



# TRUSTEES FOR THE PARKS

NEWSLETTER SUMMER/FALL 2020



Dalton Highway, AK  
© Paul Seibert

**THE WESTERN ARCTIC CARIBOU HERD IS THREATENED BY A PROPOSED MINING ROAD THAT WOULD CUT THROUGH A VAST SWATH OF THE HERD'S MIGRATION RANGE.**



## CARIBOU ON THE ROAD TO RUIN?

*Not on your watch*

**F**rom time immemorial, caribou have migrated across the Alaska tundra and played a critical role in the Arctic ecosystem as well as the lives of Alaska Native people. The hardy and graceful animals transport nutrients across the tundra while providing the people of the region with meat for sustenance and skins for warmth.

The Western Arctic Caribou Herd's very survival, however, is threatened by a proposed mining road that would cut through a vast swath of the herd's migration range. The Ambler mining road would stretch for 211 miles across

public lands, including portions of Gates of the Arctic National Park and Preserve. Nearly 3,000 rivers and streams would be disturbed by the road, which would act like a dam for thousands of acres of tundra wetlands. The road would expose one of the world's last wild and intact landscapes to industrial exploitation.

NPCA has led opposition to the Ambler mining road since it was initially proposed more than six years ago. Our fight to save caribou and other Alaskan wildlife important to Alaska Native communities reached a turning point

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*Caribou cross the Kobuk River at Kobuk Valley National Park twice each year — north every spring and south every fall.*

© NPS/Matt Cameron



earlier this year with two alarming developments.

### **Simultaneous Permit and Money Grabs**

On March 27, federal agencies responsible for protecting public lands — including the National Park Service and Bureau of Land Management — released a flawed Environment Impact Statement for the mining road. On the same day, the Alaska Industrial Development and Export Authority used an emergency meeting meant to provide economic relief to businesses during the COVID-19 pandemic to instead divert \$35 million in state funds to support construction of the road.

NPCA Alaska Program Manager, Alex Johnson, was among more than 100 people who spoke out against this pandemic profiteering that would give

foreign mining companies access to virtually untouched wilderness. “The Ambler mining road is a terrible idea for many reasons. But redirecting public funds to pay for it while local people and businesses struggle to survive a global health crisis is outrageous.”

Here are just a few of the many reasons this proposed mining road is harmful:

- **One of Earth’s largest and longest migrations would be threatened.** The 250,000-strong Western Arctic Caribou Herd migrates 2,700 miles each year — equivalent to walking from Seattle to Miami.
- **The road would stretch east-west, blocking the north-south migration route of caribou.** Studies

have shown caribou avoid roads and industrial traffic. As the animals divert from traditional migration routes, they could move farther and farther away from villagers who depend on them.

- **Although paid for with public funds and running through public lands, the road would not be available for public use.** Only foreign mining companies could use the road to bring trucks and heavy equipment in and bring minerals including copper and zinc out to be sold for private profit.
- **More than a dozen open pit mines could operate for more than 100 years.** Some of these mines surrounded by parkland on three sides could

be operating well into the 22nd century. In the time it takes to remove all the minerals, caribou populations could very well be decimated and Alaska Native communities could be lost forever.

### Not So Fast

Although mining company executives and their political allies want to plow ahead with what many Alaskans refer to as a “Road to Ruin,” NPCA continues to stand strong against this expensive, unnecessary and damaging construction project.

Our Alaska team is partnering with members of Alaska Native communities and local conservation groups to strengthen grassroots opposition. NPCA members across the country are also speaking up for the wildlife of Alaska and against carving a road through spectacular public lands that may be out of sight for most of us but never far from our conservation-minded consciousness.

