



# FIELDREPORT

Pacific Region | Winter 2014



## National Parks and Local Economies

By Seth Shteir

**M**ore 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

continued on back page

## Tower Trouble

**I**n 2012, nearly 1.4 million people from around the world came to experience the views from Joshua Tree National Park's sweeping desert valleys and spectacular mountain peaks. That's why the Palen Solar Power Project, an industrial-scale solar development comprising two 750-foot towers southeast of the park, constitutes a threat to both the park's scenic vistas and to its surrounding gateway communities. In fact, the 2010 Joshua Tree National Park Visitor Survey found that 90 percent of people surveyed thought that Joshua Tree National Park's views without development were very or extremely important to the visitor experience. In 2010, these visitors spent \$38 million in gateway communities purchasing gas, food, lodging, and souvenirs. "We've always known that protecting our desert national parks' scenic vistas is important from an aesthetic, environmental, and spiritual standpoint, but we are finding more and more that it's also an economic imperative," says Seth Shteir, California desert senior field representative for the National Parks Conservation Association.

If constructed, the Palen Project would mar Joshua Tree National Park's dark night skies and undeveloped viewsheds while threatening birds that rest and refuel in Joshua Tree National Park on their annual migration up and down the inland portion of the Pacific Flyway. Construction and

operation of the proposed Palen Project would likely result in death to migrating eagles, other raptors and songbirds from deadly solar flux (an intense heat that radiates from the solar panels), and by colliding with solar panels that can create water-like mirages. NPCA has submitted comments about this project as part of a broad-based environmental coalition

The Palen Project would likely result in death to migrating eagles, other raptors and songbirds from deadly solar flux, and by colliding with solar panels that can create water-like mirages.

working to protect Joshua Tree National Park. We recognize that this country must invest in a renewable energy future to minimize the impacts of climate change and to ensure energy independence, but we must do so in a thoughtful manner that protects our national parks and other sensitive lands for future generations.

**Above:** Sunset over the rocks and plants of Joshua Tree National Park.  
©Kateleigh/Dreamstime.com

**89% OF**  
**MONTANA**  
**BUSINESS OWNERS**  
SURVEYED SAID NATIONAL PARKS,  
FORESTS AND WILDLIFE ARE AN  
ESSENTIAL PART OF MONTANA'S ECONOMY

# FIELD REPORT

Winter 2014

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## A Birthday Present for the Parks

By Ron Sundergill

Dear Readers:

### YOUTH PARK DONORS

Instead of my usual note focused on NPCA's activities, I decided to share something a bit different—something that I found very inspiring. I had heard about two young brothers in California who ask all their friends and relatives not to give them presents for their birthday, but to instead give contributions that they then use to support Lassen Volcanic National Park and Yosemite National Park. This is a heartwarming story for anyone who loves our national parks. I was able to reach Owen and Zach Brunner (ages 10 and 7 respectively) through their mom, Sonia Brunner. I suggested that we get together for a hike at Pt. Reyes National Seashore so that I could meet and interview Owen and Zach. On August 6 of this year we met and hiked the Abbotts Lagoon trail at Pt. Reyes. It was a beautiful day. Meeting and taking a hike with these two young supporters of our national parks and their mom was a real treat. For your inspiration, here is the interview with Owen and Zach.

*As I understand it, Owen, you were the first one in the family to start the tradition of giving your birthday money to a*

*national park group. How is it that you decided to give your birthday money to the Yosemite Conservancy? What was your motivation?*

**Owen:** Well, my family still gives me presents so I do get some things. Sometimes I think it would be nice to get toys from my friends. But mostly, I feel satisfied and good to give money to Yosemite. My birthday is coming up next month. If my parents told me I could get presents from my friends this year, I would still choose to raise money for Yosemite.

*And then Zach comes along a few years later and he makes the decision to give to Lassen Volcanic. Zach, why was giving in this way important to you? How did you decide to give your cash to the Lassen Association?*

**Zach:** When I turned five, my parents told me that if I wanted to have a birthday party with friends, I didn't have to ask for presents. Instead, I could raise money for something I cared about. My first year, I gave my birthday money to my school, but that summer I went to Lassen and I loved the fresh water and the blue skies. I hiked to Bumpass Hell, a waterfall, and a lake with tadpoles. I loved Lassen. On my way home, I decided that I would donate to Lassen on my next birthday. (Editor's note: Zach has carried on this tradition for three years.)





Owen and Zach Brunner ask all their friends and relatives not to give them presents for their birthday, but to instead give contributions that they then use to support Lassen Volcanic National Park and Yosemite National Park.

