 150 parks and partners with other public agencies in 30 eastern states throughout the Northeast, National Capital, Southeast, and Midwest Regions of the Park Service. Eastern National's 250 stores include the 200 square foot site at the Lincoln Memorial which, despite its size, has an annual sales volume of \$2 million.¹ WNPA serves 66 national park sites in 12 western states in the Pacific West, Intermountain, and Midwest Regions, with an online store that features 600 educational products and 175 books in print, with new titles added each year. Cooperating associations that serve more than one park unit as well as units of sister federal agencies and state and local agencies, but only one NPS region, include: the Black Hills Parks and Forests Association (two national park units, one national forest, one state park, and a national grassland in the Midwest Region); Jefferson National Parks Association (Park Service, Forest Service, and US Army Corps of Engineers sites in six states also in the Midwest); Alaska Geographic (covering most of the federally administered public lands within the Park Service Region and State of Alaska); and Discover Your Northwest (national park units in the Pacific West Region, plus other federal, state, and local units spread across five states). Approximately 60 percent of the associations, however, serve only one national park unit. Two park units are served by two cooperating associations. The San Francisco Maritime National Historical Park, for example, is served by both the San Francisco Maritime National

Park Association and the Friends of the San Francisco Maritime Museum Library. Antietam National Battlefield also has two cooperating associations, the Western Maryland Interpretive Association, which operates the Antietam bookstore, and the National Civil War Museum of Medicine, which operates the Pry House Field Hospital Museum.

Although most friends groups are headquartered in the eastern half of the US, with less than one-third in the West, cooperating associations are decidedly western. Sixty percent of the cooperating associations are headquartered in the western US (Alaska, Pacific West, and Intermountain regions); California alone is home to 20 percent (14) of the associations.

Like many friends groups, a number of associations played an instrumental part in getting the park they serve established. Notable examples include the Fort Frederica Association, which formed in 1940 for the purpose of acquiring the town and fort of Frederica, on Georgia's St. Simons Island and establishing the Fort Frederica National Monument in 1945; the Carver Birthplace Association, which—with the support of the great African American agricultural scientist George Washington Carver—lobbied to establish the Missouri site as the George Washington Carver National Monument in 1943; and the Pipestone Indian Shrine Association, which first became active in the 1930s to protect the Minnesota soft-stone pipestone quarries, efforts that were rewarded with the establishment of the Pipestone National Monument in 1937. Local Indians still quarry and carve prayer pipes at the site.

Given that the congressional authorization for cooperating associations emphasizes educational activities, it is not surprising that operating bookstores and museums and publishing interpretative materials (newspapers, videos, books, pamphlets, and lectures) are major association activities. Items sold in the stores must have some relationship to the natural, historical, or cultural emphasis of the park, or store sales become subject to the unrelated business income tax (UBIT), a tax levied when a tax-exempt organization sells items that are not substantially related to furthering the exempt purposes of the organization. A stuffed animal may raise appreciation for wildlife, a parks monopoly game may further awareness of park units, a Junior Ranger product may inspire future conservationists, and Native American crafts and jewelry may link to an area's indigenous people and cultural heritage; all can be found in various association bookstore outlets. But since soda sales, Barbie dolls, or a regular monopoly game would trigger the UBIT, they are excluded sales items. A park visitor would need

to purchase such items from on-site vending machines or gift stores operated by park concessioners or off-site at local businesses.

Both park units and cooperating associations are very sensitive to the need not to compete with either concessioners or local retailers for sales of non-educational items such as film, firewood, or even bottled water if a park visitor can buy those items nearby. A few associations do, however, also have concessioner agreements with the Park Service. Examples include the Mount Rushmore Society's concessioner contract for the parking ramp/garage it helped finance and now runs at the entrance to the memorial; and the Joshua Tree National Park Association's limited concessioner contract allowing it to sell a number of items that are fairly useful in a remote California desert area, including bottled water, first aid items, flashlight batteries, sunscreen, and film. Although its contract also allows sales of a number of items like firewood, postage stamps, and soft drinks, the Association no longer actually sells those.

As part of their mission to further park purposes through education and scientific activities, about 19 percent of the associations operate field institutes, where students, teachers, and continuing education adults may attend field courses to learn more about the area's natural and cultural resources. All except one of these institutes are located in the West. Some associations like WNPA also provide research grants, while others, like Eastern National, have purchased land.

A number of cooperating association groups also have significant management responsibilities. For example, in addition to supporting the San Francisco Maritime National Historical Park, the San Francisco Maritime National Park Association independently operates the World War II submarine museum, USS Pampanito. The Fort Vancouver National Trust's responsibilities extend far beyond supporting the Fort Vancouver National Historic Site's two units in Washington State and Oregon; it also operates the Pearson Air Museum, is partnering with the City of Vancouver, Washington, to repurpose the Old Fort Hospital as an arts center, manages residential and commercial properties at Fort Vancouver National Historical Site, and is launching a major campaign to purchase an historic non-park building in downtown Vancouver.² Eastern National operates the 501(c)(4) membership organization, Employees and Alumni Association of the National Park Service, and a 501(c)(4) disaster relief trust fund for NPS employees who have been impacted by natural disasters. In 1986, Eastern National also established the highly popular Passport to Your National Parks program that enables park visitors to have their park passports stamped at each site they visit.

Throughout the years, several organizations have changed names. For example, in the process of doing a strategic plan, the Mount Rushmore Society decided to do a rebranding, and the Intermountain Natural History Association changed its name from Dinosaur Nature Association when it broadened its mission beyond the Park Service. When a marketing company found that only 1 percent of Portland, Oregon, area residents could identify Fort Vancouver as their closest NPS site, the Vancouver National Historic Reserve Trust decided to rename itself the Fort Vancouver National Trust; likewise, the larger Vancouver National Historic Preserve, within which is located the Fort Vancouver National Historic Site, would be termed the Fort Vancouver National Site.³ Several other organizations have dropped names that identified themselves as “natural history associations”; now they simply call themselves “associations.”

Although it is accurate to say that the number of cooperating associations tends to remain stable over time, cooperating associations come and go. Examples of groups that were reported on earlier NPS or APPL lists or on park websites, but are no longer operating as cooperating associations, include the George Washington Birthplace Association; the Brown Foundation for Educational Equity, Excellence and Research; the Weir Farm Trust; and the Lake States Interpretive Association. Just like friends groups, associations are likely to come and go for many reasons; there may be disagreements between the park and the group, the group may desire to move in different directions and concentrate on other program priorities, or a group may have struggled to make ends meet.

A review of the cooperating associations' latest publicly available Internal Revenue Service (IRS) 990 forms also reveals additional demographic statistics. From these IRS statements, information about staffing, revenue sources, memberships, and assets, and to some extent the groups' aid to parks can be gleaned. Because the fiscal years of the groups vary—most end their fiscal year either at the end of the calendar year or the end of September, but other year-ends are also used such as March or January 31—it is not possible to make equivalent time-period comparisons. Some organizations are also timelier in filing their 990s; others use all available extensions, so it can be a year after the books are closed before the statement is filed and time after that before they are publicly available.

Because the associations are engaged in retail operations, it is not surprising that the 990s show that most have paid staff. Staff support typically includes a full-time executive director, although a number of smaller associations, such as the Fort Union Association

(serving North Dakota's Fort Union Trading Post National Historic Site), the Carver Birthplace Association, Lava Beds Natural History Association (serving California's Lava Beds National Monument), and Georgia's Ocmulgee National Monument Association, work with part-time bookkeepers or business managers. The majority of principal staff salaries are under \$100,000. On the opposite end of the spectrum, however, the executive director of the White House Historical Association (WHHA), the cooperating association for President's Park (the White House) earns over \$300,000 a year, and the executive directors of the Fort Vancouver National Trust, Golden Gate National Parks Conservancy, and Yosemite Conservancy each earn over \$200,000.

Almost all cooperating associations have volunteer boards. One notable exception is The Encampment Store, which serves Valley Forge National Historic Park in Pennsylvania. There the president and the secretary/treasurer of the four-member board are paid full-time employees. The secretary/treasurer also serves as an unpaid board member of the Friends of Valley Forge Park.

Much like the wealthier friends groups, cooperating associations have a varied number of sources of income. Because they operate bookstores and museums and sell a variety of goods, they have earned income from retail sales. The Grand Canyon Association, for instance, operates eight bookstore outlets that bring in nearly \$6 million in annual sales. But their revenue stream is also likely to include income from contributions/donations, investments, and memberships. A few associations also report receiving governmental grants. One of more interesting donations occurred when the Rocky Mountain Nature Association, which is the cooperating association for Colorado's Rocky Mountain National Park, received a \$53,000 donation from the Austrian General Settlement Fund for Victims of National Socialism. One of the victims of the Nazi takeover in Austria had claimed a portion of the settlement funds. Because she had bequeathed the bulk of her estate to the Rocky Mountain Nature Association, her portion of the settlement fund went to the Association when she died.⁴

Almost all associations have investment or interest income. In some cases, this is very modest—less than \$100, but it can also be rather substantial with the larger organizations. A few groups (21%) report endowment funds on their IRS 990s, with five groups (Grand Canyon Association, Yosemite Conservancy, Golden Gate National Parks Conservancy, Rocky Mountain Nature Association, and the National Museum of Civil War Medicine) having endowments worth more than \$1 million. The Golden Gate National Parks Conservancy's

endowment, for example, neared \$7 million at the end of 2010. The WHHA's endowment is divided into two separate tax-exempt organizations administered by the Association: the White House Endowment Trust, with assets of \$39 million at the end of 2010, and the White House Acquisition Trust, with assets of \$6 million.

Associations offer memberships and receive income from member dues, but almost all memberships are nonvoting. Memberships typically entitle the member to discounts on purchases at other cooperating association outlets as well as on site. Other membership perks may include invitations to annual events and other fundraising activities, much like friends groups.

About one-third of the organizations have assets over \$1 million and another third have assets in the range from \$100,000 to \$499,999. Less than 10 percent control assets under \$100,000. Similarly, less than 10 percent control assets in the eight-figure range (over \$10,000,000). It is also clear that in recent years, cooperating associations have been affected both by the Great Recession that began in 2008 and the fundamental changes occurring in the book publishing business. In their last available IRS reporting period 24 (35%) were in the red, reporting expenses over revenue. Of those, over half were in a similar situation the previous year.⁵

Similar to the situation with friends groups, answering the question, "How much exactly do cooperating associations contribute to the parks?" is not an easy task. Again, it must be reiterated that although there is no doubt the amounts are significant, coming up with an aggregate number is not so straightforward. A 2011 NPS fact sheet asserted that 65 cooperating associations provide \$26 million annually in park support.⁶ The last publicly available report issued by the Park Service, which covered FY 2007, used \$70.6 million as a total figure, but that figure is a combination of \$28.2 million in direct financial aid as well as \$42.3 million in program service aid (association salaries and expenses directly in support of the association's activities on behalf of the park).⁷ The report noted that comparisons to previous years would be difficult because of a change in departmental guidance on how program service salaries are reported.

Using program service expenses as reported on the IRS 990s as the basis for getting up-to-date totals on group philanthropy is extremely difficult, particularly when the organizations often own and manage non-park-related properties, or serve sister federal agencies or state and local sites. Even with those groups that only serve one NPS unit, a cooperating association may calculate their aid to the park beyond their program service revenue. Joshua Tree National Park Association,

for example, adds the interest it pays on the mortgage it holds on the visitor center to their total program service expenses. Similar to the friends groups, cooperating associations also provide support that cannot be quantified by dollars, such as educational and visitor contact hours, and management of volunteer hours. Although cooperating associations report continuing to provide annual financial data about their operations to the Washington Office of the National Park Service, no compilation or analysis has recently been coming out the other end. We return to the implications of this in chapter 6.

Associations that serve more than one park often have different structures by which they divide overhead costs (staffing and other operational costs) and how they share revenues between their constituent members.⁸ Alaska Geographic and Discover Your Northwest, for example, have a separate accounting of revenues and expenses for each site, and each receives revenue based on sales in its own outlets, although Alaska Geographic does provide each park a base of \$1,000. Both Eastern National and WNPA have used a model in which high volume parks are used to support smaller parks, with guarantees of a minimal amount to be added to a superintendent's interpretative accounts—\$2,000 for WNPA and \$500 to \$1,000 for Eastern National. Facing financial difficulties, however, WNPA recently suspended contributions to the superintendents' accounts. Jefferson National Parks Association attempts to operate in parks where operations will at least break even, and works to move net loss parks to break-even status; it doesn't operate with a minimum guarantee.⁹

Cooperating Association Profiles

Cooperating associations can be roughly—and roughly is indeed the operative word—viewed as three main models: the Traditional Model of a one-park organization; the More than One Park, One Agency Model; and the Cooperating Associations for Convenience Model. Two other developments are now affecting the universe of cooperating associations: the increasing number of “hybrid” organizations that reflect a dual-purpose model (a philanthropic friends group and the educationally focused cooperating association combined into one entity); and the increasing competition from for-profit operations, some of which are replacing nonprofit cooperating associations. A complete discussion of these two developments, and an analysis of their impact on national park philanthropy, is covered in chapter 6.

The Traditional Model

The traditional cooperating association serves only one park (although some may also serve another nearby unit), and its sole mission and *raison d'être* is to further the educational and interpretive activities at its park(s). Most cooperative associations resemble the Traditional Model. The Shenandoah National Park Association is a good example. Organized in May 1950 as the Shenandoah Natural History Association before it changed its name to the Shenandoah National Park Association in 2000, there is a small staff that varies according to season, and a 12-member board of directors. Unlike many cooperating associations, members do vote for the board of directors.

The Association's two bookstores, both of which are located within visitor centers, sell books, maps, videos, and information about the park and its profits go to supporting interpretation and activities at the park. In 2011, the two bookstores recorded sales of just under \$600,000.¹⁰ "Everything that we do is for the aid to the park," says the executive director, who has worked for the group for more than 30 years. Other sources of income include memberships and gifts and grants; there are no government contracts. The organization made the decision not to take on the role of the friends organization at the park to begin fundraising. The board of directors made the decision to remain focused on supporting the interpretive and educational activities of the park. The executive director works closely with the park's chief of interpretation, to which the supportive park superintendent has delegated decisions relating to what the bookstore will sell and how dollars for the park will be spent. In turn, the cooperating association does all the purchasing for the items that the park wants to acquire or produce with its aid. Unlike some cooperating associations, no cash is given back directly to the park. Although there is little interaction between the Association and the park's official friends group, the Shenandoah National Park Trust, neither are there any divisive issues. Good relationships with the park concessioners are also reported and both worked to produce products for the park's seventy-fifth anniversary celebration. Interactions with the NPS regional office have been infrequent and there has been only one routine review by the servicewide cooperating association coordinator; there have never been any questions about its reports. The executive director has been very active in APPL, having missed only one meeting. She has served on APPL's convention planning committee and the cooperating association has won numerous book awards for its publications about the park. While acknowledging that perhaps the

biggest challenge associated with the job is working with the NPS because it is “always challenging,” and has lots of “paperwork,” there are also the challenges to grow, sell more products, and get more money for the park. The Shenandoah National Park Association is interesting simply because it does not have any particularly unique issues or controversies to report. Similar things could be said about a good many cooperating associations.

The More Than One Park, One Agency Model

Discover Your Northwest (DYN), which was founded in 1974 as the Northwest Interpretive Association, is an example of a cooperating association that serves more than one park and agency. Unlike the mega-conglomerates—Eastern National and WNPA—that serve many parks in several NPS regions and also fit the More than One Park, One Agency Model. DYN operates in only one NPS region. However, it also cooperates with other federal and local agencies including the Forest Service in three of its regions, the US Army Corps of Engineers in three of its districts, the Bureau of Reclamation, the Bureau of Land Management, and the City of Seattle. It also serves as the bookstore wholesaler for Washington State Parks. It can be said that the group is very wide and very shallow. There is not one big park, but three medium-sized parks, and a whole bunch of smaller sites. The Great Smoky Mountains National Park and Yellowstone National Park have more sales in one park than DYN does for its entire Park Service region. Its biggest revenue producer is Mount St. Helens National Volcanic Monument, a Forest Service site.