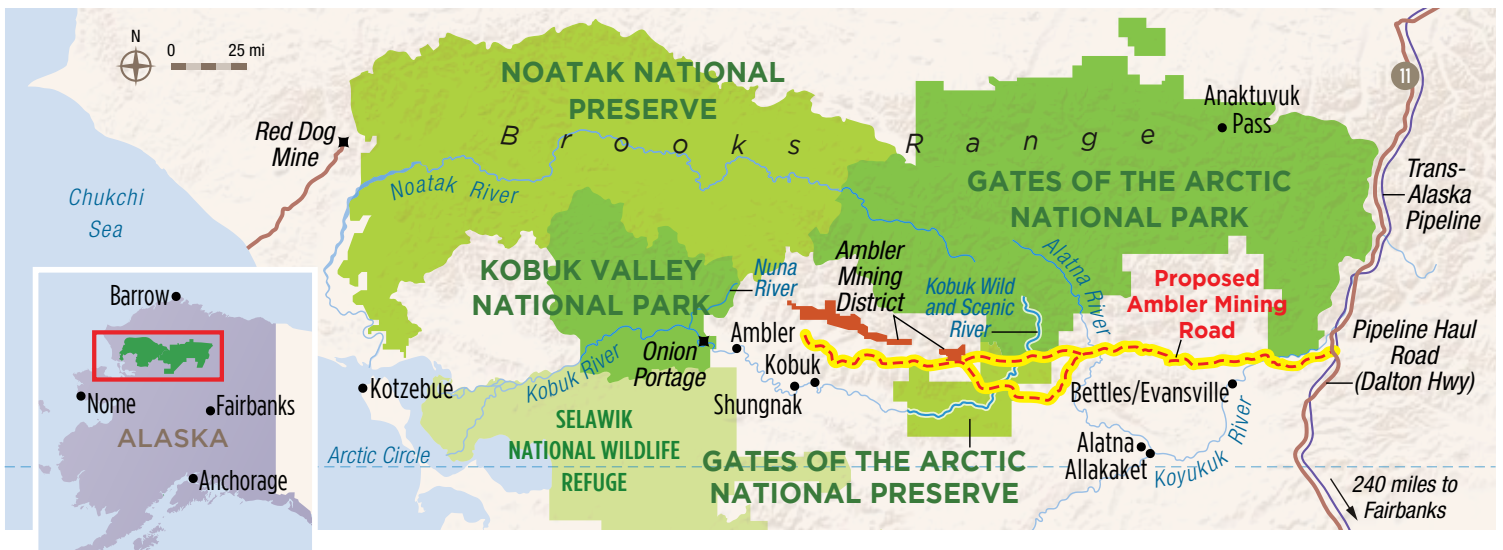
In addition, in August, NPCA brought a lawsuit against the Bureau of Land Management, the US Army Corps, and the National Park Service, pointing to key substantive and procedural failings of the environmental review that did not



*Gates of the Arctic National Park and Preserve in Alaska. Photo at right shows the river and landscape in the approximate location of the proposed road corridor.*

adequately account for the disastrous impacts to the people, parks and wildlife of the region from a century of industrial mining.

*Visit [npca.org/Ambler](http://npca.org/Ambler) for the latest on our litigation and advocacy strategies to prevent caribou and other wildlife from being put on a road to ruin.*



# President's Perspective

It is with such pride and gratitude that I share with you that together we have achieved **the largest park victory in decades**. Congress passed, and the president has signed into law, the Great American Outdoors Act. This legislation represents an historic victory for parks and will authorize billions of dollars to fund critical maintenance projects and conserve vulnerable lands, while also fully finding the Land and Water Conservation Fund. The bipartisan support of the Great American Outdoors Act is the culmination of two decades of work, thousands of emails and phone calls, hundreds of trips to Capitol Hill offices and a shared love for America's heritage.

In addition to addressing some of the highest priority park repairs needed across the system, from bridges and visitor centers to water systems and trails, this bill will generate 100,000 infrastructure-related jobs.

A victory like this wouldn't have happened without all of your work and support. Indeed, it takes all of us — advocates, business owners, financial supporters, lawmakers and *Trustees for the Parks* like you — coming together to achieve this kind of incredible victory for our parks and all who visit them.

And while we celebrate this victory, we know our work together is far from finished. Even in the midst

of a global pandemic, the administration continues to advance policies that undermine and attack the laws that protect our public lands and the irreplaceable resources they protect.

As you will read in our cover story, the state of Alaska is pushing forward with permitting for a private industrial mining access road through Gates of the Arctic National Preserve in Alaska, and the administration is paving the way. This is just one important example of why we need you at our side, now more than ever, to pressure the administration and Congress to put a stop to these attacks on our beloved public lands and national parks.

As a *Trustee for the Parks*, your leadership in our work makes me confident that together we will continue to be successful in defending our national parks and leaving a lasting legacy for generations to come.

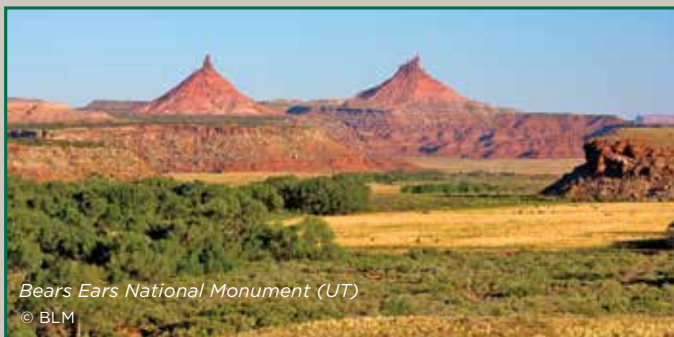
With gratitude,



Theresa Pierno  
President & CEO



## JOIN US FOR PARK TALKS



Bears Ears National Monument (UT)  
© BLM



Isle Royale National Park (MI)  
© NPS/Kaitlyn Knick

NPCA is proud to bring you a collection of virtual Park Talks. These live presentations provide an opportunity to hear from NPCA staff, park experts and partners about some of the park stories, victories, and threats we most want to share.

