



# FIELDREPORT

Northeast Region | Spring 2013

## Funding Our Parks for Posterity

With the National Parks Centennial just three years off, NPCA teamed up with the National Park Hospitality Association and the Bipartisan Policy Center to convene a discussion of innovative ways to build sustainable financial support for the National Park System. The various

87% of all Americans loved their parks and thought they deserved stable or increased funding.

proposals, discussed and supported by both Republicans and Democrats, included such ideas as raising fees, adding a penny to the federal gas tax, creating a major philanthropic centennial matching program, and expanding recreational and interpretive services through private concessionaires.

Among the speakers at the March 19 event were Dirk Kempthorne, former Secretary of the Interior; Christine Todd Whitman, former Governor of New Jersey; Norm Dicks, former Congressman from Washington, and Senator Mark Udall of Colorado.

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## Maine Woods National Park Economic Reports Spark Statewide Conversations

By Nick Lund

**T**he creation of a new national park in Maine's vast north woods—at one time but a dream in the minds of most Mainers—is slowly but surely inching toward reality. A pair of NPCA-influenced reports on the potential economic impacts of a new national park and recreation area in northern Maine is generating a lot of positive discussions in the state, even among those who have staunchly opposed the park idea. The studies, released in early February, illustrate the current economic conditions in two northern Maine counties, and compare them to the economies of 16 communities across the U.S. that are near national parks. The studies showed that since 1970, the national park economies grew faster and more diverse than the Maine counties. Although the land proposed for the Maine park currently has

the capacity to support 50 forestry related jobs, the reports continued, the creation of a national park and recreation area on the site could bring more than 400.

The release of the reports generated positive coverage in the state and the region. Articles highlighting the positive impacts of a potential new park appeared in Portland, Boston, Augusta and, significantly, Bangor. The reports have seemed to have a real impact in northern Maine communities where economies continue to struggle. NPCA and its coalition partners will keep working—both in Maine and in Washington, DC—to make sure Mainers know that in addition to being beautiful, national parks are a positive, stable, and reliable economic pillar. Visit <http://headwaterseconomics.org/land/reports/katahdin/>



**Top:** Mount Katahdin, the centerpiece of Baxter State Park, in Maine ©Denis Jr. Tangney  
**Above:** Canoe on the Penobscot River ©Chuck Katz

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## Being Brash: Supporting All Stories

By Alexander Brash, Senior Regional Director

**O**n a bus in Montgomery, a lone woman refused to be sent to the rear. In the dry desert east of Yosemite lie the foundations of an internment camp where thousands of Americans were imprisoned simply because of their ancestry. In a drab small bar on Christopher Street in New York City, a handful of young men refused to be harassed by the police. These sites were all turning points in American history. They may not be as beautiful as the Tetons, or have the cachet of Abraham Lincoln's birthplace, but they are as important in our nation's unfolding history.

Originally built as stables in the 1840s, a small two-story building had multiple lives until it was opened as the Stonewall Inn in 1967. Soon it was the largest gay establishment in New York City, if not the nation. Frequently the target of harassing police raids, patrons erupted in rebellion on a hot June night in 1969. Dozens of gay youths refused to be picked on any more, and rallying hundreds more, they turned the tables, trapping a handful of police officers inside the bar.

Sadly, not long after the riot, the bar closed, and over the next few decades the building languished in various guises, including as a

shoe store. But in the ensuing decades, a more enlightened society, growing gay pride, and a growing appreciation of its iconic value led the bar's stature as a symbol to grow. In 2000, the building was included with Christopher Street in the area's National Historic Landmark designation. In 2007, the building was renovated again, and re-opened with its old name, the Stonewall Inn.

Email your Representatives and Senators and ask that the Stonewall Inn be incorporated in our national park system.

Inside the bar today, a small mahogany countertop extends along the west wall facing just a dozen stools, another half-dozen booths line the opposite wall, and a small mirror-ceilinged gathering room remains in the back. It's just a quarter the size of Boston's "Cheers," and when I last went in, it was still a neighborhood hang-out. At mid-day a sole bartender was plying her trade to two locals. Stonewall could not be farther from the grandeur of the Grand Canyon.

Yet, this unlikely site is more than worthy of being a national park. Stonewall Inn is the iconic anchor of a great arc of history that passes on through Harvey Milk, the proliferation of gay rights marches and parades in 1970s, the Rainbow Coalition, the incredible losses of the AIDS epidemic, and the profound shift toward the acceptance of same-sex marriages today. Like the history behind many sites, from Custer's Last Stand to Manzanar, you don't have to agree or disagree to recognize it.