The central office overhead of the association unit is divided between all partners based on size, with the three biggest being Olympic and Mount Rainier National Parks, and Mount St. Helens. DYN collects cash from donation boxes located at approximately one-half of its sites, and receives 10 percent of recreational pass sales made at its sites. It does not provide cash to anyone, but provides each unit with the dollar amount it can invest in interpretive programs.

The current executive director has a management background with museum stores, and notes that he worries about the basic changes occurring in the book publishing business. Guide books, for example, are being replaced with smart phone applications (apps). While the *Sibley Guide to Birds* might have been a big seller in the past, now a visitor can take a picture of a bird and an app gives them information about the bird, its tweet, and its song. Producing one’s own app, however, is not the solution, he says. Apps do not produce the

same dollars as hard bound or paperback books; they need constant updating; and in many places the mass market to recoup the investment simply does not exist. “Flat sales is the new up,” he quipped, implying that declining sales is more the norm. “There are no dollars in museum stores.”

DYN did explore having a philanthropic arm, and has made a few forays into fundraising events, like sponsoring the Fun Run at Lolo Pass along the Idaho–Montana border to support the Lolo Pass Visitor Center (a Forest Service operation). It continues to sponsor Washington CoastSavers, a cooperative program with several other agencies and nonprofit groups to organize volunteer cleanups of marine debris from Pacific beaches. The group also did some grant writing for the Deschutes National Forest, and for Klondike Gold Rush National Historical Park, since the latter is housed in the same building as the association in downtown Seattle. It also helped to raise dollars from local sponsors and organize celebration events associated with the Elwah Dam removal project for stream and salmon habitat restoration in Olympic National Park. Nevertheless, despite these activities, the association found that the big parks did not have much interest in its philanthropic efforts, the smaller parks were thrilled about the idea but could not contribute to the fundraising overhead, and potential donor and funders were not interested because they generally had a favorite park they wanted to support. The association’s expenses became too high, and it had to lay off the development person it had brought in. With a tight financial situation, the executive director took on more responsibility, spending more time in the buyer’s role. However, the group has been able to turn things around: from a \$93,000 deficit in 2011, the group saw a surplus of \$48,000 in 2012,¹¹ and had money to distribute to its parks.

Associations for Convenience Model

Some groups need a cooperating association agreement to sell something in a park, but their missions and the scope of their responsibilities are considerably larger than their partnership with the NPS. Saying that these groups are Associations for Convenience does not mean that they are unworthy or not committed to park purposes; it simply differentiates them from the traditional park and public lands-centric cooperating associations. They were not originally formed for the main purpose of serving as a cooperation association, per se. Included within this model would be Preservation Virginia with its array of non-park historic properties. A major focus of the organization, for

example, is its revolving fund program where historic properties endangered by neglect or potential demolition are acquired, protective easements placed on them, and then the properties are sold to owners who will rehabilitate and then maintain them.

Most groups that have obtained cooperating association status in recent years seem to fit the Associations for Convenience Model. Examples of groups that have only recently appeared on the list of cooperating associations include the Friends of the San Francisco Maritime Museum Library, the National Museum of Civil War Medicine, WHHA, and the North Cascades Institute (NCI) serving North Cascades National Park in Washington State.

The Friends of the San Francisco Maritime Museum Library's agreement is solely for the purpose of enabling them to sell used books on site. The small group's main focus is on the maritime library and its use, and as noted above, the site is also served by another cooperating association, the San Francisco Maritime National Park Association. The National Museum of Civil War Medicine located in Frederick, Maryland, focuses on preserving the legacy of Civil War medical innovation. The museum operates two satellite museums, including the Clara Barton's Missing Soldiers Office in Washington, DC, in partnership with the General Services Administration, and the Pry House Field Hospital Museum at the Antietam battlefield for which it has a cooperating association agreement.

Another cooperating association that matches the Associations for Convenience Model is the North Cascades Institute. Formed in 1986, the Institute focuses on natural history seminars and education programs. It offers a professional residency master's degree program in environmental education with a Certificate in Leadership and Nonprofit Administration in partnership with the Huxley College of the Environment at Western Washington University. In 2005, the Institute opened the North Cascades Environmental Learning Center in partnership with the NPS and the City of Seattle. The Institute took on its role as cooperating association for North Cascades National Park after the park's superintendent terminated the park's cooperating association agreement with DYN.

Arguably, everything that WHHA does that promotes the history and preservation of the White House is supportive of President's Park, but the Association's work is not centered on NPS philanthropy, *per se*. The organization, which was proposed by the NPS in 1961 with the support of First Lady Jacqueline Kennedy, is a wealthy group that produces educational literature and films about the history of the White House and the people who have resided there. The

WHHA supports the acquisition of historic art works and furnishings, and furthers the conservation of the building's public rooms. In 2009, the Association entered into its agreement with the Park Service to renovate the White House Visitor Center. According to the agreement, the Association will provide funding for architectural and exhibit design and construction and the agency will pay for the architectural improvements. The WHHA operates the museum shop at the visitor center as well as another shop in the immediate neighborhood and at Decatur House. But the group also does significant work beyond the White House itself. For example, it provides exhibits and educational materials to presidential libraries and museums around the country. In 2011, a \$10 million gift from philanthropist and former aide to President Jimmy Carter, David M. Rubenstein, enabled the group to establish the David M. Rubenstein National Center for White House History at Decatur House, located about a mile away from the White House.¹² Owned by the National Trust for Historic Preservation, a 30-year agreement allows the WHHA to manage the historic building.

With each of the organizations described above, cooperating association status allows the organization to sell in NPS locations. But the main mission and scope of the group's philanthropic and education efforts are focused on programs that extend far beyond park philanthropy.

When Things Go Awry

It is often said that if you want to track political power, follow the money. Because cooperating associations have sizeable revenues and return significant dollars to park units, it is not surprising that cooperating associations have considerable political power over the Park Service as a whole as well as the individual parks they serve. Even though they are nonprofits, the influence cooperating associations can exert is similar to concessioners and for-profit companies, and can similarly be affected by a penchant for profits. Park mission and protection of natural, historical, or cultural resources succumb to overcommercialization and profit-seeking. Agency jobs and careers sometimes hang in the balance upon how relationships with the associations are maintained.¹³

When cooperating associations and/or friends groups have significant financial resources, political clout secured through ties to influential donors and political officials, and stature and esteem obtained by undertaking major infrastructure or scientific projects in the parks, they

may acquire a sense of entitlement, believing their projects or events should trump park wishes. There will be tensions between cooperating associations and park staff, and issues may become elevated to higher political levels not only within NPS but within Congress as well.

Mount Rushmore Fireworks

The Mount Rushmore Society, for example, began sponsoring a highly profitable (from both a fundraising and public relations viewpoint) Fourth of July fireworks display at the monument in 1999. The Park Service, however, decided to discontinue the event in 2010. The NPS cited worries about fire danger, the safety of park personnel who had to patrol in the dark the rugged expanse of flammable vegetation surrounding the site to watch for fire starts, and the negative impact on park visitation when event attendees filled the park to capacity early in the day to stake out their viewing area, shutting off access for the more transient day visitor.

Despite the suspension of the fireworks display, park visitation on July 3, 2011, exceeded the numbers from 2009 and 2010, so the NPS decided to continue with its model of a celebration without fireworks. The agency's regional director called the decision not to use fireworks "the prudent course of action."¹⁴ But because of the Mount Rushmore Society's historical role in supporting the monument even prior to its NPS designation, the significant risk it had assumed in securing a loan that enabled construction of the new parking ramp/garage, its belief that the fireworks event helped generate additional exposure and increased fundraising, the group did not take the NPS decision lightly. The controversy expanded to state officials (who recognized the significant tourism impact of the monument and were supportive of the fireworks display) as well as to the Washington Office of the Park Service and to the state's congressional delegation. Bitterness still exists between some park staff and the group over the fireworks controversy and in a test of wills between a new superintendent and the Society, the group is still hoping to overturn the park unit's decision on the matter.

WNPA and the Billy Malone Affair

Another example of the challenges cooperating associations can pose to the NPS centers on the WNPA. WNPA was formed in 1938 to serve 18 national monuments in the Southwest and was originally called the Southwest Monuments Association. The group's policy

was to “provide accurate information to the general travelling public concerning the Southwest.” Its first publication, a 28-page booklet, *Guide to the Southwestern National Monuments*, was published December 15, 1938. Reflecting its expanding scope, it became the Southwest Parks and Monuments Association (SPMA) in 1970, and in 2002, the WNPA. Today, WNPA conducts a range of activities from supporting traditional educational and interpretive activities to funding research. As of September 2010, it reported net assets of \$9,371,538, although for both 2008 and 2009 expenses exceeded revenues by \$490,626 and \$406,435, respectively.

One of the unique sites for which WNPA is responsible is the Hubbell Trading Post National Historic Site. Hubbell, located on the Navajo Indian Reservation is the oldest Indian trading post in the West, operating since 1878. In the late 1950s, when the original Hubbell family decided it could no longer operate the post, they decided to put it up for sale, and approached the nonprofit Museum of Northern Arizona in Flagstaff. The museum declined to purchase the site, but museum officials suggested that the NPS take over and took the lead in approaching Congress. The first bill was introduced in 1959, and in 1965 Congress declared Hubbell a National Historic Site, authorizing the Park Service to purchase the site. The clear congressional intent was that the trading post would be operated not as a museum, but as a living, authentic, traditional Indian trading post. NPS Director George Hartzog, who initially was not excited about Hubbell becoming a historic site, told supporters “that he would not countenance another goddamned dead embalmed historic site, that it must be a living trading post,” and in testifying before Congress announced that was what the Park Service intended to do.¹⁵

After the legislation declaring Hubbell part of the Park Service was signed, the NPS approached the Babbitt brothers, a politically influential ranching and Indian trading family in northern Arizona, to operate the post. They declined as they were already closing down a number of their own trading posts. The NPS then decided to go to SPMA. In 1981, Billy Malone was hired as the old-fashioned Indian trader to operate the post under NPS/SPMA. Even though management at Hubbell had long been dogged by staff rivalries, jealousies, and organizational politics, Hubbell became very profitable for the cooperating association—a veritable “cash cow” and the single most profitable site of its operations.¹⁶ In 1990, for example, all sales for SPMA totaled \$5.63 million (including Hubbell). Hubbell alone had \$1.77 million in gross sales. Compared to Hubbell Trading Post’s contribution, income from the rest of SPMA’s then approximately 40 outlets was “miniscule.”¹⁷

In 2003, WNPA hired a new executive director, who walked into a financial quagmire at the cooperating association, “a large new headquarters building near Tucson, Arizona, a \$1.5 million shortfall because monies it thought it had in the bank as surplus to cover operating costs had already been obligated, and a series of lawsuits filed by former association employees. The books were in disarray.”¹⁸ As the executive director began looking at the books at Hubbell, and after receiving reports from a disgruntled employee, she began to suspect fraud, forgery, and embezzlement at the trading post. Thus began a process by which WNPA “partnered” with NPS in an over two-year, million-dollar botched NPS investigation of Billy Malone.

The second NPS senior investigator assigned to the case (because the first investigator had made a series of serious mistakes and was not making any progress in his investigation) eventually took his findings directly to the Department of the Interior’s Office of Inspector General (OIG) because he did not trust the internal NPS culture to welcome his findings and take appropriate actions. The investigations began to show that Billy Malone, although employing unorthodox business practices, but practices historically and culturally acceptable at Indian trading posts, had certainly not been stealing either from the post or the Indian community. The NPS eventually returned Malone’s personal property, which had been taken in a questionable June 2004 raid of his home. No charges were filed.

One of the OIG’s major conclusions was that the relationship between WNPA and the NPS was “inappropriate” and “improper.”¹⁹ During the investigations into the controversy, WNPA’s executive director claimed that NPS officials had indicated that it would be in WNPA’s best interests to help pay for the investigation. According to the executive director, representations made by the NPS led the WNPA to view its contributions to the investigations as a financial investment enabling it to have privileged access to information about the investigation, as well as the ability to ultimately recover its costs via property seized from Malone’s residence.²⁰ The WNPA executive director and her staff participated in the search of Malone’s operations, and the executive director helped drive a van of seized goods to a storage facility. WNPA staff and board also received investigatory briefings from the NPS. At one point, the executive director and her board expressed frustration and disappointment about a reduced flow of information as well as recent developments in the case and called the regional NPS director on the carpet at a WNPA board meeting.²¹

During the investigation, a former superintendent of the trading post said that WNPA sometimes had more say than she did, and was

able to assert its will over hers in trading post operations.²² On “occasions when she tried to influence visible business activities to maintain the historic character of the trading post, SPMA/WNPA management in Tucson would do an ‘end run’ and go directly to the IMR director to have her overruled.”²³ The Inspector General’s report concluded that WNPA’s funding of the criminal investigation did not fall under any of the categories for which the NPS is allowed to accept donations from a cooperating association.²⁴ It also found that WNPA was determining the percentage of profits it donated to the park and how the money was to be spent before it donated the money. Moreover, neither the regional nor Washington offices of the NPS were tracking any of the interpretive support accounts set up and managed by WNPA for other park units.²⁵

As a result of the Hubbell affair, one of the changes made to Director’s Order #32 is that the NPS now sets priorities and assists in determining where the funds from the revenues collected by the cooperating associations are spent: “Aid to the NPS from activities authorized under the Agreement will be used to support the interpretive, educational, scientific, and historical projects and programs *that the NPS determines* are needed and consistent with its mission” (emphasis ours); “The level of cash and/or in-kind aid to the NPS must be determined by the Association in consultation with the NPS; and “The process for the NPS to request aid from Associations will be in writing, timely, prioritized by the NPS, and appropriate to the Cooperating Association mission.”

The Billy Malone affair alienated the Indian community, which largely supported Malone. The second senior investigator wrote a book on the investigation that was highly critical of WNPA’s “corrupt role” in the affair and its power over the NPS.²⁶ He lamented that WNPA’s quest to run the trading post with more conventional business practices and turn a profit would shift the post away from its traditional role and simply transform it into another tourist souvenir shop operated with a “faux” authenticity. He also chastised NPS officials for their deference, pandering and accommodation to WNPA wishes.²⁷ Billy Malone, who felt blindsided by WNPA,²⁸ moved to Gallup, New Mexico, and took a seat on the board of directors of the trading post’s friends group, the Friends of Hubbell Trading Post. As of 2012, Malone was still pursuing a lawsuit against NPS personnel and negotiating a settlement with WNPA.²⁹

WNPA continues to operate Hubbell and is trying incentives to get native people back into the post given both the controversy and increased competition from big box and other retail outlets. And

WNPA's own financial problems continue. In 2011, another new executive director laid off staff and the organization announced that it had informed its parks that it would cease making contributions to the superintendents' accounts because of its financial difficulties. In addition to calling for ways to enhance its retail operations, a new strategic plan calls for the WNPA to broaden and strengthen its philanthropic programs.³⁰ A new philanthropic staff member has been hired. It is also likely that in the future there will be changes in its revenue sharing model, and that parks that do not earn dollars will not be assured dollars like they have been in the past.

San Francisco Maritime National Park Association's Sea of Woes

WNPA and the Mount Rushmore Society are not the only cooperating associations that have had troubles. Although it is 62 years old, the San Francisco Maritime National Park Association has had its highs and lows. The Association, which helped to found the park, serves the San Francisco Maritime National Historical Park, which broke off from Golden Gate National Recreation Area and became its own entity in 1988. The park includes a fleet of historic ships at the Hyde Street Pier, a museum, the Aquatic Park Historic District, a visitor center located in a historic waterfront warehouse, and a library located at the maritime park's headquarters in lower Fort Mason, part of the Golden Gate National Recreation Area.