Past Park Talks have included:

- **Let It Not Happen Again: Lessons from the Japanese American Exclusion**
- **Bears Ears to Hovenweep: Conserving a Connected Cultural Landscape**
- **Searching for the Ghost Bear in the North Cascades**
- **Moosewatch Expedition: Stories from Isle Royale**
- **Julius Rosenwald: The Most Important Donor You've Never Heard Of**

You can find upcoming Park Talks and recordings of previous talks on our website at [www.npca.org/parktalks](http://www.npca.org/parktalks)



# GREAT VICTORY FOR NATIONAL PARKS

**A**t a time when politicians in Washington, DC seem unable to agree on much, NPCA members and activists have bridged partisan divides to score a huge win for America's national parks. Passage of the Great American Outdoors Act, supported by bipartisan majorities in both houses of Congress, provides long-overdue investments in our parks and full funding of the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LCWF).

National parks are facing nearly \$12 billion in backlogged repairs. Neglected needs include trail maintenance, visitor center repairs and replacing old and unsafe electrical wiring. As noted by NPCA Senior Vice President of Government Affairs, Kristen Brengel, "From Yellowstone to the Grand Canyon, our national parks have crumbling roads, trails and water systems that are in desperate need of repair. Fixing national parks will put thousands of people to work in every state and spur our nation's economic recovery."

Completely eliminating the backlog will take years because it took years of inadequate funding to build up. But the Great American Outdoors Act represents a strong first

step towards ensuring safe and enjoyable park experiences for all visitors.

We are also celebrating a provision of the new law which achieves another NPCA priority goal — securing long term funding for the Land and Water Conservation Fund.

LWCF is one of America's most important conservation programs as it is responsible for protecting parks, wildlife refuges and recreation areas at the federal, state and local levels. For 50 years, it has used a portion of revenue from offshore oil and gas royalty payments to fund land and water conservation projects, recreational construction and historic preservation of our nation's iconic landmarks from coast-to-coast. Without requiring any taxpayer dollars, LWCF contributes more than \$778 billion annually to the U.S. economy and supports more than 5 million jobs.

All NPCA members who pressed Congress and the White House and utilized social media to build momentum for the Great American Outdoors Act can take pride in this amazing victory, and take comfort in knowing the future of America's national parks is considerably brighter.

# PRESERVING HISPANIC-AMERICAN HISTORY

**A**s part of NPCA's ongoing effort to ensure national parks tell the full story of America and are places to which all Americans feel connected, our Texas staff is working with local partners to support establishment of a new park site in Marfa, Texas. Marfa, located approximately 60 miles from the U.S.-Mexico border, is home to one of the few remaining 20th century schools built to segregate Hispanic students from Anglo students — the Blackwell School.

Unlike mandated segregation of African American school children, Hispanic children were relegated to separate and unequal schools as a *de facto* matter perpetuated by school district policies across Texas. Consequently, the Supreme Court's 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* ruling did not prohibit segregation of Hispanic students. Mexican and Mexican-American children attended the Blackwell School until 1965, when the Marfa Independent School District

finally built a new elementary school open to all students in the community.

The Blackwell School is now included in the National Register of Historic Places, an important but not necessarily determinant step toward national park status, thanks to the collaborative efforts of NPCA and our partners which include the Blackwell School Alliance.

The application for National Register inclusion notes a particularly disturbing story of 7th grade Blackwell students being compelled to write "I will not speak Spanish" on pieces of paper and bury them on school grounds as a way to diminish students' connection to their language and heritage.