*So how does this work? When your birthday comes around what do you tell people?*

**Owen:** On my card, I usually say something like “Instead of presents, please bring a small donation to Yosemite.”

**Zach:** I say the same thing. Sometimes I invite more friends so I can raise more money for Lassen.

*Zach, do you ever miss getting your favorite toy or some other object that you might want for your birthday, like a new computer game or a new bike?*

**Zach:** Well, my family still gives me presents so I do get some things. Sometimes I think it would be nice to get toys from my friends. But mostly, I feel satisfied and good to give money to Lassen. My birthday is coming up next month. If my parents told me I could get presents from my friends this year, I would still chose to raise money for Lassen.

*Tell us what happened to you, Zach, as a result of your decision to give your birthday bounty away? What did the Lassen Association do?*

**Zach:** Lassen Association made me a board member of their community even

though I am only seven. I also got a Lassen sweatshirt that I wear a lot.

*Owen, what did the Yosemite Conservancy do to recognize your donations?*

**Owen:** One year, they put me in the magazine. I’m also listed in the book of donors in the museum at Yosemite. Plus, I got to meet Ranger Erik Westerlund and he took me on a special hike that not many people know about. It is one of my favorites, and I hike it almost every time we visit. (I’m not going to tell you where it is because I like keeping it a secret.) Also, the Conservancy sends me a card every year and a small Yosemite gift.

*Guys, do you think that there is any other young person in the entire country who does what you two do—giving up birthday presents so that the parks will benefit?*

**Zach:** I’m sure there are other kids who do what I do. I think that because when we give our money away, it inspires other people and maybe they will get the idea to give to their favorite park.

**Owen:** I know that some of our friends see what we do and they give to other charities—maybe not a national park, but

something that they care about. I feel like I’ve accomplished something when I see my friends doing what I do.

*As you know, maintaining the beauty and health of our natural areas can often be a challenge. Many in the adult population, including elected officials, do not recognize the importance of caring for these sacred places. What would you say to people who do not understand the importance of this?*

**Owen:** Well, there are so many humans on the planet. We are thriving and taking so much space, but we don’t live in harmony with our habitat. National parks are important because they are places that humans haven’t touched. They remind me that we should stop polluting and start living with our habitat rather than resisting our habitat. Also, when I am in the parks I feel happy and free and that nothing can stop me from being happy. It’s really important to me to have these places where I feel so—just so happy and peaceful. When we drive into Yosemite and I see El Capitan, I feel like there is nothing in the world that is bad.

**Left:** Owen and Zach Brunner at Lassen National Park ©Sonia Brunner **Above:** Yosemite Valley ©Photoquest/Dreamstime.com

## One Year Later

## Recommendations for Expanding César Chávez Monument Into a National Historic Park



By Kati Schmidt

**E**ver plan a birthday party where no one shows up? Sadly, the César E. Chávez National Monument could not commemorate the one-year anniversary of the park's dedication on October 8—the site was closed due to the federal government shutdown.

Despite the temporary disruption, the park received a belated birthday gift just two weeks later—a Park Service report recommending that Congress expand the current monument to establish a new national historical park that includes a “national network of sites and programs that tell the story of César Chávez and the farm labor movement.”

A new national historical park could include:

- The existing national monument, known as Nuestra Señora Reina de la Paz, in Keene, California.

- The Forty Acres National Historic Landmark in Delano, California, where, after five years of strikes and boycotts, grape growers signed their first union contracts.
- Filipino Community Hall in Delano, California, which signifies the role that Filipino Americans played in the farm labor movement.
- McDonnell Hall in San Jose, California—Where Chavez began his work as a community organizer.
- The Santa Rita Center in Phoenix, Arizona, where Chavez led a 24-day hunger strike in 1972 to protest a state law that limited farmworkers' right to strike.

“Being personally connected to the life of a farm labor family, I was aware of what César Chávez and the farm labor movement had done to improve the lives of thousands

of families like mine,” said Ruben Andrade, who dreamed of becoming the first superintendent of a park honoring Chávez years before the monument became a reality, and now does exactly that. “I felt the impact that he had on social change touched the lives of many Americans. His story is one that needed to be shared, and what better place than through the National Park Service?”

The existing Chavez National Monument is the only national park site honoring a modern Latino American. NPCA had advocated for the site for years, and will continue to remind Congress that preserving additional sites will help continue to enhance and diversify the park system, and provide a more inclusive story about America's labor and civil rights movements.

