



FIELDREPORT

Southwest Region | Fall & Winter 2015



Visiting Utah's National Parks In the Footsteps of Many

In case you haven't heard, Utah's national parks are on the proverbial radar. Slightly more than 10.5 million people from around the world visited the state's 13 national park units in 2014. That's a 17.4% increase in visitation from 2013 and nearly a 33% increase over the last decade. People are flocking to these iconic landscapes to scramble up Angels Landing at Zion National Park, contemplate the Milky Way galaxy and dark,



starry night skies at Bryce Canyon National Park, and to experience the awe-inspiring sunset at Delicate Arch in Arches National Park.

The Centennial Moment

As we prepare to enter the centennial year of the creation of the National Park System, we can't help but think about the future and our national parks' second century. What does this new epoch look like? Where are we headed? Where would we like it to go?

Several years ago, NPCA convened a remarkable process led by an amazing group of women and men called the National Parks Second Century Commission. Their wonderfully rich and detailed observations acknowledged the changes in our society and demographics over the past century. They envisioned a National Park System that continued to honor the special relationship Americans have with their national parks—the landscapes that it protects and the heritage it honors. They also noted that the system is still incomplete, and the story of our nation and its people continues to evolve. They observed that many Americans do not share a sense of pride and ownership in our national parks. And that without sustained and forceful support, the national parks would be subjected to many forces and factors that could weaken protections for these places in the future. We are hopeful that this new

2016

National Park Service CENTENNIAL

NATIONALPARKS.ORG

century, ushered by a year of Centennial attention, will attract diverse and enthusiastic visitors and help many more Americans to find their voice and speak up for our parks.

Our multifarious work in the Southwest region is rewarding and rich, yet complicated and ambitious. This issue of the Fall/Winter 2015 Field Report describes the multiple threats and challenges our parks are facing on the cusp of this Centennial year and what's at stake for all of us in the Southwest. There are some wonderful opportunities to add our voices to sustain this magnificent idea. We hope you will join us in celebrating the centennial of our National Park System and stay with us as we forge ahead into the next century.

Top: Left Fork trail in Zion National Park, UT ©Matthew Kuhns | TandemStock Left: Summer crowds at Riverside Walk—the start of the popular Narrows Trail in Zion National Park, UT. Photo: NPS

FIELD REPORT

FALL & WINTER 2015

Arizona, Colorado, New Mexico & Utah

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Find Your Voice

America has more than 400 national parks, protecting some of our most important cultural and historical sites and our most iconic landscapes.

We hike their trails, boat their waters, wander their museums and learn about some of the most pivotal moments in our country's history. Yet these places are facing very real challenges, from encroaching development to climate change to years of underfunding. And they need our help.



national park visitors and national park advocates. Through community service events, speaker series and advocacy trainings, NPCA is working to educate, engage and empower people to speak up for America's favorite places so they can thrive well into their next century.

For more information about the national initiative and activities, please visit FindYourVoice.camp.

National Parks Conservation Association (NPCA) has launched Find Your Voice—an initiative to encourage people to be both

Below: Bryce Canyon National Park, UT never disappoints! A picture perfect autumn day on Peekaboo Loop Trail ©Cory MacNulty, NPCA



A Potential Solution for Chronic Underfunding The National Park Service Centennial Act

Next year marks the centennial of the creation of our National Park System—and a century of protecting our country's most important historical sites and most incredible landscapes. But as the park system has grown and aged, federal funding has not kept pace. On September 1, 2015, President Obama submitted a legislative proposal to Congress—the National Park Service Centennial Act—to better address critical maintenance and improvement projects in our national parks. If enacted, the proposal will help pay for key issues facing our parks, from addressing the mounting maintenance backlog to connecting youth to our parks. The Centennial Challenge Fund

is a key component of this proposal, which is part of a broader strategy to get more federal dollars for parks. First proposed by the George W. Bush Administration, the Centennial Challenge Fund would establish a dedicated, guaranteed federal fund of \$100 million each year for three years, to be matched with private contributions from individuals, foundations or businesses. This legislative proposal is an important contribution to the dialogue currently occurring in Congress on how to restore our parks for their next century. It is now up to Congress to act and restore our national treasures. It is time for Congress to make our national parks a national priority.