In this light, I urge you to email your Representatives and Senators and ask that the Stonewall Inn be incorporated in our national park system. For as then Assistant Secretary of the Interior, John Berry (now Director of the Office of Personnel Management) said in 2000, "Let it forever be remembered that here—on this spot—men and women stood proud, they stood fast, so that we may be who we are, we may work where we will, live where we choose, and love whom our hearts desire."



Left: Stonewall Inn, Greenwich Village, NY  
©DouG



## Connecting with the National Parks of New England

By Oliver Spellman

**N**ew England's 25 national parks generate more than \$550 million in annual economic benefit from 12 million national park visitors. Our Northeast Regional office is considering taking a more active role in protecting and preserving New England's national parks. So with that goal in mind I packed up a few odds and ends and headed up to the Boston area to get a sense of what makes some of our New England national park sites so special.

My first stop was Adams National Historical Park in Quincy, Massachusetts, the home of two American presidents and their descendants from 1720 to 1927. Here, I was lucky enough to gain an audience with Superintendent Marianne Peak and her staff, and was immediately impressed with their knowledge and passion for the

preservation and protection of these special historic homes entrusted to their care. After a tour of the private home of our second president, John Adams and his wife Abigail, we had a detailed discussion of how NPCA could be helpful and supportive with their Friends Groups, and other local non-profits, I headed back to Boston for a meeting with the Superintendent for Boston Harbor Islands National Recreation Area, Bruce Jacobson.

Superintendent Jacobson shared many of the current challenges involved in the coordination and management of 34 islands that contain a Civil War-era fort, historic lighthouses, picnicking, fishing and swimming areas, as well as natural areas that require sensitive wildlife management and operational issues, such as the dependence on ferries as the primary mode of visitor access. More urban parks are studying the cost benefits

### FUN FACT

The Boston Light, located within the Boston Harbor Islands, is the oldest lighthouse site in the country.

of waterborne transportation for visitors as it relieves traffic congestion, improves air quality and provides an alternative means of transportation for commuters in urban areas.

The next day I visited Superintendent Nancy Nelson of Minute Man National Historical Park, where the opening battle of the American Revolution is celebrated and brought to life. Located on the outskirts of the quaint City of Concord, Minute Man offers an opportunity for visitors to connect with the actual sites where the American War of Independence was initiated, like the “Old North Bridge” where the advancing British Soldiers were stopped. It was refreshing to hear the Superintendent’s ideas about a new sustainable agricultural initiative targeting school kids, as a way to connect with future generations of young park stewards.

I left Minute Man feeling rejuvenated and excited about the great work of the National Park Service and continued my site visits in New England, with tours and meetings at Lowell National Historical Site, Salem Maritime National Historic Site, Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site, and Boston National Historical Park. I now have a better sense of how NPCA can play

a supportive role for the parks located in the Boston area. NPCA will advocate for:

- Increased funding for the Land and Water Conservation Fund to help protect the boundaries of Adams and Minute Man National Historical Parks from incompatible development in the near future.
- Help identify appropriate federal transportation funds for waterborne transportation connections for Adams, Boston Harbor, and Boston Historical, with future connections at Salem Maritime NHS.
- Offer training for newly formed Friends Groups at Longfellow, JFK and the Olmsted historic site, focused on fund raising, partnerships, program development and goal planning.

As we continue working toward full funding for our treasured national park system, it’s important to acknowledge the great work that is consistently being accomplished by our Park Service personnel throughout the Northeast Region. My recent New England trip reinforced my commitment to help protect one of our most treasured possessions, our national parks.

**Left:** Trolley at Lowell National Historical Park, Lowell MA ©Liz West.

**Below:** Captain William Smith House, Minute Man National Historical Park ©graysky.

**Right** (Seated left to right): Hon. Norm Dicks, Hon. Christie Todd Whitman, Hon. Jim Oberstar, Jeremy Jacobs of Delaware North Co. ©Bipartisan Policy Center



## Funding Our Parks for Posterity

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As Mr. Kempthorne noted, a conversation about broadening the revenue base for the National Park System is not new, but markedly, does take place against the backdrop of the Sequestration. The National Park Service must now deal with a \$110 million, or 5 percent, cut to its budget. Conversely, he also noted that “The 2016 centennial of the National Park Service creates an unparalleled opportunity to galvanize the country and policymakers in particular to take steps necessary to ensure the promise of the national parks continues.”