Above: President Obama speaks at La Paz during the 2012 dedication of the César E. Chávez National Monument. ©Kati Schmidt/NPCA

# Mammoths & the Military

By Lynn Davis

**A**s Congress considers legislation to create Tule Springs Fossil Beds National Monument, NPCA's Nevada Field Office organized a tour of the area for high-level Nellis Air Force Base officials. The legislation would create a 22,650-acre park unit on the northern outskirts of Las Vegas, protecting a significant array of Ice Age fossils on the ground, and it will reserve for use an important military air corridor above. Colonel Barry Cornish, Colonel Robert Ramsden, Chief Master Sergeant Steven Cleveland and several Nellis-based airmen and airwomen were given an early morning tour of a desert wash dense with visible fossil fragments. Guided by paleontologists from the University Nevada Las Vegas (UNLV), the military contingent learned of Columbian mammoths, American lions, saber-tooth cats, dire wolves, and sloths the size of small sports cars, all while the U.S. Air Force Thunderbirds flew overhead.

Boundaries for the proposed national monument coincide with one of the most significant military air corridors in the

western United States, connecting Nellis and Creech Air Force Bases. "Notably, as this new park is preserved for future generations, a vital air corridor is recognized and protected for perpetuity, too," says NPCA Senior Program Manager Lynn Davis.

Nevada's entire Congressional delegation—three Republicans and three Democrats' including Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid—are cosponsoring the legislation. At press time, the legislation was expected to advance through various House and Senate subcommittees.

NPCA's Nevada Field Office gathered endorsements and now leads a diverse group of stakeholders. Nevada's state legislature recently passed a resolution endorsing the new national monument, with only one dissenting vote. Public support for the legislation has come from Nevada's governor, Clark County commissioners, mayors and city councilmembers from the cities of Las Vegas and North Las Vegas, as well as local tourism entities, education organizations, and community groups.



Above: Col. Robert Ramsden, 99th Air Base Wing vice commander (right), and Chief Master Sgt. Steven Cleveland, 99th ABW command chief (center), survey fossil beds excavated by archaeologists in the 1960s during a tour of Tule Springs, Las Vegas Nov. 18, 2013. (U.S. Air Force photo by Airman 1st Class Joshua Kleinholz)

**NATIONAL PARKS**  
ARE A TINY AND DECLINING PART OF THE FEDERAL BUDGET.  
IF YOU ELIMINATED THE ENTIRE NPS BUDGET  
**IT WOULD TAKE ABOUT**  
**6,000 YEARS**  
TO ELIMINATE THE DEBT.  
**DENY GALVIN**  
RETIRED DEPUTY DIRECTOR, NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

**EVERGLADES**  
THE \$80M TO-DO LIST

PROJECTS AT EVERGLADES NATIONAL PARK ARE TYPICAL OF THOSE FACING PARK UNITS ACROSS THE COUNTRY, DUE TO DECLINING PARK FUNDING

- REPLACE & REHAB BOAT DOCKS AT EVERGLADES CITY MARINA \$396,000
- REHABILITATE VISITOR FACILITIES AT LONG PINE KEY CAMPGROUND \$305,000
- REPLACE ROOF OF FLAMINGO VISITOR CENTER \$595,000
- SAFETY & FIRE PROTECTION UPGRADES FOR FLAMINGO VISITOR CENTER AND MUSEUM \$30,000

**ECONOMIC IMPACT RELATIVE TO COST**

Location	2011 Positive Economic Impact on the Region	2018 Enacted Budget
ACADIA NATIONAL PARK	High	Low
LAKE MEAD NAT'L RECREATION AREA	High	Low
STATUE OF LIBERTY NATIONAL MONUMENT	High	Low
OLYMPIC NATIONAL PARK	High	Low
SHENANDOAH NATIONAL PARK	High	Low
GETTYSBURG NATIONAL MILITARY PARK	High	Low
CUYAHOGA VALLEY NATIONAL PARK	High	Low
LAKE ROOSEVELT NATIONAL RECREATION AREA	High	Low
FREDERICKSBURG & SPOTSYLVANIA NATIONAL MILITARY PARK	High	Low
CUMBERLAND GAP NATIONAL HISTORICAL PARK	High	Low

■ 2011 POSITIVE ECONOMIC IMPACT ON THE REGION  
■ 2018 ENACTED BUDGET

## NPCA Welcomes New Program Manager for Los Angeles

**D**ennis Arguelles comes to NPCA after more than 20 years of nonprofit management and advocacy experience in Los Angeles' low income, immigrant and ethnic communities. He has worked for several neighborhood-based organizations and is the past President and Executive Director of the Asian Pacific Policy and Planning Council, a coalition of over 30 community-based institutions. He also served as the Assistant Director of the UCLA Asian American Studies Center and as an appointee to various City and County Commissions. As a youth, Dennis grew up in the shadow of the San Gabriel Mountains and Angeles National Forest, leading to a lifelong passion for backpacking, kayaking, fishing and other outdoor activities. He is particularly interested in connecting inner-city youth and urban communities to the natural environment and serves as a guide and instructor for Outward Bound Adventures, Inc. As an urban planner, he is also interested in open space access and equity issues and the preservation of cultural and historic places. He received his bachelor's and master's degrees from UCLA. Working for NPCA represents the coming together of many of his interests and passions, and he feels privileged to be working to expand, preserve and strengthen our national parks.