"We are encouraged by President Obama's commitment to help our parks get back on track. Support for parks extends well beyond party lines."

- THERESA PIERNO, NATIONAL PARKS CONSERVATION ASSOCIATION'S
PRESIDENT AND CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

Alton Coal Strip Mine

On the Doorstep of Bryce Canyon National Park

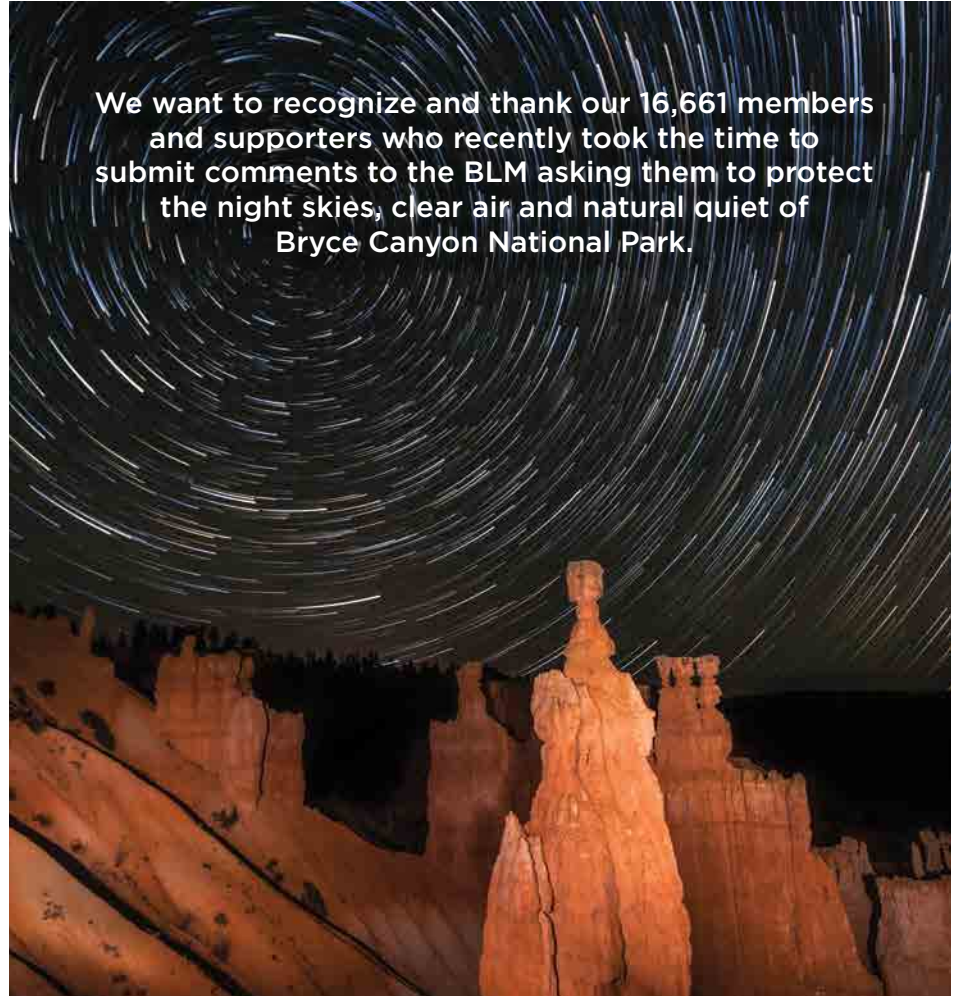
Bryce Canyon National Park is a national treasure protected foremost for its unusual scenic beauty that draws nearly a million and a half visitors from around the world each year. Expansive views across colorful hoodoos, clear air, natural quiet and dark, starry night skies are all integral to the national park experience at Bryce. A proposal by Alton Coal Development LLC (Alton Coal) could put all of these features at risk.