In recent years, the Association's executive directors have gone through a revolving door—seven directors in ten years. Membership has decreased from 3,000 to 300 members, and a largely unwieldy board has only a handful of engaged members. Although its youth education program, the Age of Sail, which involves an overnight stay on the park's historic ship *Balclutha*, has been financially self-sustaining, the group's independently owned and operated submarine *Pampanito* needs restoration work and visitation is declining as other venues in the waterfront compete for visitor dollars. The Association closed its money-losing bookstore, which fronts a busy tourist street at Fisherman's Wharf, a location that should attract customers and revenue (and which it did for several years when operated by the Golden Gate National Parks Conservancy). It has missed filing annual reports, and the NPS had to hire an auditor to look at its books, which were highly complicated and difficult to decipher. The board considered filing for bankruptcy and dissolving.

In many respects, the park has provided aid to the Association rather than receiving aid, and has had to put into place protocols to protect itself from the group's travails. Despite this, the superintendent is committed to working with the group to turn it around and to help it emerge from its problems, even if that entails reconfiguring the scope and mission of the group. And the Association is on an upswing, with a new executive director who was for several years a hard-working board member and now has been instrumental in stabilizing operations and finances, recruiting new board members, and collaborating with the superintendent to better align the Association with the park and other park partners.

Little Bighorn Battles

The movie title, "It's Complicated," aptly describes the partnerships at Little Bighorn Battlefield National Monument in south central Montana. The site has faced numerous challenges since it was established under the War Department as Custer Battlefield National Cemetery in 1879, three years after the battle between the US 7th Cavalry and Indian warriors that has become legendary in American military history. The government erected a pedestal marker over the mass grave where the remains of soldiers and scouts had been buried, and later, erected individual white marble markers where individual soldiers were believed to have fallen. In August 1939, Congress authorized a public historical museum at the site, and in July 1940, the cemetery and adjoining battlefield were transferred to the NPS. The area was redesignated as Custer Battlefield National Monument, and in 1991, Congress renamed the 765-acre site Little Bighorn National Monument. Red granite markers were later erected to identify the sites where the Indian warriors were known to have perished. In June 2003, an Indian Memorial was built across the road from the 1881 memorial honoring the soldiers.³¹

As the National Parks Conservation Association noted in one of its *State of the Parks* reports in 2003, the national park has changed dramatically from its beginning years when its focus was on telling the story of the battle from the perspective of the cavalry soldiers. Now, interpretive events and the small visitor center, built in 1952, are less one-sided in their explanations of what happened, and park officials are attempting to treat the area as a single cultural landscape and as a single visual and natural landscape, with the grasses and knolls as much a part of the story as Last Stand Hill is to military history enthusiasts.

But the park faces numerous problems, ranging from a lack of space for the thousands of artifacts including battle-related correspondence, battle flags, and photographs in its collection, to an almost antiquated visitor center that one superintendent referred to as “way too small and grossly inadequate.”³² The site is also under siege from nonnative and invasive species of plants, a viewshed that includes pollution from nearby coal-fired power plants, and signs from encroaching businesses at the park’s edge. This might sound like exactly the kind of park unit where friends would be needed, but at Little Bighorn, the park unit’s cooperating association and a multiplicity of “friends” have often been at odds with one another and the Park Service.

The current strife stems from several different factors. From an administrative perspective, the site has gone through various organizational and managerial changes since the first superintendent, Edward S. Luce, arrived with his wife in January 1941. The Luces often used their home, which had been constructed in 1894 and restored in the mid-1990s as the Stone House, as a greeting area for tourists who found their way to the battlefield, even preparing and displaying their own exhibits in the front room. The Yellowstone Library and Museum Association opened a small outlet at the national cemetery in 1943 selling postcards and a pamphlet about the battlefield. In 1952, the NPS approved the establishment of “an Association for the furtherance of the interests of historical research and related subjects to Custer Battlefield National Monument,” and the following month, the Luces and five others met to organize the Custer Battlefield Historical and Museum Association (CBHMA). The group inherited the \$3,000 in assets of the Yellowstone Association and in 1956, nominated its first new members. Over time, as the sales of the group expanded, the Association began purchasing important Custer-related collections and funded an archaeological research and restoration project. At the NPS’s request, the group incorporated in 1959.³³

Those who sought membership in the CBHMA had to be recommended by a current member, and it was not until 1975 that the organization amended its bylaws to permit anyone interested in the battle to join. “Perhaps significantly for the course of future National Park-association relations, the switch to open membership coincided chronologically with the ongoing interpretive thrust begun in the 1960s to include more of the Indian perspective of the event in addition to that of Custer and the military.”³⁴ The CBHMA became extremely powerful in its own eyes, and as one early member noted, “CBHMA practically ran the Battlefield when I first joined. We actually had a hand in making policy. We would observe ranger talks, make

suggestions on how they could be improved and fund worthwhile projects. The chief historian at the Battlefield was actually a CBHMA board member—so we exerted a great deal of influence at the park.”³⁵ Part of the Association’s perceived power was due to the fact that the group not only had NPS staff as members, but the CBHMA also funded a museum curator in the 1980s and funded summer interpreters at the park in 1990. “The group’s liberal funding of certain park positions, including that of curator, arguably created within its leadership a sense of investment and entitlement that was unjustified,” wrote one observer.³⁶

The CBHMA took on many projects the Park Service could not or did not choose to implement. It published a cemetery guidebook and worked with the park historian to update a manuscript that traced federal governance of the park through the war years. Many valuable items were purchased as donations to the park’s collections, the most valuable of which was the Fred Dustin collection of research papers, maps, and books. The Association also purchased a private collection of letters written to pioneer photographer D. F. Barry. As one historian wrote, “The collections have been of great value to the interpretation and preservation of Little Bighorn history, and without them, the exhibits and study collections in the museum would have little significance.”³⁷ Following a major wildfire in 1983, the CBHMA provided funding for a major archaeological study, and continued to help fund other archaeological projects necessitated by the construction of the Indian Memorial and the excavation of the horse cemetery.

But there were numerous issues on which the CBHMA and the Park Service disagreed. The group actively and successfully opposed one NPS proposal to remove the Stone House; the former Luce home is now a research library. The group also opposed an illustration called “the Custer Nude” in a 1969 battlefield handbook, and helped organize the centennial of the battle, which was scaled down by the NPS over concerns that AIM (American Indian Movement) would disrupt some activities. CBHMA opposed the naming of a Ute-Cherokee woman as superintendent and fought her after she sought to have the CBHMA approve the book *Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee* for sale at the bookstore. The CBHMA voted against the book due to “historical inaccuracies” and the NPS subsequently dissolved the book committee. Other disputes over supervision of the Association’s employees, reprinting of the battlefield handbook, the content of ranger talks about the battle, and opposition to the name change for the site created tensions that indicated the Park Service was concerned about the “independence” of the Association. The CBHMA also opposed a plan by a company

called North Shield Ventures to build a theme park in the vicinity of the battlefield. Although the NPS described the Association's operations as "very good," Park Service officials said there was evidence that CBHMA's members had "behavioral patterns that result in attacks on the park staff by letter, through the media, through congressional representatives, and by the membership directly."³⁸ Although tensions appeared to subside somewhat between the NPS and its cooperating association, the relationship ended when, as one NPS staff member noted, "they stopped cooperating." One leader said the group was kicked out because it refused to change its name after Congress changed the battlefield's name. Regardless of what the cause might have been, in 1993 the Park Service cancelled the memorandum of agreement with the group, and Southwest Parks & Monuments (now WNPA) took over as the new cooperating association. All CBHMA employees were terminated, and members of the board began taking on the tasks related to bookkeeping and memberships on a volunteer basis. A new superintendent removed a historical plaque the group had placed on the Stone House, along with the name plate on a painting the Association had commissioned that hung in the visitor center.

After 40 years of serving in an official capacity as a cooperating association, the CBHMA is now an unofficial friend and independent partner. Its 1,200 members have a mission of providing "a mechanism for the study of this battle, the people involved on sides, the times, and the Plains Indians Wars in general," according to the group's website. It has not, however, vanished from the Little Bighorn Battlefield picture. The group continues to make donations to support park activities, including the Indian Memorial. Its 2011 financial report showed over \$50,000 in income, an estimated inventory of \$48,000, \$30,000 in its bank account, and a \$225,000 certificate of deposit, making it, at the very least, a financial force to be reckoned with.

Just as WNPA took over as the official cooperating association, a new group, Friends of Little Bighorn (FLBH) took over in 1996 as the park unit's official friends group, signing a memorandum of agreement with the NPS in 1998. The group's president, who had previously been involved as a member of the board of directors of CBHMA, noted that the new organization worked closely with the Native American superintendent to tell the story of the battle from the Indians' perspective. The group has about 350 members, and usually helps with small projects when asked to do so by the Park Service. Members consider their primary purpose as fundraising, but they also recognize that under their current structure and with competition from other Custer groups, they are unable to raise the kinds of money needed for a new visitor center or

other capital improvements. In recent years, the FLBH has attempted to change its demographics (“so it doesn’t look like a nursing home convention”) by adding younger members to its board, engaging in social networking, and establishing a presence on Facebook. It started a newsletter and website, and in 2001 began organizing symposiums on the battle. The group began funding projects, such as a flier about invasive plants, and purchased curatorial supplies and webcams. Although the group does not have any paid staff members, it does work with the tribes and is continuing to see membership growth.

Another unofficial group, Little Big Horn Associates (LBHA), which was established in 1967 with 12 charter members and a mimeographed newsletter, includes what one observer calls “individuals whose avocational (and for some, emotional) lives revolve around the Custer persona and the Battle of the Little Big Horn.”³⁹ Initially, the group was established to exchange historical data through a newsletter where members could contribute to the field of Custeriana and help debunk “a welter of false claims, myths, and fictions intended to solve the unsolvable.”⁴⁰ Based on the group’s initial 1967 newsletter, the serious historians referred to by the acting editor were clearly those supportive of General Custer, not the “anti” Custer faction. Some call the LBHA “Custer buffs” intent on the glorification of General George Custer, but they, too, have a solid constituency of members the NPS depends on for support.

The group was incorporated in Ohio in 1979 as a nonprofit organization to facilitate communication among scholars and “studies associated with George Armstrong Custer, The Battle of the Little Bighorn, and honest history.”⁴¹ The LBHA disapproved when the NPS made changes to the plans for the park’s centennial, and became more aligned with the CBHMA in criticizing the Park Service for what it considered caving in to AIM and its leader Russell Means. They opposed the name change of the battlefield, accusing park management of “pro-Indian bias.”⁴² The group later called for the removal of one superintendent and the park historian. They opposed a plaque on the visitors center that quoted Oglala leader Black Elk, “Know the Power that is Peace” as well as the North Shield Ventures proposal.

The group’s financial statement shows that for the year ending May 31, 2012, LBHA had total assets of \$76,603, about \$10,000 less than it had on hand in 2011, primarily due to investment losses. The bulk of its revenue comes from membership dues, and most of its expenses go to publication and distribution of an auction catalog, newsletter, and a research review. Its annual conferences draw about 130 individuals who attend seminars and purchase books about the battle.

Another unofficial group, the Custer Battlefield Preservation Committee (CBPC), includes members of the official friends group (FLBH) as well as the old cooperating association, CBHMA. The group was started after a superintendent met as a private citizen with the secretary of the Interior in 1982 to share his concerns about the Little Big Horn. "The secretary suggested formation of a nonprofit corporation to accept donations with which to purchase the land parcels needed to assure protection of the battlefield resources and view shed."⁴³ The superintendent formed the CBPC with himself as executive director. In 1982, the group collected \$7,837 in donations, and by 1990, it had raised over \$3 million and had paid for about 2,200 acres of land. In 1993, the NPS removed the lucrative CBPC donation box from the visitor center on grounds that the CBPC did not formally account for the money received from it.⁴⁴

Now the committee has gained ownership of an estimated 3,500 acres adjacent to the current national battlefield's boundaries, purchased with the intent of donating the land to the Park Service. Many park supporters fear that commercial development not only intrudes on the visitor experience, but also can irrevocably alter the physical landscape where the battle took place. Many of those acres were purchased, starting in 1982, from members of the Crow tribe who live on the reservation. The group's efforts to expand the battlefield's boundaries are mirrored in the monument's approved 1995 General Management Plan, which called for expanding the park unit from 765 acres to 11,800 acres. The plan also included the withdrawal of Crow land from the Bighorn Canyon National Recreation Area (NRA) or the monument, a step which would require congressional legislative action.

The circumstances of any donation are, however, extremely complex due to objections by the Crow Tribe that opposes giving up what tribe members consider "their" land to the federal government. In 1930, Congress took the battlefield site away from the Crow reservation, granting the tribe's rights, title, and privileges to the United States. The tribe had a 1967 memorandum of agreement with the NPS authorizing the incorporation of tribal lands into the Bighorn Canyon NRA, but three decades of disputes over issues related to concessions, employment of tribal members, and road right-of-ways led the Crow to terminate the agreement. The secretary of the Interior rejected the tribe's action, but the NPS is now under a development moratorium on any of the Crow lands that are within the NRA.

Although both park units and the Crow Tribe reached tentative agreement on a draft legislative package that would resolve some of the issues, consultations have continued for years. The CBPC has

agreed to sign an agreement that would let the NPS put the acreage in trust for the Crow Tribe for perpetual preservation. Lacking such an agreement, the NPS continues to struggle with an inadequate visitor center, insufficient museum collection storage, outdated roads and parking, and park boundaries that a former superintendent has called “inadequate for protecting park resources.”⁴⁵ The CBPC has become, some believe, more important as a Little Bighorn stakeholder than the official friends group might ever hope to be. The group has taken part in planning for a new visitor center on 240 acres of land it owns near an interstate highway in conjunction with the Montana Department of Transportation’s plans for a rest stop at the site. Despite some CBPC concerns about the Crow Tribe’s trustworthiness over the fate of the trust land itself, the group has the ears of the Park Service because of its land holdings—something yet again the NPS could never have accomplished on its own.

In 1986, the park’s General Management Plan proposed a new visitor center that was estimated to cost \$22.3 million, and by 2010, the cost estimate had escalated to \$50 million, a price tag that did not include the cost of purchasing or acquiring land for the facility.⁴⁶ In the current economy, the likelihood of the Park Service buying more land, building a visitor center, and updating its exhibits becomes, well, unlikely. Should (or could) the NPS depend on a special congressional appropriation to pay for a new home for the archives and other improvements at Little Bighorn? If one of the park’s friends steps forward with an offer of land or other resources, will the Park Service accept a donation?

What happens when these groups differ over goals but need to work together? Can past tensions be tamed? One stakeholder said that he was “pissed off” that his group’s seat at the table was equal to that of other groups who failed to work as hard or who were less cooperative. Another group leader referred to the official friends group, FLBH, as a “kiss ass” group. Despite the name calling and jealousy, Park Service staffers clearly depend on these multiple types of partnerships. The sometimes warring factions are made up of individuals who form strong constituent groups when it comes to protecting the park and its resources. They serve as a network for getting the word out about developments there, debating the issues and keeping the conversations going over the park’s future. They often serve as critical overseers of one another and of the Park Service itself, and generate funding that the park badly needs. Despite differences of opinion over what the park ought to be, these groups provide an element of credibility to Washington’s efforts at increasing public involvement.

In 2010, the Park Service held public meetings trying to determine how to deal with the serious problems it faces at Little Bighorn. Meanwhile, the NPS transferred its museum and archive collection to the Western Archaeological and Conservation Center in Tucson, Arizona, amid concerns that the artifacts and other materials might not survive another rainstorm like the one that flooded the visitor center basement in 2011. The park's historian continued to lament the fact that there has never been a systematic archaeological survey of the two miles of land along the Little Bighorn, the river where the Cheyenne and Lakota camped, that is not part of the national monument and is not accessible to the public because it is now part of the Crow reservation. At the time of the battle, there were 1,000 tepees and 8,000 people at the encampment. "There is still a time capsule there," he said, speaking of the land owned by the tribe that also made a last stand on the land.⁴⁷ An NPS veteran who had served as a legislative affairs specialist in the NPS Washington Office was named superintendent at Little Bighorn in September 2012, inheriting a battle, and a battlefield, that forces enemies to confront one another once again.