NPCA's new office will be in Los Angeles. If you would like to contact Dennis send him an email at [darguelles@npca.org](mailto:darguelles@npca.org)



## West Coast's First Marine Wilderness One Step Closer to Protection



**UPDATE**

By Neal Desai

**E**arlier this fall, a federal appeals court ruled in support of the National Park Service decision to protect Drakes Estero, a five-bay estuary located within the Point Reyes National Seashore. As we reported earlier this spring, the Interior Department had decided to let the lease of an existing industrial oyster operation expire as planned, ushering in the protection of the Estero. Forty years after taxpayers purchased the property for inclusion in the Seashore, the estuary will finally be free from millions of non-native Japanese oysters and manila clams planted by the company, free from thousands of noisy motorboat trips each year, and allowed to provide maximum wildlife habitat for birds and marine mammals.

Though the company has sued the Park Service to overturn the decision, two courts have thus far rejected the lawsuit, acknowledging that taxpayers fairly purchased and planned for the property to be protected after the company's 40-year lease expired.

"If the oysters, seals, birds, fish and tomorrow's children could speak, they would be cheering the wisdom of upholding the law, honoring the long-awaited removal of a commercial operation from the midst of a national and global treasure, Drakes Estero," said Dr. Sylvia A. Earle, an oceanographer, former chief scientist at National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, and National Geographic Explorer in Residence. "Wilderness areas not only provide increasingly rare safe havens and sources of restoration for wildlife, they do the same for humankind."

The company has stated its intention to file yet another court appeal. But rest assured that NPCA, along with its allies, will continue to lead the effort to complete a multi-decade planning effort for rare marine wilderness protection. Stay connected with the campaign at [savepointreyeswilderness.org](http://savepointreyeswilderness.org).

**Above:** Harbor Seal on beach. ©Moose Henderson/Dreamstime.com

Clissy Field, The Presidio, Golden Gate National Recreation Area, San Francisco, CA.  
© Edward Caldwell

# We made a difference. You can, too.

“When Mike and I decided to create a living trust, national parks were high on our list, because they need to be preserved for future generations. NPCA will ensure that happens.” — Kathy Grazioli, California

Join Kathy and Mike Grazioli and hundreds of other park lovers who have promised to protect our national treasures for future generations by including the National Parks Conservation Association in their will or trust. Create a meaningful legacy that will last beyond your lifetime.



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.....  
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## National Parks and Local Economies

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visitor spending each day national parks were closed. Tourists cancelled their trips, visitor spending ceased to exist, and local businesses suffered a devastating loss. Nowhere was that felt more strongly than in the California desert, where tourism to the desert national parks is a powerful economic driver.

In 2011, there were almost 3 million visitors to Joshua Tree National Park, Mojave National Preserve, and Death Valley National Park who infused the local economy with over \$100 million in spending and supported more than 1,200 full- and part-time jobs. “The parks are the spark plugs in the desert’s economic engine,” says David Lamfrom, senior desert program manager for the National Parks Conservation Association. “When the parks were shut, local businesses suffered grave financial losses during their high season—a time when they make money to cover the lean times.”

NPCA is working hard to avert another government shutdown and address chronic underfunding of our national parks, which is an equally serious threat to their future. As of last year, the National Park Service operating shortfall was more than a half billion dollars, and deferred maintenance had piled up to \$12 billion. These shortfalls harm national park staffing, educational programs, infrastructure, maintenance, resource protection, and law enforcement. In response, NPCA has asked desert businesses to sign on to a letter requesting that Congressman Paul Cook, who represents the California desert, work to address acute and chronic funding shortfalls to ensure that our national parks can be enjoyed by future generations. Already, more than 50 local businesses that include bed and breakfasts, computer companies, yoga studios, pizza parlors, coffee shops, and consulting groups have signed onto the letter, and we anticipate more signatories in the future.



IT'S LIKE CLOSING A SHOPPING MALL  
AT **CHRISTMAS** TIME.  
IT'S THE TIME OF YEAR WHERE YOU EITHER  
**MAKE IT, OR DON'T MAKE IT.**

PHIL FRANCIS  
FORMER SUPERINTENDENT OF BLUE RIDGE PARKWAY  
QUOTED BY THE HUFFINGTON POST REGARDING THE IMPACT  
OF THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT SHUTDOWN ON  
REGIONAL TOURISM

**BLUE RIDGE PARKWAY**  
RECEIVES MORE VISITORS IN OCTOBER  
THAN ANY OTHER NATIONAL PARK, WITH  
**60,000** VISITORS **SPENDING**  
**\$1.4 MILLION** **EACH DAY.**

