



December 13, 2013

Congressman Paul Cook, Eighth Congressional District
1222 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Congressman Cook:

The National Parks Conservation Association's (NPCA) mission is to "Protect the national parks for present and future generations." We have 800,000 active members and supporters nationwide, including over 100,000 in California and two offices in the California desert: Barstow and Joshua Tree. Our desert offices work closely with local businesses, chambers of commerce, communities, the media and elected officials to further protect the spectacular natural and cultural legacy of our national parks.

NPCA and the undersigned coalition of desert businesses agree that there is a direct, reciprocal relationship between adequately funding our national parks and the economic health of our region's local businesses. Adequate funding of our national parks ensures that nationally important natural and cultural resources are protected; interpretation programs educate the public; maintenance staff can repair critical infrastructure and law enforcement can make sure that visitors have a safe and enjoyable experience. In light of the devastating government shutdown, sequester and other recent cuts to the National Park Service budget, we respectfully request that you work proactively with the budget committee, appropriators, leadership and your other colleagues in Congress to end the sequester and ensure that national park funding is restored by the National Park Service's hundredth anniversary in 2016.

More than ever, local business owners are rallying behind their neighboring National Parks. The recent government shutdown was a brutal reminder of the direct connection between national parks and the success (or failure) of local businesses. Across the nation, local economies experienced a loss of more than \$30 million in direct visitor spending each day national parks were closed. When the parks are closed, tourists cancel their trips, visitor spending ceases to exist and our local businesses suffer a devastating loss. However, chronic underfunding of our national parks is an equally serious threat and has created a National Park Service operating shortfall of more than a half billion dollars each year and a deferred maintenance backlog of nearly \$12 billion.

Our desert national parks are powerful economic engines that drive the tourist economy of our region and support numerous local businesses. In 2012, Death Valley National Park hosted 984,568 visitors, the Mojave National Preserve hosted 542,527 and Joshua Tree National Park saw an overwhelming 1,396,117 visitors. These visitors ate in restaurants, slept in hotels, bought gas and souvenirs, spending almost \$100 million in our desert gateway communities. Moreover, in 2010, during the height of the worst recession since the Great Depression, the desert national parks supported over 1,200 full and part time jobs.

It's clear that our Desert National Parks play a key role in the economic well-being of our local economy; we must avoid another shutdown and provide parks with needed support through consistent and adequate appropriations for the National Park Service. However, we must do more than just keep our parks open. We need to invest in the special places that protect our American heritage and draw tourists from throughout the world. That's why we are asking you to address both the acute and chronic, long term problem of underfunding by working to end the sequester and adequately fund the national parks by their Centennial in 2016. Both acute and chronic funding shortfalls are cause for great concern because they impair the National Park Service's ability to maintain visitor services, protect treasured resources and bolster the local economy.

Sincerely,

Seth Shteir, California desert field
senior field representative
National Parks Conservation
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Bistro Twentynine
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Coleen Anderson, Owners
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Twentynine Palms, California
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Natural Sisters
Kristi Lopez, Owner
61695 Twentynine Palms Highway
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Joshua Tree Health Foods
Linda Perry, Owner
61693 Twentynine Palms Highway
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Hotel 29 Palms
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Twentynine Palms, CA 92277

Country Inn
Venokumar Nathraj, Owner
71829 Twentynine Palms Highway
Twentynine Palms, CA 92277

Holiday Inn Express
Venokumar Nathraj, Owner
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Best Western Gardens at Joshua
Tree National Park
Jim Bowie, General Manager/
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Cactus Mart
Nicole Holland, Owner
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Jinder Sings, Owner
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Hospice of Morongo Basin
Ramon Lomeli, General Manager
61675 29 Twentynine Palms
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Mike's Liquor
Ravinder Kaur, Owner
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Park Rock Cafe
Nelson Munez, Owner
6554 Park Blvd
Joshua Tree, CA 92252

Sam's Pizza
Jinder Sings, Owner
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Sam's Smoke Shop
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Hoof and the Horn
Jen Michael, Adam Yuratovac,
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Tamma Rae McCombs, Owner
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