From this last set of examples, here is no doubt things can go awfully awry with cooperating associations. When they do, a cooperating association's boards and members can then transition themselves into both unofficial and official friends and partners, continuing to support the park as well as fighting their ongoing battles. Nonetheless, it is also important to stress that longevity, stability, and few missteps characterize many of the organizations. Despite the challenges of book publishing and retail sales, running field institutes, and dealing with government bureaucracy, in fulfilling the agency's educational, interpretive and scientific mission, cooperating associations are really more than just the bookstore people.

Chapter 6

Issues, Trends, and New Directions

There is perhaps no better example of a national park that could use some friends than Nicodemus National Historic Site. Nicodemus *ought* to be an important stop for visitors interested in westward expansion and the history of slavery. It is significant and symbolic because it is the last remaining post-Reconstruction western town established by African Americans. The Nicodemus Town Company was founded in 1877 by six black men and a white land developer who recruited 350 pioneer settlers from Kentucky to move to Kansas, a free state where they could start their own self-governed community. Named after a man said to have come to the US on a slave ship who bought his freedom, Nicodemus' leaders invited "Colored People of the United States" to settle in the Great Solomon Valley of Kansas, a "Western Eden" that some considered the Promised Land.¹ In its heyday in the 1880s, the population of Nicodemus was about 700 people, with a thriving economy that included hotels, a bank, livery stable, newspapers, and churches. The town's leaders hoped to have the railroad come through their community, but it passed further south and some residents moved to be closer to the train line. Later, the interstate bypassed the town, too. The population was listed at 59 in 2010, according to the US Census.

The park was established originally as a National Historic Landmark in 1976, and then designated as a National Historic Site in 1996, largely at the behest of Kansas Senator Bob Dole. It consists of five buildings within 161 acres, which some writers call a ghost town, where the buildings are "in disrepair and unsafe to enter."² The National Park Service's (NPS) seven staff and an intern or two operate out of rented space in the Nicodemus Township Hall that is referred to as "temporary" in NPS documents, since the building is owned by the Township Board. The other four buildings include the African

Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church built in 1885 and closed in the 1950s; the First Baptist Church, completed in 1907; the St. Francis Hotel built in 1881; and the Nicodemus Schoolhouse, built in 1918 on the site of the original structure that burned down. The AME Church has a wall missing, but is owned by the Park Service. The Schoolhouse, which was used until 1955 and purchased by the American Legion in 1983, has an unstable foundation; the cost of lifting the building up and putting it down on a new foundation is estimated at \$250,000. The visitor center, which consists mostly of static exhibits on folding displays, is housed in a Works Progress Administration building completed in 1939; the Township Board hopes that one day the building, which also serves as a community center, can be restored. There is a suspicious attitude toward the Park Service, and locals, who are not interested in selling any of their land for a new visitor center, sometimes confuse NPS staff with game wardens. The bookstore is operated by the park's cooperating association, Western National Parks Association (WNPA), and consists of a couple of overstuffed chairs, a few tables and lamps, and a pair of shelved hutches. The hotel, also known as the Fletcher-Switzer residence, which is believed to be the site of the first African American-operated post office in the US, also was a school and a stagecoach station, and is now privately owned. There is a short film to watch and a brochure for the short walking tour at the visitor center; the other four buildings are signed but not open to the public. As one recent traveler noted, "The dilapidated buildings, outdated signs, vacant lots, and absence of people all tell the visitor that no one cares about this place. This site appears abandoned not only by residents but by the National Park Service, Congress, and the American people."³

With a \$600,000 annual park budget, and fewer than 3,000 annual visitors, the Park Service has clearly not prioritized repairs, staff, or the enhancement or expansion of Nicodemus National Historic Site. There has been testing for the presence of lead paint around the buildings, and an April 2004 General Management Plan made numerous recommendations for upgrading the site.⁴ Other planning documents and reports subsequently have been completed, but little has changed on the ground.

The park's few friends include the Nicodemus Historical Society, which is working with the NPS on wayside exhibits through a cooperative agreement, and which plans the town's annual Emancipation/Homecoming Celebration in late July. WNPA sometimes provides support such as supplying lunch for the swearing in of the youth participating in the Junior Ranger Day event. The National Park

Foundation's (NPF) African American Experience Fund (AAEF) provided assistance in 2010 for the design of quilts depicting the Untold Story of A Kansas National Park. In some years, the NPF has also provided grants to enable the park to participate in other Park Service and NPF programs.

But the NPF's contributions to Nicodemus pale in comparison to its funding through AAEF of other national parks for "the opportunity to experience these national treasures firsthand and unearth little known facts and stories about the considerable contributions of African Americans throughout our nation's history."⁵ The other 25 or so sites supported by the AAEF, such as the Martin Luther King, Jr. National Historic Site and the Tuskegee Institute National Historic Site, are better known and better funded by both the Park Service and external organizations. The few checks mailed to the superintendent listed on the Nicodemus website cannot begin to pay for what the park needs, nor do the coins and dollars deposited in an acrylic donation box. In a time of shrinking federal budgets and the sequester, even maintenance, let alone expansion, suffers. Two other sites added to the national park system in 1996 when Nicodemus was designated a National Historic Site, Tallgrass Prairie Preserve in Kansas and Washita Battlefield National Historic Site in Oklahoma, have new visitor centers. Nicodemus does not. As one observer notes, "It's not surprising that the site lies at the bottom of the budgetary food chain. To top it off, Nicodemus lacks powerful advocates. Tallgrass Prairie has support from a major environmental trust and a Texas billionaire, among others. Nicodemus has no such supporter."⁶

As the preceding chapters have shown, there is no doubt that the tangible and intangible benefits provided by friends and cooperating associations are substantial. These partnerships are exceptionally valuable at a time when the economy is still recovering from an economic downturn, and the future foretells more negative financial news. As the Nicodemus example illustrates, parks without friends are parks without resources.

When parks do have friends, they come in various forms and shapes; no one size fits all. Yet there are also issues, trends, and new directions that need to be addressed. As this chapter discusses, both the NPS and its partners have constituency building challenges, and the need to attract a younger and more ethnically and culturally diverse visitor base. Using a frosting/cake analogy, it also argues that instead of providing goods and services over and beyond basic park needs, friends groups are increasingly being put in the position of supporting core functions. While philanthropic partnerships can be

highly productive, they can also be problematic depending on the unique circumstances that each park faces, from the personalities and management styles of agency and group leadership to the political resources each partner brings to the relationship. Given the increasing emphasis on partnerships as the way to do business, each could benefit from more transparency, accountability, and oversight. Finally, among developments to be watched in the future are the potential mergers into one group of the fundraising objectives of friends groups with the educational purposes of cooperating associations, the emergence of for-profit entities to challenge the traditional role of cooperating associations, and a stepped-up search for new funding mechanisms and additional private–public partnerships for funding basic park operations.

Partnerships Have Constituency Building Challenges

Historically, the Park Service has depended on two primary constituencies. The first constituency is the broad, diverse segment made up of summer visitors who travel to the national parks, who seek recreational opportunities, who consider the parks part of a public good belonging to them that is simply managed by the Park Service, and who are generally unaware of the political and funding issues the agency faces. The second constituency is composed of environmental and preservation-oriented groups who have sometimes been politically perceived as extremists on the fringe of society with a narrow and restrictive agenda, even though they serve a valuable role as protectors of the parks and watchdogs over the NPS. Political support for what the Park Service does—“the existence of an optimal-size constituency on which the agency generally can count”⁷—is one of the key resources an agency can use to advance its mission.

In terms of the visitor constituency, the numbers are on the side of the Park Service. Despite a forecast that national park recreational visits would rise about 1 percent between 2011 and 2012 after the downturn during the recession,⁸ statistics show a nearly 2 percent increase in visitation and a similar increase in total sales/visitor spending. The national economic significance of visitor spending, the NPS notes, “further reverberates throughout the national economy in a domino effect of spending by supporting businesses and households.”⁹ NPS Director Jon Jarvis told members of Congress in April 2013 that not only are national parks valuable economic drivers for nearby communities, they have a ten to one return on investment for the nation.¹⁰ In short, the national parks are good for business.

Reaching for Youth

As the post–World War II Baby Boomers get older, and their descendants become a more potent force both politically and economically, the Park Service must reach out to an America much different than ever before. As part of the 2012 Call to Action’s theme of connecting people to parks even in times of constraint, the NPS is challenged to “create deep connections between a younger generation and parks through a series of diverse park experiences.”

One new program that is helping to bridge that gap is the NPF’s Ticket to Ride project, which helps students visit a national park near their homes and schools. Funding from sponsors such as the Disney Worldwide Conservation Fund brings students to the park for location-based learning with in-park educational programming and meals in addition to transportation costs for the field trips, expenses that many schools and families cannot afford. NPF and the Disney program realize that these visits, which are often the first time a child has been to a national park, not only help a new generation to discover their cultural and natural heritage, but may also help them build a lifelong relationship with national parks.¹¹

But the Park Service, as well as friends groups and cooperating associations, have come somewhat late to the realization that the country’s changing demographics require changes on their part, too. While most of the reports about the graying of park visitors are merely anecdotal, and statistics about visitation can vary due to sampling errors and changes in the way visitors are counted, one university analysis of park attendance figures shows that visitors at some parks are definitely getting older. It is hard to compare apples to apples because of the scarcity of longitudinal data, but at Rocky Mountain National Park, for example, the average age of visitors, which used to be late 20s and early 30s, is now 46.¹² Unless the Park Service is willing and able to market its sites to a younger demographic, and a demographic that votes, the agency will continue to stumble in its efforts to secure political support and funding.

Indicative of the disconnect between older and younger generations, for example, is the Eugene O’Neill National Historic Site. Once best known as a popular author and playwright, O’Neill is no longer on every high school student’s reading list. The group that was instrumental in getting the park unit established has gotten older, and many of those who were active in preserving his California home, Tao House, have passed away. Friends group meetings are held in the daytime because members are older and retired, and it has been a struggle

for the organization to find someone willing to be president, a situation that is not unique to this site but one found in other groups that are On Life Support. Unfortunately it is also a situation that applies to many non-profits generally.

While national parks overall did indeed see an increase in visitors in 2012, 15 of 21 sites in Arizona reported a third straight year of decline; a 22 percent decline since 1993. While the iconic Grand Canyon saw an increase in visitors, Lake Mead National Recreation Area and Montezuma Castle, Wupatki, Sunset Crater Volcano, and Organ Pipe National Monuments saw fewer visitors. An analyst at one of the state's universities noted that the parks are up against a younger generation that isn't as interested in outdoor recreation; they prefer to play video games inside. Moreover, "During the mid-90s, visitation from Europe was high, and the Baby Boomers were in their prime travel years... Since then, international visitation has been going down and we're getting fewer visitors from Europe because of economic problems and aging populations."¹³

Nowhere is the need for building an enduring constituency for the parks more evident than at the nation's battlefield and military parks. For a younger generation, wars fought on American soil are not as germane to their life experiences or interests as they were to prior generations. One friends group leader noted that as generations change, the group will need to develop new constituencies to support its park unit. "Corporate sponsors are unfamiliar with a military park, and we are not being branded well within the NPS," he said. As a result, some friends groups are turning toward other partners, such as the Civil War Trust, for help. Since 1996, that organization has sponsored Park Day as part of the Department of the Interior's Take Pride in America events. Another Civil War park participated in Unilever's National Parks America Tour program, which brought hundreds of volunteers and local youth groups to help restore portions of the site. And it was the Civil War Trust, not a friends group, which was responsible for leading the efforts to increase the size of the Gaines' Mill unit of Richmond National Battlefield Park from 65 acres to 345 acres at a cost of \$3.2 million.

Friends groups could, and should, help bridge the gap between the generations that grew up vacationing in a national park, and the generation tied to electronic devices, social media, and a life spent largely indoors. Friends groups could also continue, and support, the traditions of conservationism and environmentalism that flourished after the first Earth Day in 1970. The generation gap of national park supporters who lead and participate in many friends groups is already

at, if not past, retirement age. As the former president of the National Parks Conservation Association (NPCA) noted, “If we do not do a better job of inviting young people to the national parks and providing the funding to be able to do that the parks will become less relevant.”¹⁴ So will the groups that have done so much to aid the parks philanthropically.

Ethnic and Cultural Diversity

In addition to bridging generational gaps, NPS constituencies need to become more ethnically and culturally diverse. For too long, parks have been seen as mainly frequented by, and supported by, mostly relatively well-to-do white folks, despite agency efforts to recognize the need to embrace diversity. The Call to Action directs the agency to “welcome and engage diverse communities through culturally relevant park stories and experiences that are accessible to all.” Or, as the NPCA puts it, “With demographers predicting that in 50 years the nation’s Asian population will double and the Latino community will triple, leaving white Americans the country’s new minority, much more of the stewardship support for the parks will need to come from ethnic groups not currently flocking to the parks.”¹⁵ One national NPS official said in an interview, “We are really going to need to look at partnerships for the underserved who don’t see themselves relating to parks. If we want to save ourselves we need to expand.”

Numerous studies and reports have documented the lack of diversity among national park visitors. The National Visitor Services Project (VSP), for instance, found that in 1994, only 7 percent of visitor groups were ethnic minorities, and a 1999 review of other VSP studies indicated that 90 percent of visitor groups were largely whites of European descent.¹⁶ In the Park Service’s first comprehensive diversity survey, published in 2003, only 13 percent of African American respondents, 27 percent of Hispanic Americans, 29 percent of Asians, and 36 percent of white non-Hispanics reported visiting an NPS unit within the previous two years.¹⁷ Eight years later, in 2011, a follow-up survey found that visitation by racial and ethnic minorities hadn’t changed all that much.¹⁸

Social scientists have grappled with the issue of why minorities are less likely than whites to visit national parks. Perhaps it is because many sites used to gloss over painful issues by gently referring to the “servant’s quarters,” for example, rather than openly calling them slave quarters, or by exalting the fortitude of the US military against hostile and savage Indians. Perhaps, it has also been hypothesized,

minorities have less disposable income because of historic patterns of racial discrimination, and therefore do not fully participate in cultural and social societal institutions such as recreation. Others believe that the divergent norms, value systems, and socialization practices of different racial and ethnic groups determine whether they have a propensity to utilize national parks. Park visitors' perceptions of discrimination when they travel to or visit a national park may also affect their desire to return. Regardless of why visitation does not reflect demography, and that there are perceptions of discrimination, respondents in the most recent NPS diversity survey said the reason they do not visit more often is that they "just don't know that much about National Park System units."¹⁹

Fostering diversity will be a challenge for both the Park Service and its partners for some time to come. The NPS, however, is making some strides in working with friends groups and partners that represent historically under-represented groups, and as a by-product, building its constituency. It established an American Indian Liaison Office in 1995, for instance, to improve relationships between American Indian tribes, Alaska Natives, Native Hawaiians, and the agency. The office functions as a way to enhance the content of interpretive programs and museum exhibits and to improve the content and images in park brochures and films, signage, and many others aspects of park operations. In 2003, a draft plan, *Making Parks Matter: Ensuring the Organizational Survival of the National Park Service*, recognized the need to address the agency's culture during a period of increasing diversification. Other programs have been established to increase the talent pool of minority students and graduates including youth programs to help young Americans from different economic, ethnic, social, and cultural backgrounds gain access to the parks. More recently through the agency's social science program, numerous research reviews and technical reports have been conducted to describe and analyze the diversity of visitors and non-visitors to the national park system.

Some progress has also been made at individual park sites. California's Manzanar National Historic Site, for example, is a painful legacy of World War II and the United States' highly questionable involuntary internment of Japanese American citizens in special camps. (Debate still continues whether such sites should be called war relocation centers, internment camps, relocation camps, or concentration camps.) Established as a national historic site in 1992, the park's story is told because of the efforts of the Manzanar Committee and the Friends of Manzanar. The annual Manzanar Pilgrimage to the site, which started in 1969 with 200 participants—many of them students

who were the sons and daughters of Americans of Japanese descent—now includes over 1,000 participants from across the United States. Through reconstructed historical structures, interpretive exhibits, and oral histories, Manzanar provides a connection to a shameful past that goes far beyond what the site's initial supporters could have done on their own.