The company has proposed expanding its coal strip mine on about 3,561 acres of land ten miles from Bryce Canyon National Park and increasing it to an around the clock operation for the next 25 years. Part of this expansion would mean hundreds of daily truck trips to and from the site to haul nearly 45 million tons of coal to the nearest railroad to be burned in a coal-fired power plant nearby or overseas. NPCA recognizes the need for diverse energy sources, and we have long advocated that energy development, both extractive and renewable, should avoid high-value conservation areas including units of the National Park System as well as federally designated wilderness and wildlife management areas. We want to recognize and thank our 16,661 members and supporters who recently took the time to submit comments to the BLM asking them to protect the night skies, clear air and natural quiet of Bryce Canyon National Park by rejecting the coal mine expansion in such an extraordinary and delicate place.

For those unfamiliar with the issue, the federal tract Alton Coal identified for its mine expansion proposal is on land surrounded by Bryce Canyon and Zion National Parks, Cedar Breaks National Monument and Grand Staircase Escalante National Monument. The land is currently managed by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM).

More than five years ago, NPCA became engaged in this issue when Alton first proposed establishing Utah's first and only surface coal mine, the Coal Hollow Mine, on 635 acres of private land in the same vicinity just south of the small town of Alton in Kanab County.

Six years before Alton began digging at the Coal Hollow Mine in 2010, they submitted a Lease by Application to mine coal on approximately 3,500 acres of adjacent BLM public land. In 2011, the BLM released a Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) analyzing potential environmental impacts of the proposed coal surface mine.



We want to recognize and thank our 16,661 members and supporters who recently took the time to submit comments to the BLM asking them to protect the night skies, clear air and natural quiet of Bryce Canyon National Park.

During the public comment period NPCA joined the National Park Service, the Fish and Wildlife Service and more than 200,000 members of the public in identifying several issues with the DEIS and recommended the “No Action” alternative—no expansion on BLM land.

Instead of choosing “No Action”, BLM went back to the drawing board to conduct further analyses and provide additional information in a Supplemental Draft Environmental Impact Statement (SDEIS) that was released for public comment earlier this summer. In the SDEIS, the BLM analyzed the “No Action” alternative and three other alternatives (that varied primarily by acreage and mine operation stipulations), but they did not choose a preferred alternative.

Based on BLM's own analyses, each of the action alternatives for the Alton coal strip mine would increase nighttime sky glow, elevate ambient noise levels and release haze causing toxic air pollutants. These

impacts could harm the very resources and visitor experiences Bryce Canyon National Park was established to protect. The expansion could also destroy cultural archeological sites, potentially extirpate the southernmost greater sage grouse population in the country, adversely impact the health and well-being of nearby communities and negatively affect regional tourism-related businesses.

For these reasons, NPCA submitted detailed technical comments again requesting that the BLM select the “No Action” alternative and deny the proposal by Alton Coal Development LLC to expand their coal strip mine on up to 3,561 acres of federal land. We will keep you updated as this issue progresses, and thank you again for speaking up for your national parks.

Above: “Thor’s Hammer Guarding the Night” at Bryce Canyon National Park, UT set against a canopy of stars ©Jason J. Hatfield | TandemStock

Visiting Utah's National Parks: In the Footsteps of Many

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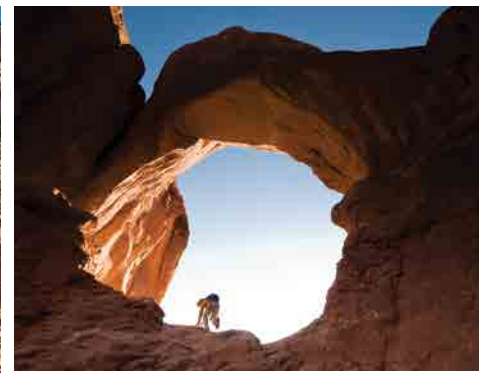
Visitors also provide valuable economic benefits to the local gateway communities. In 2014, those 10.5 million visitors spent \$729.9 million, making Utah one of the top ten states in national park visitor spending.

In many ways, this increase in visitation signals success for statewide and local tourism marketing campaigns and the allure of the parks strengthens the communities.