Following the discussion of potential new revenue sources, two polling specialists, Geoff Garin and Whit Ayres, took center stage to discuss their bipartisan effort to characterize Americans’ love of our parks. Foremost, they observed that the national parks drew bipartisan support like no other issue in American politics, and with a spread of only a few percentage points between Republicans and Democrats, approximately 87% of all Americans loved their parks and thought they deserved stable or increased funding. The conference concluded with remarks from Senator Udall, and he closed by noting that “Our national parks are a red, white, and blue initiative, not just red or blue.”

If you’re interested in the various proposals to broaden the National Park Service’s financial support please visit: <http://bipartisanpolicy.org/events/2013/03/building-more-sustainable-future-americas-national-parks>



# Micro-Funding America's Urban National Parks

By April Mims

NPCA recognizes that while urban areas are home to some of our greatest national treasures, urban national parks rarely receive the support needed in order to reach their true potential. That's why we're partnering with ioby (In Our Back Yard), a local leader in urban civic engagement, on a campaign that will allow Americans to sponsor environmental stewardship projects in urban national parks throughout the country.

The concept is simple: 1) An organization becomes a project lead by posting a project

## IN OUR BACK YARD

description with a target budget on the ioby webpage; 2) visitors to the webpage (<http://ioby.org/npc>) contribute tax-deductible donations to the project; and 3) the organization raises money for the project.

Using this simple formula, NPCA and ioby are sponsoring three urban national park projects across the country. In Baltimore, the National Aquarium and National Park Service will recruit volunteers to clear and maintain trails at the wetland adjacent to Fort McHenry National Monument and Historic Shrine. Tropical Audubon Society

will lead kayaking trips in Biscayne Bay in Miami. And thanks to generous community support, one of the three NPCA-supported projects, the Roots and Wings Program, has met its fundraising goal, enabling organizers to bring Los Angeles high school students to national parks this spring. These important projects, which elevate local park groups and improve national parks in urban areas, will be made possible because of the contributions of park lovers like you.

To volunteer for the Roots and Wings Program, or support the other two active urban national park projects, visit the ioby website at [ioby.org/NPCA](http://ioby.org/NPCA).



Top: Miami Skyline from Biscayne Bay, Florida ©hessbeck Right: Clean up at Fort McHenry ©ioby



## NORTHEAST REGIONAL OFFICE

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# Why I Support NPCA: Lawrence Benenson

“It all began with Ninety Six,” says Lawrence Benenson, long-time donor of NPCA, who visited Ninety Six as a child. What is Ninety Six? It is a national historic monument in South Carolina with various legends about how it got its name. It is rich with Cherokee tradition and was the site of two Revolutionary War battles. “But one of my favorites is the Maggie L. Walker National Historic Site in Baltimore, which commemorates the first female president of a bank and the first African-American bank president/owner: The same person!”

Many of Lawrence’s interests had their beginnings in national parks, “My life has been enriched by them,” he says. “So much of what I know I learned at a national park.” America’s national parks bring history and culture to life through interpretive programs that help visitors form intellectual and emotional connections with the inherent significance and meanings.

**Above:** Lawrence Benenson with NPCA Nevada Program Manager Lynn Davis at Tule Springs



He loves New York City’s rich cultural offerings, citing Teddy Roosevelt’s birthplace, a national historic monument on 20th Street, “How many people have been there or even know about it?” he asks.

“He is a Renaissance Man,” says Lynn Davis, Nevada Program Manager for NPCA, who has gone with Lawrence on many hikes.

“His interests are sophisticated and wide-ranging, and his knowledge is deep, but he acts like a happy child when he learns something new.” He often visits Tule Springs, the site of a potential future national park in Nevada’s Mojave Desert, where he feeds his interest in fossils and his love of open space. “I feel safe in national parks,” said Lawrence, trying to articulate the feeling of peace, serenity and infinity he feels in one of America’s magnificent spaces.

Lawrence once described himself as “philanthropically militant,” a thought that is reflected in his statement: “I look at the parks as this wonderful gift that our government has given us. We must protect them from political

shenanigans that threaten them. Our government gives us much more than we give in return.” He believes that philanthropy is essential to a healthy society. “I give to NPCA because I want to ensure that there is always money in the Federal budget for parks so that we can conserve these beautiful lands as well as our history and heritage.”



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