Friends groups also need to guard against becoming, either in perception or reality, elites seeking to protect “their parks” for the type of visitor experiences they desire, the resources they want to preserve, or the historical story they want to tell. To do so, boards need to be diversified, giving voice to the various ethnicities and income strata that currently are too often muted.

Partners Fund the Frosting, *and* the Cake Too

It is likely that the vast majority of people who visit national parks think that the parks' expenses are fully covered by congressional appropriations. Although there may be awareness of the ups and downs of the NPS budget resulting from media attention on cuts facing federal agencies and services, and some recognition of the role of entrance fees and concessioner contract revenues, it is far more likely that the general public is largely unaware of the function of partners in paying for the cost of operating a national park. Knowledge about the financial position of individual parks or how the funding process works is limited to Washington insiders and the most attentive of interest groups.

During this study many friends groups, cooperating associations, and the parks themselves readily pointed out that the purpose of their partnerships is to provide the “margin of excellence” or “value-added component” to national parks—the difference between the park's basic operating and management budget (the “cake”) and the programs and services that transform ordinary parks into extraordinary ones (the “frosting”). As one former superintendent noted: “One of the primary goals of a Friends group is ‘to aid and directly promote management programs and objectives of the Site for which no government or other donated funds are available.’ Parks are not allowed to buy certain things, such as food for special events, and we rely on our partners for assistance. We also rely on our partners to raise funds for projects we can't afford or get funding for. Many grant opportunities require non-federal matching funds.”²⁰

Moreover, friends groups enable parks to circumvent a great deal of their own government bureaucracy. National parks cannot conduct

their own fundraising programs, so they rely on partners to do what parks themselves are forbidden to do. When a park “touches” the donation box at a park site, for example, it is government money subject to all government regulations regarding permissible uses, procurement, and contracting. When a friends group manages the donation box, all the funds collected are handled by the friends. Proceeds from the donation box can thus be used to buy food for the park’s volunteer appreciation event. (One individual even left a sizeable bequest to a park—through the NPF—specifying that the funds be used to support volunteer appreciation events at the unit to ensure volunteer recognition “wasn’t simply potlucks.”) In another example, WNPA paid for period-appropriate food and supplies for the Living History Encampment demonstrators at Bent’s Old Fort National Historic Site in Colorado—again, expenses the Park Service is not allowed to pay for. For such reasons, a superintendent may prefer not to have anything to do with managing donation boxes or other donations, preferring that money goes to the park’s nonprofits. Without all the strings, the nonprofit can more easily and more quickly do any of the purchasing or contracting that a project might need.

However, as several executive directors remarked, “What was once icing on the cake is now the cake.” Many friends groups and cooperating associations have gone beyond support at the margins of Park Service operations and have now become an integral part of the funding equation; donations from partners, whether nonprofit or corporate, are a major source of funding supplementing what Congress hath taken away. As a result, nonprofit partners are also paying for the “cake.”

But it isn’t just food for volunteer events that makes friends groups vitally important to park operations. At Yellowstone National Park, for example, the Yellowstone Park Foundation committed \$1 million in 2012 to a native fish conservation program that was part of a 2011 NPS plan, matched one for one with federal funding. Biologists estimated that Yellowstone Lake and the Yellowstone River had lost 90 percent of indigenous cutthroat trout by 2012.²¹ The park’s superintendent noted that the loss of native Yellowstone cutthroats “could have dramatic consequences for the entire ecosystem. Funding from the Yellowstone Park Foundation and its supporters will help us maximize our existing resources and opportunities to preserve native cutthroat trout before it’s too late.”²² An additional \$100,000 grant was made in April 2013 to help identify the source of invasive rainbow trout in Slough Creek, which has been a stronghold for the native species. The project is estimated to take five more years and \$5 million

in private funding to restore native trout to mid-1990s levels. The Yellowstone Park Foundation noted, in a press release announcing another \$600,000 in new project grants to Yellowstone in 2013, that the group's "mission and agreement with the National Park Service is to provide funding for specific projects that are above and beyond the daily operations of Yellowstone National Park."²³ Without the Foundation's donation, the native fish program could not have been implemented. But if the loss of the trout is truly central to ecosystem health, is this really "frosting?" Or have the grants made by the Yellowstone Park Foundation now funding projects that more properly should be paid for by annual appropriations to the Park Service?

In an instance at another national park, a park employee noted that without summer interns there would be virtually be no archeological work done at the site, an important element of the park's mission. At still another site, Delaware Gap National Recreation Area, a local company made a \$41,000 donation to allow the park to open Milford Beach, which was scheduled to be closed in the summer of 2013 because of the sequester. The NPS provided the funding for lifeguards and fee collectors, and the donor covered the operational and maintenance costs.²⁴ Along with the plowing of the Sun Road discussed in chapter 4, are these examples frosting or park obligation? Should friends and partners be building visitor centers and parking garages, providing transportation, supplying tools, or paying the salaries of seasonal staff? What about deferred maintenance? How much more of basic park activities will partners be expected to cover when future budget cuts are made, and if the private sector does continue to pick these things up why shouldn't Congress view private funding as a logical and preferred outcome?

These somewhat ordinary, and often essential items, appear to be the kinds of expenses the Park Service should pay for, and ones the public might expect their taxpayer dollars to go toward as well. Many group and park representatives cling to the "frosting" rationale while, in the very next breath, citing examples of how friends groups help with basic park services and functions such as visitor services, seasonal employees hires, or trail maintenance. Increasingly it is difficult to differentiate between activities that are the "frosting" and activities that are the "cake."

Perhaps as a result, some groups expressed frustration that they are being treated like an ATM, where NPS staff can simply go to them for funding items or projects they cannot fund through NPS resources. Others explained how they funded activities and even personnel that the park superintendent used to budget for, but where funding has

disappeared. But is the ATM metaphor accurate or just a complaint from group members who felt their organization was being nickel-and-dimed to death? As the 2012 NPF survey of friends groups found, some organizations reported as little as zero dollars in revenue.²⁵ Sometimes, there is no ATM for Park Service personnel to use.

Several prominent park supporters have also publicly raised concerns about whether private support, including volunteers and contributions from friends groups, is being used to replace federal dollars rather than adding value to the national park. The president of the Coalition of National Park Service Retirees testified before the Senate Subcommittee on National Parks that as parks rely more on additional private sources such as volunteers, interns, foundations, donations, and friends groups to carry out the basic functions of managing a national park, they no longer provide a margin of excellence. “While we celebrate and congratulate the spirit of voluntarism, friends groups, and foundations, the inability of the federal government to carry out its core responsibilities has blurred the bright funding line that must exist between those responsibilities of the government and those of an assisting partner. This places a heavy burden upon the philanthropic organizations seeking funds for parks who must answer queries about why the government is unable to adequately fund our parks and questioning the true commitment of this nation to adequately provide for its national park system.”²⁶

Having spent 34 years with the Park Service and six as superintendent of Grand Canyon National Park from 1994–2000, the coalition’s leader has frequently criticized the use of the term “service-level reductions” as a euphemism for “cuts, pure and simple;” all the outside sources combined he says cannot fill the gap in basic functions. “Even with all that generosity of voluntarism and philanthropy, the system is still falling behind.”²⁷

Similar comments have been made by David Rockefeller, Jr., legacy of the notable park-philanthropic Rockefellers and former vice-chair of the NPF. He referred to the “bright line” between the federal responsibility and the private opportunity. “I believe that the American people—especially the large sophisticated donors—need to have assurances that their private dollars will not be used to offset public responsibilities.”²⁸

A few friends groups, however, provided another perspective. They were more sanguine about the need for friends groups to take on the task of raising money for things that can be fairly argued are basic park operations. One group works on trails for the multiple parks it serves—a function it stresses and one that it believes provides

important visitor experiences and volunteer and stewardship opportunities. Its executive director sees no problem making the argument to donors that they should be giving money to support trails, which some might argue are core park responsibilities. Given the funding realities, “People here ‘get that’ because they love their parks.” At another park, projects include educational projects, natural resource protection, infrastructure maintenance and repair—“almost anything the park does. But it is project specific. There is a lot of deferred maintenance. Yes, we are doing things Congress should be funding. It’s a private-public partnership. People understand that. We don’t get that much pushback from the idea. People understand the partnership and don’t get upset and argue that Congress should be doing it.”

In a couple of urban parks, group leaders commented quite pointedly that the parks’ public spaces had “gone to pot.” Yet, despite these sharp criticisms, they were also cognizant of the need not to denigrate the agency, its overworked and underresourced employees, or Congress. Building a fundraising campaign around implications that the agency or Congress weren’t doing their jobs, they realized, might harm personal relationships with park staff, create political pushback from the agency, and irritate Congress whose fiscal support is needed to fix the problems.

There are now 401 units in the national park system, and the number keeps growing; so do the agency’s other programs and responsibilities. Since the beginning of this study in 2010 the national park system has grown from 392 units to 401. Currently, on the NPS planning website, 19 active Special Resource Studies (conducted for areas that are candidates for inclusion into the national park system) are listed; dozens more were included in a list published in June 2011.²⁹ In addition, a November 2012 meeting of the National Park Service Advisory Board had consideration of the designation of another 18 new historic and natural landmarks to add to the agency’s roster.³⁰ More responsibilities; Fewer resources. Philanthropy through cooperating associations and friends groups will only grow more essential as a critical part of core park funding. With a constant barrage of headlines about sequestration, fiscal cliffs, and debt ceilings, pledges not to raise taxes by any direct or indirect means, and a rising crescendo of calls to cut government spending, the funding noose is getting tighter. It is inevitable that outside philanthropic groups will either be asked, or feel compelled, to provide the wherewithal for core park maintenance and cultural and natural resource conservation. The “frosting,” “margin of excellence,” and “value-added” rationales for the role of friends groups are rapidly becoming outdated—more myth than reality.

Partnerships Can Be Productive but Also Problematic

While superintendents had mostly positive things to say about the support friends groups and cooperating associations groups provide, noting that “successful parks need successful partners,” there were some exceptions. And along with cited benefits, the partners, too, were quick to point out the problems they faced in dealing with both their park unit staff and the NPS generally.

Superintendents Are Key

One factor that was made abundantly clear is that superintendents are key in determining how effectively the partnership works. Some superintendents said that they could not operate effectively or serve the public without the assistance of partners. They are genuinely grateful for the support the partner provides, and they demonstrate that spirit in how volunteers, paid staff, and members of the partner’s board of directors are treated. Some superintendents feel that how well they interact with their partners can affect their job performance evaluation, so they make attempts to work with their partners. The 2012 NPF survey also reported that respondents stressed the importance of park leadership in sustaining successful partnerships and good working relationships between groups and the park.³¹ Ideally, there is a spirit of collaboration that allows partners and the parks they support to work in tandem with one another.

A superintendent who is supportive of partnerships can make all the difference in determining whether the relationship between the park and the partner is a positive one. As one partner appropriately and succinctly summarized, “The supervisor sets the tone.” One park without a friends group for many years started one when, after a series of superintendents came and left nearly every two years, a new one arrived who had experience with developing organizations at other parks. This superintendent actively encouraged citizens to participate in the planning and operation of the park, and helped form an official group before leaving. Arrangements were made to provide the friends group with office space in the new visitor center, and the superintendent also helped set up a revenue stream to provide the organization with a steady source of income. In other instances, superintendents are purposively brought in to help with existing groups that can be characterized as On Life Support. Bringing in new superintendents and/or chiefs of interpretation skilled in working with partnerships and committed to collaborative relationships can sometimes significantly change groups as well as parks.³²

Conversely, one group mentioned that they had previously had a superintendent who exhibited flexibility, who was then replaced by a superintendent who is more “black and white,” more bureaucratic, and more apt to erect roadblocks. The group leader said when leadership changes, the task is to get a sense of each new superintendent and to adjust accordingly. Another described its superintendent as “expecting more than we can give,” and very “official, which doesn’t work well in a small town where everyone knows everyone else.” Yet another had worked with nine superintendents in four years. “In order to progress in the NPS system you need to rotate, but the reality is that partnerships require persistence and stability.”

With cooperating associations, it also depends on how much a superintendent delegates to his/her chief of interpretation, how much leeway in turn is given to the cooperative association, whether there are different ideas of what should be sold in park bookstores, or whether or not the park even wants to continue a relationship. Tensions can develop, divorces occur. Just as tough relationships can be improved, so can good partnerships be soured with changes in leadership.

. Superintendents are also the bridge between the group and the park staff. As one respondent in the 2012 NPF survey reported: “The Park Superintendent is the person in the Park with a very strong understanding of what a Friends group can and does do for the Park. Front line staff does not fully understand the Friends and how the Friends can be helpful to the Park. This can often cause frustration in trying to get staff to be forthcoming with needed information, supportive of Friends’ programming, and cooperative in trying to work together . . . We have a very good relationship with the Superintendent but the staff can view our work as additive to their already stretched workload.”³³

In many parks, NPS personnel, cooperating association personnel, and volunteers are all visible to the average visitor. While ideally a seamless relationship, issues can nonetheless surface over who has control and whether one group should be helping another out. To members of the public, all of the “staff” looks the same, and they are not likely to make a distinction among affiliations when they ask a question of an available person wearing a uniform or an official name tag. A park employee, for example, who enters the bookstore area but exudes an attitude of “that’s not my job” when asked to assist, does not cement either positive visitor experiences or good park-partner relationships. A park superintendent who understands the importance of a cooperating association to the financial health of the park can

reinforce the idea that when park personnel assist with the cooperating association's bookstore operations they are really helping themselves. Another superintendent pointed out that parks can do a better job acknowledging the work friends do, and one group leader almost begged to have the superintendent thank volunteers for their help. Occasionally staff forgets to mention their friends. There is a need to get every level of the park—and not just upper management—to appreciate and openly acknowledge what friends bring to the park.

Likewise, leadership within the partner groups need to instill the attitude that their job is not to manage the park but to help the park, and not just to make the group prosper but to make the park prosper. Groups need to find the balance between what the park needs and what donor groups get excited about and want to support. Said a representative of one organization, "We need the 'best of us is the best of them' attitude."

Although the Park Service is making strides to reward superintendents for their partnership skills, not all superintendents view friends in a positive light. At one small park, the superintendent viewed the friends group as a nuisance, except when something was needed from it. The superintendent said that it was more important to rely on one's own personality and relationships built over a 20-year stint at the park, rather than a friends group. The superintendent noted that this is especially true in a small community. "By developing relationships over two decades, I can make a telephone call or drop in on a government official to get something done. The [friends group] was really only a vehicle, as a nonprofit organization, for me to do what I was doing anyway, not really a supporter of the park."

A handful of superintendents indicated that from their perspective, partners are more trouble than they are worth because they require supervision and yet contribute little to the park. The superintendent at one park noted that upon arriving at the park, "friends groups had a bad reputation." This superintendent did not see a need for a new group to be formed, considering the current group to be "dormant" until a project or needed item could be identified and local residents called upon to help raise the necessary funds. Another superintendent pointed out how much time it took wrangling volunteers, attending friends group meetings, and the cost of having staff members diverted from their regular duties to manage them. Another respondent characterized the relationship with friends groups in former job postings as "testy," remarking that the "friends groups were no friends of mine."

Certainly working with partners takes diplomatic skill. Superintendents have to manage "friendly disagreements" with a

group so that they don't get out of hand. They have to carefully remind friends groups that their role is not to question management decisions or make unilateral decisions about what should be done at a site. They need to have patience with boards that don't understand what it takes to work in a bureaucracy with all the laws, regulations, policies, and director's orders that guide the superintendent. Knowing where to draw the line is not easy. Friends groups aren't supposed to take positions, but it is also true that in educating members about issues they can sometimes say things more strongly than the park—which can either work to the detriment or advantage of the park. Superintendents may sometimes also need to convince groups that the park simply doesn't have the staff to commit to implementing a project the group wants to promote—no matter how laudable—perhaps even confronting an attitude of “how can the NPS stop us from doing what they should be doing?” In addition, superintendents sometimes need to put the kibosh on totally unrealistic plans and proposals. For example, one friends group board member, upon hearing that the park unit was acquiring lands with sensitive riparian habitat, suggested that the park should consider using the land to build an RV park to generate funds. The superintendent had to politely explain that it couldn't and shouldn't do that.