In 2013, the State of Utah launched its “Mighty 5” domestic marketing campaign, encouraging visitors to experience the state’s five national parks—Zion, Bryce, Capitol Reef, Canyonlands, and Arches. Visitation numbers at each of the five national parks are up and the local gateway communities are accommodating more and more visitors.

The National Park Service (NPS) and NPCA also have ongoing efforts to attract more diverse park visitors as well as new park advocates who are not afraid to speak up on their behalf. The NPS Centennial campaign “Find Your Park” encourages people to get out and discover the national parks, while NPCA’s “Find Your Voice” campaign is designed to inspire park visitors to speak up for the parks and ensure their future protection.

While more people are visiting the national parks, funds to maintain and run them have been declining. For almost two decades, Congress has been systematically cutting money from the Park Service budget, which means fewer rangers, less money available to repair trails, inadequate park resource protection and reduced visitor center hours. So at what point does the success in drawing visitors to our national parks, coupled with reduced funding to maintain them become a problem for land managers and local communities? Visitors climbing to Angels Landing experience crowded foot traffic and overflowing parking lots greet visitors heading



to the Delicate Arch trailhead. Utah’s “Mighty 5” national park managers are facing the challenges of accommodating ever increasing numbers of visitors while trying to protect the park and the quality of the visitor experience. Since early 2015, park managers, community members, state and

local tourism officials, and NPCA have all come together to find creative solutions to this dilemma.

At Arches and Canyonlands National Parks, managers initiated a public process to address traffic congestion. After consulting with

Top Row (Left): Mesa Arch in Canyonlands National Park, UT ©Prochasson Frederic | Dreamstime.com. **(Right):** Blooming desert in Capitol Reef National Park, UT © Uros Ravbar | Dreamstime.com. **(Middle Row):** Sunrise over Paria View, Bryce Canyon National Park, UT ©Andrew Mace | Flickr Creative Commons **Bottom Row (Left):** Climbing Angels Landing in Zion National Park, UT © Golasza | Dreamstime.com **(Right):** Arches National Park, UT ©Scott Kirkwood



Parks in Peril

Hearing your voice echo back at you, over the vastness of the Grand Canyon—or walking through a sea of blinking lights and booming sounds at a nearby mega mall. Hiking out to Delicate Arch at Arches National Park and gazing to see...oil pumps. The crown jewels of the National Park System are at a crossroads: their wildlife, wild places, and sites that connect us to our nation’s history and shared culture are threatened within and just outside of their borders. However, with each threat comes an opportunity for the Obama Administration to take action. But they need to hear from you.

The National Parks Conservation Association is fighting for these #ParksInPeril—and we need your help. Visit www.npca.org/parksinperil to learn more and take action.

diverse stakeholders including local Moab business and community leaders, state and national leaders and elected officials, NPS is now reviewing potential solutions to congestion there. The list includes implementing time limited parking, building more parking lots, encouraging visitors to use less congested areas of the park and a timed entry system where visitors would have a designated day and time to enter the park. The goal is to protect and enhance the visitor's experience while preserving park resources and values.

So at what point does the success in drawing visitors to our national parks, coupled with reduced funding to maintain them become a problem for land managers and local communities?

Zion National Park, with nearly 3.2 million visitors in 2014, has been a leader in implementing strategies to address the flow of park visitors. The most notable is the successful implementation of a mandatory shuttle to get to Zion Canyon between October and April each year. Even with the measures already in place, higher and higher visitation is straining the capacity of park rangers, trails and facilities, as well as the resources of the town of Springdale. To explore innovative solutions to address the challenges, Zion National Park held a collaboration clinic in mid-August, bringing together key park staff, park partners and community leaders. They will use the information gathered during this process as well as data collected during ongoing monitoring to assess visitor impacts and develop solutions to minimize them.

NPS is working with stakeholders in Utah to address the logistical challenges of hosting millions of people each year. Some of these challenges can be overcome with more money, however, NPS must also consider the broader implications for the parks and the quality of the visitor experience. Trying to accommodate high concentrations of people over longer and longer periods of the year can have lasting impacts on delicate desert ecosystems and important cultural sites. In addition, many visitors seek solitude and quiet as an integral part of their national park experience. This experience is more and more difficult to find at the most popular places in the parks. As we encourage more people to explore and enjoy the national parks, we will have to develop creative options to ensure that these special places remain well-protected into their second century and the expectations that visitors have for a memorable and unique experience can be met.