The 800 Pound Gorillas

Cases where a partner is perceived as being powerful—perhaps even more powerful than the NPS or the superintendent—can also work to the success or detriment of a park. When there is a good working relationship among the friends group, the superintendent, and staff of both organizations, a powerful friends group can raise millions of dollars, cement external relationships, build a constituency for the park, and amass a staggering record of accomplishments. Such is the case with one Rich and Thriving group, the Golden Gate National Parks Conservancy, where the organization has been hugely successful in courting private support, mounting large capital campaigns, and developing close ties to the community.

Considered “the new urban park,”³⁴ Golden Gate National Recreation Area has grown to 75,000 acres, and the NPS partnership with the Golden Gate National Parks Conservancy is responsible for spearheading projects well beyond the capacity of most friends groups. The restoration of a former military base at Crissy Field, including the creation of a tidal marsh, open space meadow, promenade, and a center for arts that includes a well-publicized restaurant, is only one

of the group's successes. The group has also established the Golden Gate Raptor Observatory, funded and built the Muir Woods Visitor Center, launched night tours of Alcatraz, completed a new seed and plant laboratory, and restored a campground that is the only facility of its kind in San Francisco.

In 2012, the group capitalized on the seventy-fifth anniversary celebration of the Golden Gate Bridge in a three-way effort among the Conservancy, the park, and a new partner, the Golden Gate Bridge, Highway and Transportation District. The Conservancy was able to underwrite construction of a new bridge pavilion store stocked with newly developed books, brochures, and merchandise oriented to telling the bridge story. Proceeds from bridge pavilion retail sales and bridge tours will provide the Conservancy with another stream of earned income in addition to that derived from its already highly profitable Alcatraz audio tour tapes. Earned income enables the group to cover its own overhead expenses without having to raise funds for that, and provides the slack resources it can reinvest in future ventures. The Conservancy's budget is now larger than the park's, and the group has more staff than the Park Service at the site.

The park has had only two superintendents who have worked with the Conservancy since it was established in 1981 as the Golden Gate National Parks Association, and relationships have been largely positive. Likewise, the executive director has been at the Conservancy for over 20 years. Executive leadership of the group inculcates a positive culture toward its partnership responsibilities and role, which is reflected throughout the group's organization. In addition, the Conservancy purposefully works to foster a "culture of appreciation" that constantly recognizes its own donors and volunteers, so that no one who contributes to the organization believes they are taken for granted, whether it is an individual, a grammar school class, or its local congressional representative, the minority leader of the US House of Representatives.

Such 800-pound gorillas can stoke criticism from competing groups who envy their success and compare their lack of resources to those of the more prosperous group. There is the also danger that a successful group could flounder when the leadership of the group changes or the superintendent moves on to another park and new philosophies, management styles, or personalities begin to clash. A smooth, beneficial partnership becomes dysfunctional, making real the old cliché that the bigger they are, the harder they fall. Alternatively, situations can arise where the group becomes even stronger, running roughshod over park management. One superintendent, describing

the situation in a former park assignment, commented that the group there “operated under the Golden Rule. They have the gold, and so they get to rule.” In other instances, the success of the relationship may be dependent on a superintendent who basks in the partner’s glory or one who chooses not to rock the boat because of the group’s political or philanthropic connections, another unhealthy situation.

Sometimes, a powerful friends group can create “high tension” with a superintendent and/or the NPS when the group believes it can run things better than the Park Service and politically acts upon its positions. This has happened in several cases where a group has bypassed a superintendent by going to higher ups in regional or Washington offices or bypassed the Park Service itself and gone to a state or a congressional delegation. In other cases, a group may have strong local political support and non-park partnerships it can successfully mobilize to play against a weaker park partner. There are 800-pound friendly gorillas and 800-pound monster gorillas.

Finally, by attempting to make up the federal shortfalls of assistance to a park, groups can become so powerful that they exacerbate long-standing tensions between the NPS and local residents, as is the case of the Friends of Virgin Islands National Park. There, as discussed in chapter 4, some local residents have resented the park’s friends group because of its lack of diversity, lack of concern for issues of interest to the local population, and disrespect for their unique and historical relationship with the island. “They [have] argued that they were tired of what they saw as the hypocrisy of Friends of Virgin Islands National Park and the park of ‘preserving paradise’ while accepting money from the real estate and tourism industries the locals believe had damaged the island’s environment.”³⁵

When a partner’s agenda becomes the tail that wags the dog, there is the ever-present danger that the group could in essence yield so much political power that park leadership is emasculated. It’s the slippery slope of diverting public control to private control. With more and more partners providing park necessities it can become increasingly difficult for parks to look the proverbial gift horse in the mouth, ceding more and more power to philanthropic partners to call the shots about what gets done or not done in a park and who does it.

Partnerships Need More Transparency, Accountability, and Oversight

One of the most obvious weaknesses in national park philanthropy is that much of what friends groups and cooperating associations do,

and even the Park Service itself does, is difficult to trace or analyze. As mentioned in chapters 4 and 5, it can be difficult to gather even simple data, such as an “official” list of friends groups, or the amount of financial assistance provided by cooperating associations. The issue of transparency exists not only in the NPS, but with philanthropic partners as well.

Both NPS and partner websites are often out-of-date, with a lack of information about financial reports, the status of general agreements, contact information, or even the names of the members of boards of directors, staff, or other types of disclosure common to nonprofit organizations. Some friends groups do not return telephone calls or respond to e-mails, not knowing whether the inquiry is from a researcher or a potential donor seeking background information about the group, its leadership, or its financial condition before donating. The main partnership website for the Park Service is labeled “under development” and appears to be stuck in that position. Lists of friends group are quickly outdated and no one seems able to know when a list might be updated. Attempts to obtain the most basic information are compounded by personnel changes in NPS staff in the Washington Office and important partnership positions have been left long unstaffed. One NPS official, for example, was unaware that a friends group had ceased operating months before, and seemed overwhelmed at the number of partners to be looked after. Some NPS staffers pointed the finger at their predecessor, blaming the lack of current data on an individual who had moved on, whether at the park level or in the Washington Office. Often, multiple requests for reports, lists, or NPS documents can go unanswered.

The difficulties encountered in obtaining current lists of friends groups might be explained by noting that in the 2012 NPF survey, 7 percent of respondents reported that they did not have a friends group agreement, and 12 percent were in the process of developing an agreement.³⁶ Although personnel changes can explain some of the reasons why the annual reports that cooperating associations are required to submit is so difficult to obtain, there also appears to be a lack of procedure and sufficient personnel on the part of the NPS to make sure that data are regularly and accurately compiled, analyzed, and made publicly available. The Park Service has the responsibility for maintaining up-to-date information on its partners and their financial and programmatic activities.

While the lack of cooperation can, in itself, be frustrating from a research perspective, it nonetheless also points to a larger question. Why is a public agency like the NPS (or a donor supported nonprofit

organization such as a friends group) unable to provide consistent reports about partnership operations and finances? Is it really the cost of dealing with a large bureaucracy, or with volunteers unfamiliar with the current philanthropic climate?

Or, to put it another way, what if a member of Congress were to ask the director of the NPS about the programmatic contributions of cooperating associations and friends groups, how much financial assistance they provide to the NPS, how many volunteer hours they contribute, and how much in-kind assistance they offer? Would the director be able to provide current reliable, well-documented information on the number of agreements the NPS has signed with the groups and group finances? Or would the numbers merely reflect guesstimates? For example, one 2007 NPS source reported that in FY 2005, partner contributions were over \$234 million, including \$68 million from friends groups, \$22 million from the NPF, \$53 from cooperating associations, \$91 million from volunteers, and nearly \$28 million in NPS donation accounts.³⁷ But there is no documentation or information that would allow anyone to verify those totals. Once reported, however, such figures become repeated and reified. In fact, as illustrated in chapters 4 and 5, the complexity of park philanthropy reporting makes it virtually impossible for anyone, including Congress and the Park Service, to really know how much money has been contributed, collected, or reported.

Among the friends groups, a few of the larger organizations, including, for example, the Appalachian Trail Conservancy, Yellowstone Park Foundation, and the Yosemite Conservancy, have made a concerted effort at transparency by meeting the accreditation standards of the Better Business Bureau Wise Giving Alliance. They have agreed to be rigorously evaluated, and meet the Alliance's standards for charity governance, finances, fundraising practices, website disclosures, and donor privacy. Others are evaluated by organizations such as Charity Navigator, which rates groups on their financial health and their accountability and transparency. The nonprofit groups, which include the Boston Harbor Island Alliance, Friends of Acadia, Friends of Great Smoky Mountains National Park, and the Grand Teton National Park Foundation, are given an overall score and additional information of value to donors.

The Sarbanes–Oxley Act of 2002 instituted new governance standards for the corporate sector. However, two provisions also apply specifically to nonprofit organizations as well as the corporate sector: whistleblower protection and document destruction. To assist donors, granting organizations, and others in making judgments

about a nonprofit organization's financial integrity, and the adequacy of its board governance and financial oversight capacities, IRS 990 forms also ask questions about board management and policies. These questions include whether the organization has written whistle blower, record retention, and conflict of interest policies, procedures for determining compensation of officers and staff, and documentation of meetings and actions taken by the governing body and any of its committees.

Even a cursory look at the publicly available materials on partner websites shows that most friends groups and cooperating associations do not include the materials considered part of the "best practices" measures of accountability and transparency recognized within the nonprofit sector or required by state nonprofit laws. For example, although some states have passed legislation requiring groups to have an annual audit, the requirements vary from state to state, with some states requiring an audit if spending is over \$100,000. The Wise Giving Alliance has suggested a trigger of \$250,000, while the organization Independent Sector suggests \$1 million. In the NPF's 2012 survey, 90 percent of the friends groups responding had an external audit in 2011 or 2012; 6 percent said their last audit had been in 2005 or prior.³⁸ However, audits can be very expensive, and even moderately prosperous groups can be challenged to find the \$7,000 to \$17,000 that might be required for a full-blown audit.

Several friends group leaders were unaware of either IRS or state nonprofit regulations or whether or not they had filed documents with the Park Service or IRS to report their activities. Even NPS officials were uncertain whether their partners were compiling annual reports, and if so, whether anyone within the Park Service reviewed or analyzed them. Group leaders often commented that the reports they filed seemed to disappear into a "black hole." Since about half of the friends groups that responded to the 2012 NPF survey depend solely on volunteers and have less than one full-time staff member, it is not surprising that engaging in the kinds of activities that enhance a group's transparency and accountability are overlooked. When asked the top three activities the group did as an organization, friends groups reported fundraising (57%), major events (52%), and program management (35%). The internal operations of the group, which conceivably included financial management, were listed as one of an organization's top three activities by only 17 percent of the respondents.³⁹ For smaller groups, the challenge of record keeping and overseeing the process of keeping internal governance procedures and processes formalized and up-to-date can take considerable time and effort,

activities that many members of a group may believe are not as important or rewarding as directing their time and energy directly toward fundraising or other “doing” activities.

But it is important. Nonprofit organizations are considered “public benefit” corporations—their purpose is to benefit public interests rather than those of their board members, staff, clients, or outside business partners. To be successful, according to the Council of Nonprofits, they need to earn the public’s trust through ethical leadership and responsible practices. “The goodwill earned by accountable and transparent nonprofits is one of, if not the most important, of its assets. Donors will give to organizations they trust to use their charitable gifts wisely. Volunteers will invest their time in causes when they trust that the nonprofit is acting ethically.”⁴⁰

For cooperating associations the requirements for reporting and accountability are much more rigorous. Part of the reason, of course, is because cooperating associations are likely to have revenues in excess of the threshold that exempt them from filing the Internal Revenue Service’s Form 990 or 990-EZ. Another reason is that donors expect it. Yet another is that groups view openness and annual report preparation as a marketing tool; it’s good business to publish accomplishments and publicize sound financial management. For example, three major groups: Eastern National, the Jefferson National Parks Association, and WNPA, make their annual reports readily available on their website. Jefferson National goes a step further. Its website includes a statement regarding public disclosure, its practices related to ethical integrity (including an annual conflict of interest statement for board members and senior staff) and financial integrity (an annual external audit), its whistleblower policy, and the organization’s policies on making its tax filings available. This could be a model for other groups to follow.

A June 2009 Government Accountability Office (GAO) report addressed several concerns Congress and others had raised about the potential risks of the philanthropic contributions the Park Service receives, including: inappropriately large construction projects promoted by fundraising friends that left taxpayers responsible for costly operations and maintenance; undue corporate influence, and the potential for commercialization of the parks. Other concerns addressed were activities where written agreements did not reflect changes in the scope of the projects, partnerships projects that did not necessarily reflect the Park Service’ own priorities, and failures to conform to existing fundraising policies.⁴¹ The report outlined several steps that could be taken to improve the management of donations and NPS

partnerships, and some important steps have been taken toward that goal. There are now guidelines aimed at ensuring that groups have the capacity to take on large fundraising projects before they are launched, that commitments can be met, and that maintenance as well as construction costs are accounted for in proposed new projects. Development of a standardized template for friends groups agreements will help the Park Service regularize its relationships with nonprofit groups and assist groups in developing a yearly workplan for their activities. But there is also little evidence that the agency has developed a long-range vision for partnerships and donations, a system that would enhance its information on donation and its partners, or a process to monitor compliance. It is also difficult to determine whether the Park Service has been successful in improving its employee's skills in understanding how its nonprofit and philanthropic partners work. Many of the deficiencies identified in the 2009 GAO report remain.

The time to address potential problems is before they occur, not after the damage and bad publicity occurs. It is clear that the NPS has less oversight, and that some partners operate with less supervision, the farther away they are from the Washington Office and the smaller the group. To date, the service-wide cooperating association coordinator in the agency's Washington Office has been oriented toward customer service and not enforcement. Regional coordinators see themselves as "enablers and not in a records management role." It is vitally important for the Park Service to develop a more systematic oversight program, including thorough reviews of partners' annual reports, audits, and other documentation. The lack of a thorough review of partner operations by the NPS invites operational abuse and the potential for the agency to lose the support of its constituency, and thus, funding by Congress and contributions from donors. Because philanthropic partnerships will increasingly become more important as a source of revenue for the parks, the agency needs to commit to providing the staff and resources for partnership oversight and monitoring as well as partnership cultivation at both Washington and regional levels.

That said, accountability and transparency are not without costs. The most commonly identified obstacle—identified by both NPS personnel and friends groups—for building collaboration and partnership was, perhaps understandably, the lawyers: lawyers who are more interested in making sure the agency suffers no harm than in fostering workable partnerships; lawyers who craft friends agreement templates with onerous, legal requirements and impenetrable legalese; lawyers who take untenable positions on intellectual property issues; lawyers who are driven to make everything the same despite

the vast differences in parks and groups; and lawyers that take too long drafting fundraising agreements that are excessively lengthy and impose burdensome restrictions that donors can't or won't abide by.

Acknowledging that there are now more regulatory requirements, one superintendent, for example, speculated that a successful partnership that built a visitor center at a previous park posting would probably not be done today since the partner could not have waited as long as it would now take. When the lawyers make things safe and consistent, asserted another superintendent, "it's a contract rather than a partnership." Said another: "The Park Service doesn't make it easy to be a friend." And another: "You don't make friends with accusatory language and legalese." A friends group leader cited how, after receiving back from the NPS a 66-page document four months after a local corporate donor expressed interest in putting a link to the fundraising group on its product, the donor withdrew the proposal. There is a "seemingly arcane view of fundraising," noted the executive director. "National parks need private dollars so they need to be more nimble. The business plan that the Park Service is operating under now is not working. It needs to be open to new ways."

Certainly, another major challenge for the Park Service is how to move toward greater accountability and transparency by means other than simply adding more laws or directives. There is no reason for groups to file yet additional reports that seemingly disappear into a "black hole" because there are insufficient resources to provide feedback or provide timely analysis of the data and information received. Finding the ways to operate to create a new business model for partnerships will take concerted effort by both the agency and its partners. "Current structures don't lend themselves to creating robust partnerships...the National Park Service has to change its structure," said one group leader.

Partnerships Are Moving in New Directions

Friends groups, cooperating associations, and the organizations that support them, such as the Association of Partners for Public Lands (APPL), exist in a philanthropic environment that is constantly changing. Just as the Park Service continues to revise its priorities with initiatives such as the Call to Action and the Centennial Challenge, park partners are responding to a shifting economy, changes in leadership, often times conflicting political forces, and changes in visitor and donor demographics. There are several new trends that may alter the landscape of national park philanthropy.

Hybrids and Mergers

One of the changes that is becoming more apparent is the blurring of administrative or legal distinctions between friends groups and cooperating associations, and the increasing number of “hybrid” partners. The term hybrid may be a misnomer, or as one respondent called it, an “insider” term, but it is a designation routinely used to describe partnerships that include mergers between an existing cooperating association and an existing friends group, a cooperating association that signs a friends group agreement in a park unit without a friends group, or some other permutation that blends educational/interpretive activities and fundraising.

The Yosemite Conservancy is considered a model for many of today’s park partnerships. The Yosemite Museum Association was formed in 1923 to manage the private funds being raised to build the Yosemite Museum, becoming the nation’s first park cooperating association. The museum association later became the Yosemite Natural History Association, and in 1985, the Yosemite Association. In 1988, the Association spun off the fundraising function to a new group—the Yosemite Fund—after the Park Service said organizations shouldn’t serve both a fundraising and cooperating association purpose. The Yosemite split did not last long, however. In 2010, the Association and the Fund merged their efforts, becoming the Yosemite Conservancy.

A more recent merger involves Glacier National Park. The Glacier Natural History Association (later known as the Glacier Association) was formed in 1941 and incorporated in 1946 as a nonprofit cooperating association, serving both Glacier National Park and several other federal sites. In 1999, the Glacier National Park Fund became the nonprofit fundraising partner for the national park. The two organizations agreed to a merger in October 2012, and renamed the partnership the Glacier National Park Conservancy, effective January 1, 2013. Although the new group’s name implies, it serves the national park; the terms of the merger also allow the former cooperating association to operate sales outlets at the National Bison Range, the Flathead National Forest, the Grant-Kohrs Ranch National Historic Site, and the Big Hole National Battlefield. Why merge? The new organization notes, “Merging these two organizations will allow fundraising activities for Glacier National Park to be accomplished in a cooperative and more effective manner. The merger will also provide a ‘single voice’ to their constituencies and stakeholders—reducing confusion and enhancing overall visitor awareness.”⁴²

But mergers such as this are not just a matter of combining two groups into one. In the case of the Glacier National Park Conservancy, the group announced that the membership of the Conservancy's board "will be based on current managerial needs and will include both local and national representation. In addition, a National Council of Advisors will be created to assist the board and Conservancy staff with strategic planning and outreach activities. The logistical details will be determined as the merge moves forward."⁴³

The reasons why friends groups and cooperating associations merge are many. In some cases, it is to take advantage of revised administrative, managerial, and financial structures, eliminating the redundancy of the two organizations and forging a more cooperative relationship. In other cases, a merger may help to reduce the public's (and donors') confusion over mission, especially when the names of the partners are similar.

A major driving force behind mergers, however, is financial. The retail world of bookstores and publishing has changed dramatically, and smaller cooperating operations, such as the Joshua Tree National Park Association (JTNPA), are seeking other ways of increasing revenue. The Association signed a supplemental agreement to its 2005 cooperating association agreement that allows it to conduct fundraising by establishing a legacy project—a fundraising committee of the board of directors. At times the committee has been dormant, but in 2011, a new managing director arrived after the group operated for several years without an executive director; a new superintendent also arrived in 2011, in time for the park's seventy-fifth anniversary. The Association also has a cafe that is leased to an outside tenant, and its limited concessioner agreement. Also unlike other friends groups and cooperating associations, JTNPA bought the visitor center in 2006, with a long-term goal of giving the center to the NPS once the mortgage is held free and clear. The Association is now looking at expanding its activities to include bus tours, and providing a more interpretive role beyond what the NPS provides. By doubling the size of the board of directors and including more individuals with a fundraising focus, they now have a hybrid board with a hybrid purpose, rather than the previous model of serving like a "hospital auxiliary."

Although several NPS superintendents and leaders believe that hybrids are the wave of the future, and the 2012 NPF survey identified this as a significant change in the landscape of park philanthropy, there is still disagreement whether such mergers can yet definitely be called a "trend." Certainly the hybrid model will be more applicable to larger organizations than to the myriad smaller groups that partner with the

Park Service. Friends that merge with cooperating associations are more likely to be Rich and Thriving or Middle of the Roader groups.

The move to merge is also being aided by groups such as the APPL, which has historically focused on publishing, education, and cooperating associations rather than fundraising. But APPL has been recruiting friends groups to join as members, and in 2013, the organization announced its first fundraising academy, a three-day workshop it advertised as “designed to engage nonprofit and public lands agency leadership in developing a comprehensive fundraising philosophy. Participants will receive clear, practical, and helpful guidance to take fundraising efforts to the next level.”⁴⁴ The APPL initiative definitely moves its programs closer to the friends groups end of the spectrum rather than to cooperating associations, signaling its support for fundraising and its attempt to broaden its membership base beyond the bookstore people.

While there may be some benefits that accrue when two similar organizations combine forces and resources, there is also the potential for mistrust and hostility. Observers cited the difficulties a merger encounters because it can require two organizational cultures to communicate as a team. For example, boards of cooperating associations are focused on education and interpretation, and board members bring knowledge and skills in these areas to their board service, while boards of friends groups focus on fundraising and development. Members of cooperating association boards, who may not have been profit-oriented, are now faced with the need to identify profit centers and the different and difficult tasks of executing fundraising strategies and personally reaching out to donors. Hybrid boards may need to be rebalanced and new members recruited; members who are unable to adjust to the merger may need to be rotated off. Another respondent mentioned a merger than involved organizations in two different geographic locations, prompting some staff and volunteers to feel resentment toward those working outside the park. Certainly, as one executive director noted, “nothing in a merger is easy; it’s not for sissies.”

The merger trend compounds the problem of how partners calculate the assistance they provide to the parks. One concern that has been raised involves situations when the philanthropic funds raised by one arm of the organization are merged with those of the bookstore/retail operations, and expenses for the two are not separated out. This makes it difficult to determine the true costs of operating a merged or hybrid group. There is also the fear that revenues from cooperating association funds raised under the groups’ congressional authorization for education and interpretation will be diverted to underwrite

fundraising purposes. Similarly, based on past experiences there can be issues about the intermingling of funds, which reduces the transparency as to how funds are moved and used. Firewalls need to be put in place, noted one agency respondent. Finally, there are concerns that fundraising will eclipse the mission and priorities of cooperating associations. Cautioned one supervisor who noted the changing focus on dollars: “Enhancing education and interpretation, not dollar making, are the reasons for cooperating associations... Never, ever lose sight of that.” While cooperating associations may be propelled to look increasingly hard at the bottom line, it should also be noted that moving cooperating associations into fundraising, as was the case with Discover Your Northwest, may not always prove to be successful. Still if the current group of merged organizations operates more efficiently and profitably, the hybrid model may become common.

For-Profits

Another trend, and one which has cooperating associations, hybrids, and the NPS all concerned, is the emergence of for-profit firms that have gained a foothold within the national parks. The largest of these is Event Network, a privately owned corporation established in 1998 and headquartered in San Diego, California. The company already has stores in many visitor attractions throughout the nation, including aquariums, botanic gardens, museums, and zoos, and its presence is growing at national park sites.

Consider this example. As you enter the doors of Ford’s Theatre National Historic Site in Washington, DC, to the left is an Event Network-run shop (although there is no signage to indicate that the store is run by the company). Bear to the right to get your free, timed-entry ticket to the site’s museum and the theater where President Lincoln was shot, and then descend the ramp to the basement museum where the NPS cooperating association bookstore operated by Eastern National is located. Your ticket will also provide admission to the NPS-owned Pederson House (where Lincoln died) across the street. From the back porch of the Pederson house the visitor can then enter a building owned by the Ford’s Theatre Society, the park’s official friends group. Acquired in 2007 by the Society, the building houses its Center for Education and Leadership, and additional exhibits on Lincoln. On the first floor, in addition to the 34-foot tall stack of books written about Lincoln, there is another Event Network retail operation. The profits from the Event Network stores benefit the Ford’s Theatre Society, a Rich and Thriving friend, with assets

over \$52 million, and an endowment nearing \$9 million. The Society is responsible for programming at the theater.

Event Network buys in bulk, so items in most all of its stores are likely to look the same and not be tailored to an individual park; books and other materials unique to a particular site are likely to be overlooked in favor of items that can be sold at multiple sites, which increases the profit margin. In addition to items that might appropriately be sold in a cooperating association outlet, Event Network stores include many items that many in the cooperating association fold believe are not worthy of sale at a national park. In the two Event Network stores at the Ford Theatre site, for example, the following items could be found: frosting-coated fortune cookies, sodas, bags of Democrap Donkey Dung and Repooplican Elephant Dung (which are actually chocolate-coated peanuts), oriental fans, and games, toys, and cheap costume jewelry with no connection to culture, history, or nature, whatsoever. The items stray quite a way from the educational materials cooperating associations sell in their stores. Moreover, Event Network does not engage in publishing park-related guides like the ones Eastern and WNPA produce.

The difficulties and confusion about the two kinds of stores a visitor can encounter at the same complex became manifest in 2011 when the Ford's Theatre National Historic Site, which must approve items for sale at its cooperating association outlet, declined to approve the book *Killing Lincoln: The Shocking Assassination that Changed America*, by conservative Fox News host, Bill O'Reilly. The stated reason was that the book failed to meet standards for accuracy and attribution and so it would not be sold at Eastern National's basement bookstore at the site. After this decision was reported by the *Washington Post*, the Ford's Theatre Society sent out e-mails to the paper and others pointing out that the book would be available in its shops (the ones run by Event Network), saying it would let their visitors judge the book for themselves.⁴⁵ Perhaps fearful of the political ramifications that being accused of an anti-conservative bias would have on donations, the friends group proceeded with sales of the book. Sometimes friends undermine friends.

At another Event Network store at the Gettysburg Museum and Visitors Center, a John Wilkes Booth bobble head doll created quite a stir. The doll had Booth holding a gun and was displayed next to an Abraham Lincoln doll. Said one critic, "The Booth doll is tasteless, sadistic and an insult to a hero who helped made [sic] Gettysburg into the Civil War's most iconic destination."⁴⁶ Said another, "Imagine bobble heads of James Earl Ray for sale at the soon-to-be-built National

Museum of African American History Museum or bobble heads of Lee Harvey Oswald for sale at the Kennedy Museum outside of Boston.”⁴⁷ The Gettysburg Museum eventually pulled the doll from its shelves, but this is an example of the excesses that can occur when the NPS has no say in approving museum store items for sale in pro-profit venues.

The controversy over the Gettysburg bobble head doll was related to the role of the nonprofit friends group, the Gettysburg Foundation, in the construction and operation of the visitor center and museum on land owned by the Foundation. Some see the Gettysburg Foundation’s role in the park as the harbinger of the kinds of public partnerships that will become more desirable and common in the future.⁴⁸ Critics, however, have alleged that the new center is too big and commercial, keeps raising fees, and is more about maximizing money than about educating the public or revering the battlefield site,⁴⁹ a nonprofit friend acting more like a for-profit corporation. When the Gettysburg Foundation removed Eastern National as the cooperating association from its visitor center and went instead with Event Network, there was also a negative impact on other parks. Under Eastern National’s revenue sharing model, proceeds from the profitable Gettysburg operation had been subsidizing net loss smaller parks that could not financially afford a stand-alone cooperating association.⁵⁰

The possibilities that park superintendents will be promised greater returns through partnerships with Event Network-type partners is seen by some as an insidious assault on the whole idea of the educational and interpretive purposes of nonprofit cooperating associations established by the 1946 congressional legislation. Words like “evil corporation,” “scum,” and “a cancer set out to destroy” are some of the harsh criticisms hurled at such for-profit organizations during the course of this study. Decisions like those made at Gettysburg, it can also be argued, undermine the idea expressed in the 1970 legislation that the National Park System is a system of allied units that “derive increased national dignity and recognition of their superb environmental quality *through their inclusion jointly with each other in one national park system*,”⁵¹ and are not a collection of individual park units out to maximize their own and their friends’ fiefdoms and profits.

There is also concern that the Park Service and the NPF, while claiming to like *all* their friends and partners, might be accused of liking their corporate friends even more than their nonprofit ones. There is no doubt that corporate partners, and for-profit companies like Event Network, are in a position to assist national parks at a magnitude that many cooperating associations and friends groups cannot match. Groups like the Trust for the National Mall, which set a goal of

\$350 million, and the Flight 93 National Memorial Campaign, which hopes to raise an estimated \$67 to \$76 million, are clearly depending on major corporate gifts to reach their goals. The growing dependence on corporate support for national parks—a strategy that the watchdog group Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility (PEER) has called the “creeping corporatization of national parks”—is to many a real threat to the public nature of America’s public lands. PEER criticized the NPS because the 2012 Call to Action summit in Washington, DC, was sponsored in part by Coca Cola and was an invitation only event that some believe lacked transparency.

Alternative Funding Avenues

Although many federal agencies appeared to have been surprised by the \$85 billion in automatic across-the-board budget cuts that resulted from the March 2013 sequester, the Park Service may actually have been in a better position than most because of previous cuts and planning that began the year before. As director Jon Jarvis noted in his congressional testimony in April 2013, park operations funding allocated directly to park managers have been in a slight but steady state of decline of about 4 percent from FY 2010 to FY 2012. When combined with the effects of inflation and the uncertain budget cycle, park managers have made what Jarvis called “reactive financial decisions that are unsustainable in the long term.”⁵² Even before the Park Service began absorbing \$153.4 million in cuts required by the sequester, Jarvis issued a budget planning memo instructing NPS leadership to develop financial models and a reduced budget scenario that would allow parks to operate through FY 2015. The planning exercise, once implemented under the sequester, called for a hiring freeze on permanent positions, the elimination of spending on travel, overtime, supplies, equipment, and deferral of contracted services that had minimal short-term repercussions. In order to fulfill the 5 percent reduction, some parks also eliminated temporary seasonal positions and furloughed permanent employees.

Jarvis told committee members that he planned to bring Congress a legislative package that will allow the Park Service more flexibility in developing private partnerships, asking for “additional authorities for philanthropy, for cooperative agreements, to work with our private-sector partners in a much more entrepreneurial and innovative way to bring that side to the operation and financial health of the organization.” Jarvis also told members of a House appropriations subcommittee that he wanted to work with the NPF to increase private

donations from the current \$20 million per year to \$100 million by boosting the organization's profile to attract corporate and philanthropic partners.⁵³ That kind of an increase in philanthropy is highly unlikely to be accomplished with individual donations, furthering the prospect that corporations are likely to be the controlling partners in the NPF.