Groundbreaking Oil and Gas Leasing Plan in Moab Shows Promise, Certainty for Utah Parks



Since 2008, Arches and Canyonlands National Parks, two of the most iconic and alluring parks in the southwest, have faced pressures from oil and gas leasing near their borders. NPCA and local communities continue to be concerned about the lasting impact oil and gas leasing will have on the parks' visitor experience, air quality, dark skies, and the economies of their gateway communities. Arches and Canyonlands National Parks bring more than \$170 million per year to local communities and support nearly 3,000 jobs in the region.

On August 21st, the Bureau of Land Management's (BLM) Moab field office released its 'preferred alternative' to address the leasing issues through a first of its kind, master leasing plan (MLP). The MLP was a collaborative process that culminated through the work of a diverse group of stakeholders including NPCA, local elected officials, advocacy groups, businesses and community members of all political stripes who set out to seek a balanced approach to oil and gas leasing near the parks. As a result of this collaboration, the 'preferred alternative' was released with wide community support, and BLM is seeking comments from the public regarding the plan until November 23, 2015. This MLP considers new leasing of oil and gas and potash on about 785,000 acres of public lands within the planning area around Moab.

Collectively in the southwest, the MLP process is working and is shaping a promising future for national parks but there is more work to do. Master leasing plans have been introduced for Dinosaur National Monument and surrounding Arches and Canyonlands National Parks while more "smart from the start" planning is needed for Mesa Verde National Park, Hovenweep, Natural Bridges and Chaco Culture National Historic Park. NPCA is working to ensure that leasing near the parks is conducted in a smart way. To stay connected, please visit our website for the most current information. (See Parks In Peril Sidebar)

Above: GreenRiver in Canyonlands National Park, UT ©Scott Kirkwood

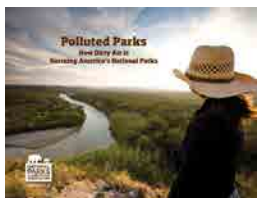
Mark Your Calendars for Utah National Parks Centennial Celebration!

NPCA, in collaboration with the Utah National Parks, the Utah Office of Tourism, Clark Planetarium and Harvest Moon Events, will be hosting a special invite only Centennial Celebration "Your Park After Dark" in Salt Lake City on February 11th, 2016, at the Clark Planetarium. There will be special Dark Sky presentations by Tyler Nordgren in the Planetarium Dome and the premiere showing of the IMAX 3D® MacGillivray Freeman Film "National Parks Adventure". Please contact Britte Kirsch (ekirsch@npca.org) for more information and if you would like to join us for the celebration!

Polluted Parks: How Dirty Air is Harming America's National Parks

This summer, NPCA released a new report entitled *Polluted Parks*, highlighting that many national parks continue to struggle with air pollution and climate impacts, particularly some here in our own backyards. The report looked at the 48 national parks that are required by the Clean Air Act to have the best possible air quality and found that 75 percent of the iconic parks have air quality that's unhealthy at times for visitors, particularly for people with respiratory diseases. And hazy views are a problem across the country—at Saguaro National Park in Arizona, for example, visitors are missing more than 70 miles of scenery that they've come to enjoy.

Fortunately, these problems have a tangible solution. Our parks don't have big fences to block air pollution, but they do have the Regional Haze Rule, an element of the Clean Air Act that was specifically designed to reduce park air pollution. Improving the Regional Haze Rule to strengthen accountability and increase certainty will help ensure that states and polluters clean up their pollution and that national parks and wilderness areas will receive the clean air they are afforded under the law. If the Regional Haze Rule is not improved, over the next 50 years, only 10 percent of national parks required to have clean air will actually have it.

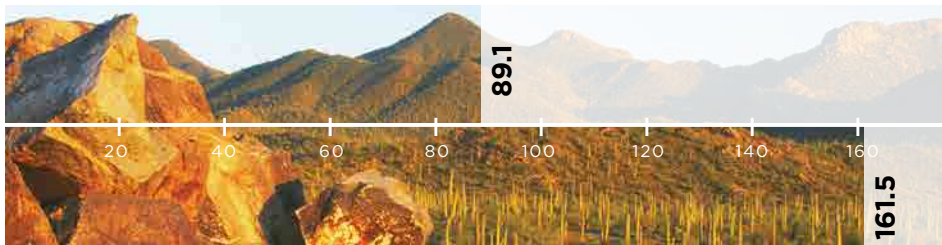


Please visit our website at npca.org/PollutedParks to read our report and learn about how you can get involved with

our country's most treasured natural sites and take action!

Visibility in Miles

Saguaro National Park



Top 12 Parks Most Harmed By Air Pollution: Report Card

RANK	PARK (STATE)	HEALTHY AIR	SEEING CLEARLY	CHANGING CLIMATES ²
1 ¹	Sequoia National Park (CA)	F	D	D
1	Kings Canyon National Park (CA)	F	D	D
3	Everglades National Park (FL)	B	D	F
4	Joshua Tree National Park (CA)	F	C	F
5	Carlsbad Caverns National Park (NM)	C	D	F
6	Acadia National Park (ME)	B	C	F
7	Yosemite National Park (CA)	F	C	F
8	Guadalupe Mountains National Park (TX)	C	D	D
9	Big Bend National Park (TX)	C	D	D
10	Mammoth Cave National Park (KY)	D	F	B
11	Great Smoky Mountains National Park (TN/NC)	D	D	C
12	Saguaro National Park (AZ)	C	D	C

1. Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks are tied for "most harmed park." Because they are so close together, they are often measured by the same air quality monitor, so their ratings are the same.
2. In recognition of the current and increasing impacts of climate change to all national parks, no parks received higher than a "B" grade in this report.

Riding into 2016 with NPCA ~ Partnering with Climate Ride

NPCA is celebrating its 5th year as a partner with Climate Ride, which offers charitable rides and hikes that have raised more than \$2 million for over 100 environmental and bike advocacy organizations while also bringing awareness to climate change. To date, more than 100 people have chosen to ride and hike for NPCA raising \$100,000 to support our work.

In 2016, we will be hosting two special events to benefit NPCA—a ride through Death Valley in March and a hike through Glacier

National Park in late July. In addition, Climate Ride will be hosting six additional rides and hikes across the country. Climate Ride provides a fully supported event, including meals, luggage transport, and comfortable overnight accommodations, so you can focus on the beautiful scenic and breathtaking routes each day. For more information on how you can support the parks via this unique partnership visit www.climateride.org/2016 or email NPCA's team captain, Ben Sander, bsander@npca.org.



Above: NPCA Climate Riders celebrate their final day of the NY-DC trek in September 2013 ©NPCA

Grand Canyon National Park

Issues on the Horizon

Grand Canyon, one of our most iconic national parks, is unfortunately also home to a vast array of threats. NPCA is paying particularly close attention to these three current pressing issues as we head into the National Park Service's centennial. To get timely information on these and other park protection issues, join NPCA's activist email list at www.npca.org.

Road access for a proposed mega-development outside the South Rim. The small town of Tusayan and an Italian developer want the Forest Service to allow better road access and utility corridors to turn two nearby ranches into a massive residential and commercial development at the park's doorstep. NPCA, the Havasupai, conservation allies, and the park oppose the move because the project's scale will increase traffic, light and noise pollution at the park. Drilling new wells could dry up springs and side creeks including the iconic Havasu Falls in the canyon.

Planning Colorado River flows from Glen Canyon Dam to protect park resources. This dam's operation upstream affects endangered fish, recreational beaches, cultural sites, and the entire riverside environment in Grand Canyon. The current plan of operation is being revised, with input from all Colorado River stakeholders—utilities, states, tribes, conservationists and recreation interests. A Draft Environmental Impact Statement will be released soon. NPCA will advocate for water release schedules that best protect the natural and cultural resources of Grand Canyon National Park.