There are a number of developments that indicate that individual parks, as well as the Park Service itself, are casting an even wider net in an attempt to find potential new sources of funding. At a program sponsored by the NPCA and the National Park Hospitality Association in March 2013, for example, participants hoped to start a national dialogue on how the parks could operate independent of their reliance on federal appropriations. The meeting considered 16 proposals, ranging from adjustments to the current park fee structure to the creation of a \$1 billion endowment for the parks, an idea that has failed to gain support in the past. Another proposal was a one cent a gallon increase in federal fuel taxes that was estimated to raise \$1.5 billion annually for the national parks.⁵⁴

The Park Service has also investigated several initiatives that would increase funding that would reduce the agency's reliance on Congress. In 2007, and again in 2013, the NPS sought to develop policies that would compensate the parks for any commercial technologies that resulted from resources found in the parks. Termed "commercial bio-prospecting" by opponents to the proposals, groups such as PEER have criticized the agency for undermining "the basic mission, purpose and spirit of the National Parks. While we strongly support scientific research in the parks, we believe there should be no research within the park system that is expressly commercial."⁵⁵ PEER referred to the efforts as "the product of a more than six-year regulatory effort by NPS to designate parks as 'federal laboratories.'"⁵⁶

The NPS is also looking at a proposed one-year extension of the Federal Land Recreation Enhancement Act of 2004 (FLREA) that replaced the Recreational Fee Demonstration Program; FLREA is scheduled to sunset on December 31, 2014. The sometimes controversial Fee Demo Program, originally enacted in 1997 by the FY 1996 Omnibus Consolidated Rescissions and Appropriations Act, now raises an estimated \$300 million per year for five federal agencies through entrance and campground fees, including \$195 million for the Park Service in 2012.⁵⁷ If Congress were to extend FLREA beyond an additional year, the program could provide a stable source of user fees for parks. But it could also continue to antagonize those who already are bitter because the public lands are not freely accessible to the public.

In the meantime, individual park units are looking at alternative revenue sources on their own. One strategy that eventually may prove successful for supporters of the Jefferson National Expansion Memorial in St. Louis, home to the 630-foot Gateway Arch, was to seek voter approval for a 3/16-cent sales tax that will help pay for grounds renovation at the site. Proposition P, which appeared on the ballot for both the city and county of St. Louis in April 2013, is estimated to raise about \$780 million over the next 20 years. Forty percent of the revenues will go toward city and county parks; 30 percent will go to the Great Rivers Greenway Parks district for trail expansion, and the remainder will go to help pay the public portion of the \$380 million renovation project. The Great Rivers Greenway tax proceeds will also support debt retirement of selected capital improvements at the Gateway Arch grounds and neighboring public areas in downtown St. Louis. Plans include a set of interconnected gardens and pathways and a \$160 million expansion of the Arch museum. A nonprofit organization, CityArchRiver, that spearheaded the project, was expected to raise \$100 million in donations by the end of April 2013.⁵⁸

But the sales tax approach may not, in the end, be the answer to the problem of securing funding for such a major undertaking like this one, or other parks hoping to raise money for large capital projects like visitor centers. Critics have raised questions about whether it is appropriate to spend local sales taxes on a national park on federal land, and why county residents are being taxed twice to maintain federal property. An adjoining county pulled out of the plan, reducing support and an estimated \$7 million in additional revenue. Supporters, in contrast, acknowledged that although the Arch is on federal land, it is the region's symbol.⁵⁹ In addition, groups such as the NPCA served on the governance board for the project, adding a national perspective to the site's planning. But the Park Service has not yet signed off on the project, or committed any federal funds toward it, and issues related to the development plans and partnership agreements may block implementation.

During a time when the public's trust of government is at one of its lowest ebbs, any attempt to fund national parks through taxes, local or otherwise, is likely to be perceived as a failure on the part of Congress or the Park Service to use its existing federal tax revenues wisely. Almost all of the 16 proposals discussed in the 2013 meeting share a common flaw—expecting park users, drivers, or someone else to pick up the tab for the kinds of services and amenities visitors expect at a national park. Missing from the discussion, some believe, is the central question raised by Secretary of the Interior James Watt, in

the 1980s, whether the Park Service needs to keep adding more units (including some of questionable historic, cultural, or scenic value) before it can adequately manage the people and the resources in the parks it already has.

For those national park friends groups with a comprehensive fundraising program and for others focused on major capital projects, the traditional sources of funding, such as corporate donors, foundations, and wealthy individual donors, are likely to remain the core of their revenues. But friends of smaller parks, or those dependent on a smaller giving base, may want to incorporate crowdfunding into their fundraising toolbox.

The term crowdfunding, thought to have been coined in 2006,⁶⁰ is used to describe a process where a group or individual proposes a project for funding, allowing the public to decide which ones to support by making a pledge toward the project's cost.⁶¹ From a practical standpoint, organizations use crowdfunding over 450 Internet websites, called platforms, such as Kickstarter or ioby (which stands for in our backyards), to propose or initiate a project, which is then publicized on social channels like Facebook and Twitter. Individual donors then make contributions to the platform; they can monitor the fundraising process online while helping to support the project.

The Statue of Liberty is often cited as an early example of *civic* crowdfunding, although without the Internet connection. French citizens contributed two million francs to build the monument as a gift to the United States as a symbol of liberty, but Americans were expected to raise the funds to build the pedestal for the statue after the American Committee for the Statue of Liberty ran out of money in 1884. Newspaper publisher Joseph Pulitzer used his New York newspaper, *The World*, to plead for the public to contribute funds for the project, noting, "Let us not wait for the millionaires to give us this money. It is not a gift from the millionaires of France to the millionaires of America, but a gift of the whole people of France to the whole people of America." Within five months, Pulitzer's challenge had brought in 125,000 donations and \$100,000, with many contributions less than a dollar.⁶²

Crowdfunding has developed as an application to assist budding authors, filmmakers, small companies, and philanthropic projects abroad through platforms such as Kiva, Petridish, and Global Giving. But civic crowdfunding has also been used to enhance public participation in government by allowing citizens to "invest" in projects they like. Citizeninvestor, for instance, allows local governments to list preapproved projects that lack funding on the website, and anyone

who supports the project can make a financial pledge to help pay for it. Investors do not pay anything until the project is fully funded; CitizenInvestor charges a 5 percent fee for successfully funded ideas.⁶³ Another group, CivicSponsor, markets projects for the sponsor, collects the funds, brings in corporate donors, and assists in making the fundraising process transparent. One project involves efforts to build athletic funds at four middle schools in East San Jose, California, a project that likely would never have been funded without this application.⁶⁴

The concept, using platforms that already have a record of success, has the potential for assisting national parks and their friends groups, and the NPCA partnered with the platform ioby to start the idea. The cofounder and executive director of ioby worked with NPCA “to provide an environmental crowdfunding tool that will allow local leaders to continue this great legacy of using citizen philanthropy to support more of our urban national treasures.” The first of three projects launched in 2013 joined the Park Service and the National Aquarium to restore wildlife habitat, remove debris, and clear and maintain trails in the ten-acre wetland area adjacent to Maryland’s Fort McHenry National Monument. An estimated 100 community volunteers participated in the project, which required \$5,185 for supplies like gloves and trash bags, dumpster rental, mulch, fencing, and plants.⁶⁵ A second project, Roots and Wings, sponsored by the NPCA and the NPS, introduced Los Angeles-area high school students to five of the state’s park units: Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area, Manzanar National Historic Site, Mojave National Preserve, Channel Islands National Park, and Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks. The goal of the \$3,125 program is to reconnect urban, low-income students to the outdoors, open space, and wilderness.⁶⁶ A third project, Paddle Out with Tropical Audubon Society, seeks to increase awareness and facilitate data collection at Biscayne National Park in Florida. The \$3,125 budget pays for citizen science supplies, drinking water, a first aid kit, kayaking staff, and guides.⁶⁷

Ioby’s executive director notes that the three initial projects pairing the national parks with crowdfunding are not really different from the Statue of Liberty campaign. “Sure, we have some advantages, Web tools make collecting donations easier and social channels like Facebook and Twitter help us amplify these stories and visions.”⁶⁸ With NPCA support, the projects reach an even wider audience. Although none of the partners cited is an official friends group, the strategy seems a perfect fit for partners who have a specific project that needs funding.

Civic crowdfunding can raise a friends group's profile, especially among those who might not have the opportunity to visit the national park. It allows donors to become engaged in the fundraising process since platform websites typically list donor names, the amount of money needed to fund the project, and updates on a project once it has been funded. And supporters of the crowdfunding concept point out that this fundraising idea allows anyone, regardless of their financial profile, to participate. Unlike friends group campaigns that appeal to deep pocket corporate donors, or gala events with big ticket price tags, a friends group that participates in crowdfunding can use even small donations because they are aggregated and pooled, regardless of the amount. Schoolchildren learning about the history of a Civil War battle can send in a dollar; retirees on limited budget can remember a park where they used to go every summer with a small donation. Like other fundraising strategies, civic crowdfunding can become one more tool in a friends group's efforts to assist a national park.

For friends groups seeking to have their organization publicized more broadly and to a wider audience, crowdfunding may make sense. But those donors already familiar with a national park might not want to have a percentage of their donation used as overhead for the intermediary platform. As groups become more sophisticated in the use of social media, and as they build their donor base with the names and contact information collected by the platform, they might find that using the intermediary is no longer necessary.

And Finally...

When asked why a group is able to raise significant amounts of money, a leader or a donor might simply respond, "Why it's the National Mall," "it's Yellowstone," "it's Antietam" or "it's Rosie the Riverter," as if the inherent qualities of those special places is sufficient explanation. The attachment to place, be it cultural, natural, or historical, fosters a sense of altruism for protecting, restoring, and maintaining what the Park Service is increasingly challenged to do by itself. Building upon the historical tradition of philanthropy—begun even before the establishment of the Park Service itself by railroads, philanthropically inclined individuals and families, and promoters of tourism—the individuals in friends groups and cooperating associations have a real passion for the national parks and a commitment to seeing the Park Service be successful.

What has evolved over the span of the park's first 100 years is a complex array of institutional arrangements in terms of the laws,

regulations, agency directives, and reference manuals that govern the relationships between the Park Service and its various partners, whether nonprofits, corporations, or individual volunteers. Not surprisingly, this is a system that many times exhibits the tensions inherent when government bureaucracy meets private enthusiasm and entrepreneurship. Partners need to work in a world constrained by legal provisions designed to protect a larger public interest from the excesses of private interest, while the agency and its lawyers need to work in a world in which people want to get good things done without burdensome and often unnecessary bureaucratic red tape. Although standardization with templates, for example, may create a level playing field, standardization may also fail to recognize the diversity of groups, disparities in their resources, and differences in their historical track record of fulfilling commitments. Not every park can or should strive to have friends like the Golden Gate National Parks Conservancy; those like Nicodemus could simply benefit from a more robust and ongoing friends operation.

For many donors, the strengths of friends groups and the multiple benefits provided to the parks have reinforced their dedication as consistent donors and decisions to include the organizations in their estate plans. Nonetheless, potential donors need to look carefully at the groups that conduct fundraising on behalf of a national park, since there are substantial differences in the amount of money they actually contribute to a park. Groups On Life Support may be struggling just to stay afloat. Almost Friends may be in the process of being energized by local leaders or new park leadership while the Rich and Thriving and many Middle of the Roaders may have well-established and sophisticated planned giving programs and permanent endowments. Donors can thus make decisions as to whether they would rather give to a small organization where a donation brings a bigger bang for the charitable buck, or to a larger group that has a strong track record of accomplishment.⁶⁹

Moreover, things change quickly. Groups come and go, either voluntarily or by request they may be No Longer Friends. Outliers may be groups hoping to become official friends or groups partnering with the agency but without the status of being the official park fundraiser. Names may be deceptive; some groups may call themselves friends but are not fundraising friends but advocacy groups supporting a course of action or fighting the Park Service on a particular issue. It's not easy often to tell the difference.

Potential donors therefore need to be aware that if they do have issue-based concerns—mining or real estate developments adjacent

to the parks, endangered species protection, air pollution, or the countless other threats to national parks—or issues with particular Department of the Interior or NPS plans or management decisions, friends groups and cooperating associations are probably not where they might want to be sending their donations. There are a myriad of national and local groups that do actively fight these battles, including the NPCA.

Cooperating associations have long furthered the educational, interpretive, and scientific purposes of the national parks. They are being increasingly confronted by changes in the publishing world in which producing and selling printed material is less profitable. The Traditional Model of one park/one association is likely to be more frequently challenged by the emergence of hybrids that merge fundraising with educational functions, for-profit park partners, and Associations for Convenience nonprofits that serve parks as well as the nonprofit's other programs, agencies, and properties.

Because of the depth of involvement that philanthropic nonprofits have in supporting education, funding research, purchasing equipment and supplies, sponsoring special events, leading capital campaigns, and providing volunteers, these groups are becoming a critical financial linchpin in the NPS funding picture, necessary, not ancillary, for fulfilling the agency's dual mandate of providing visitor enjoyment and protecting resources. The need to foster philanthropic partnerships is becoming more and more embedded into the agency's management culture, led by superintendents committed to the ethos of partnership, as well as being embraced by other natural resources agencies.

But things do not always go smoothly; it's not always a pretty picture. There is continually room for improvement. Significant challenges exist that will require changes by both the agency and its nonprofit philanthropic partners. These include, for example, the need to: extend a welcome to younger and more diverse groups of park visitors and supporters; ensure group transparency and accountability in the solicitation and use of donations and generated revenue; improve agency monitoring and oversight capabilities; avoid the slippery slope of increased park commercialization and privatization of the public's treasures; and resist the worst traits of special interest politics (that even nonprofits can sometimes exhibit) from being exerted upon the agency.

As the NPS enters its second century, and as elected officials, park officials, and park supporters look for additional and innovative ways to gather the wherewithal to protect resources and serve the public, park philanthropy will play a critical, although certainly evolving, role.

Early on in the nation's history, French political observer Alexis de Tocqueville commented that a distinguishing feature of American democracy was the propensity of Americans to engage in associations for social betterment.⁷⁰ It is therefore significant that another manifestation of American democracy, the development of a system of national parks to ensure that the nation's most special places would belong to everyone and not succumb to development for private gain, is so intimately linked to private philanthropic associations. There is indeed nothing so American as our national parks, places where with the help of friends and cooperating associations—organizations undertaking private initiatives for public good—you can “perform the double function of enjoying much and learning much.”⁷¹

Appendix: Interview List

Friends and Cooperating Associations

Appalachian Trail Conservancy
Assateague Island Alliance
Custer Battlefield Historical and Museum Association
Discover Your Northwest
Friends of the Apostle Islands National Lakeshore
Friends of Big Bend National Park
Friends of the Monuments
Friends of Glacier Bay
Friends of Hubbell Trading Post
Friends of Little Bighorn Battlefield National Monument
Friends of Peirce Mill
Friends of Saguaro National Park
Friends of Tumacacori
Friends of Virgin Islands National Park
Friends of the Well
Golden Gate National Parks Conservancy
Grand Canyon Association
Joshua Tree National Park Association
Mount Rushmore Society
Pea Ridge National Military Park Foundation
Potomac Appalachian Trail Club
Rock Creek Conservancy
Rosie the Riveter Trust
Shenandoah National Park Association
Shenandoah National Park Trust
St. Thomas Historical Trust
Trust for the National Mall
Washington's National Park Fund
Western National Parks Association
Yosemite Conservancy

Park Superintendents and Staff

East Bay National Parks
Flagstaff Area National Monuments
Fort Monroe National Monument
Fort Smith National Historic Site
Golden Gate National Recreation Area
Little Bighorn Battlefield National Monument
Mount Rushmore National Memorial
Nicodemus National Historic Site
Pea Ridge National Military Park
Saguaro National Park
San Francisco Maritime National Historical Park
Shenandoah National Park
Tumacacori National Historical Park
Virgin Islands National Park
Wind Cave National Park
Wolf Trap National Park for the Performing Arts

Other Groups and National Park Service Officials

Association of Partners for Public Lands
Citizens for a Fort Monroe National Park
National Park Foundation
National Park Friends Alliance
National Park Service Midwest Region
National Park Service Pacific West Region
National Park Service, Washington Office, Cooperating Coordinators
Office
National Park Service, Partnership Training
National Park Service, Southeast Archeological Center
National Park Service, Washington Office, Partnerships and Civic
Engagement Office
National Parks Conservation Association

Notes

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