Protecting fragile resources by removing invasive hybrid bison. Cattle-bison hybrids, (also called beefalo or cattalo) introduced and maintained at a nearby historic hunting ranch, have spread onto our public lands and recently caused damage in the park. A Draft Management Plan and Environmental Impact Statement should be released soon. NPCA will support the alternative that best protects meadows and vulnerable springs on the park's North Rim.

Left: Cattle-bison hybrids (aka Beefalo) of Grand Canyon National Park, AZ. ©Alan Levine

Get this **COOL**
Liberty Bottleworks
USA Made Bottle
and support our
Grand Canyon work!
PRICELESS!

This summer at the Outdoor Retailer Show in Salt Lake City, NPCA connected with more than 250 new supporters who wanted to help us protect Grand Canyon National Park (see side article). Through the purchase of this special edition Liberty Bottleworks bottle, you can too! Please contact Britte Kirsch at ekirsch@npca.org to order a bottle (\$10 plus shipping and handling) and sign up to be an advocate. Hurry while supplies last!



Let the River Flow: Protecting Colorado Plateau Parks

In December, the state of Colorado will finalize its first statewide water plan. The plan will establish a framework for dividing the state's water among several priorities: supporting cities and growth, protecting the state's agricultural heritage and economy, and its recreational industry and environment. Several national parks in the state of Colorado, as well as those downstream, could be affected. Only a few of these parks are protected by water rights that guarantee a minimum amount of water

in rivers to support park resources, including maintaining iconic canyons and geologic features, as well as needs for fish and wildlife, boating, and other recreation. Disconcertingly, the plan leaves open the opportunity to remove additional water from the already-strained Colorado River system, which could have unforeseen consequences for 11 national parks within the basin.

Many thanks to hundreds of NPCA supporters who weighed-in to ask that the needs of

national parks be considered alongside other priorities. NPCA will continue to fight for a flexible, balanced approach to sharing this water in a way that continues to support human needs while keeping more water in this vital river system that brings life to hundreds of miles of otherwise arid landscapes. For updates and opportunities to take action on this and other important park-related issues, go to www.npca.org/advocacy.

Above: Cache la Poudre River National Heritage Area in Fort Collins, CO ©Marek Uliasz | Dreamstime.com



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Southwest Regional National Public Lands Day Events Held Sept. 26, 2015

At Petrified Forest National Park in Arizona, NPCA helped to recruit and organize volunteers in completing two projects. One group painted ceiling panels and walls at the Painted Desert Visitor Center, part of a larger goal of restoring the complex to its modernist mid-20th Century glory. Another group removed mesh fence on ranchlands recently added to the park, to benefit pronghorn and other wildlife who can now roam these remote lands freely.

At Dinosaur National Monument in Colorado/Utah, NPCA and volunteers worked with park rangers to clean up trash at the visitor center, scenic overlooks and along Harpers Corner Road. They also placed black and white tabs on fences near sage grouse mating areas (called leks) to prevent the protected birds from colliding with the barbed wire.

For more info about volunteering at NPLD events, please visit www.publiclandsday.org



Right (Top): Jesse Chanley (right) and Rick Guggemos (left) assist with the removal of old fencing at Petrified Forest National Park, AZ. ©Joyce Kelly. **Bottom:** Emily Spencer, Natural Resource Specialist at Dinosaur National Monument, CO/UT, describes the sage grouse habitat restoration project to a group of young volunteers.

Do you Haiku?

Enter our SW Region contest and try out your Haiku skills!

Here at NPCA we are fighting the good fight for our National Parks and the Southwest Region has plenty of complex issues—light pollution, air quality, underfunding, congestion, development—the list goes on. So we are asking our members, supporters and fellow park enthusiasts to try their hand at a haiku that represents or describes a concern or issue that you feel most passionately about here in the Southwest. If you don't know the rules of Haiku please go to <http://www.wikihow.com/Write-a-Haiku-Poem>.

Example:

Dark skies in Utah
Keep them clear for our children
Magic starry nights

We will publish these wonderful creative poetry bits on our new website (www.npca.org) and in our next Field Report in the Spring of 2016. Thank you in advance for submitting your thoughts and feel free to contact Britte Kirsch (ekirsch@npca.org) if you have any questions or need more information. Happy Haiku-ing!