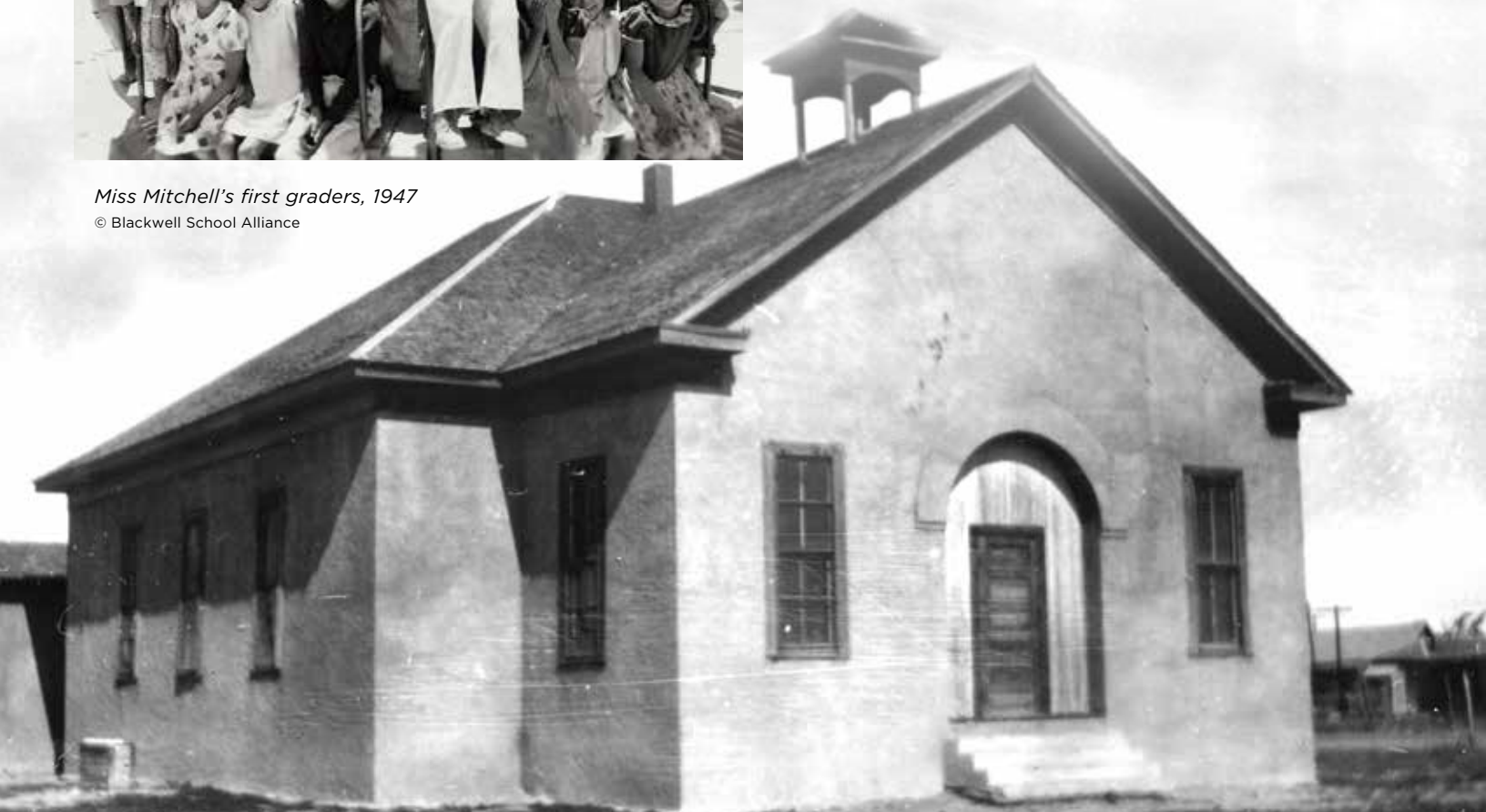
Such chapters in American history do not inspire pride, but they are instructive and warrant being told to better understand discrimination faced and overcome by minorities as well as challenges that persist to this day.

We hope to secure congressional designation of the Blackwell School as a park site before the end of this year. Similar initiatives in the past, however, have proven that progress does not always happen as quickly as we would like. But in the same way that our nation's story continues to unfold, NPCA intends to persist until national parks accurately reflect our shared past and inform a more inclusive future.



*Miss Mitchell's first graders, 1947*

© Blackwell School Alliance



*Earliest known photo of the Blackwell School, Marfa TX*

© Blackwell School Alliance

# TRUSTEE SPOTLIGHT: DAVE KIRKWOOD

**D**ave Kirkwood has been a life-long national parks enthusiast and a supporter of NPCA for nearly 30 years. After developing his love for the parks during family picnics in Harpers Ferry National Park as a child, Dave and his best friend Randy were inspired to go on a road trip during their 20's to see nearly every national park and monument in the American West. "It was an epic 7,000 plus mile, two-week journey I'll never forget," Dave says.

National parks are not just for the youth, however, because once you are hooked, you are hooked for life. To kick off his 60's, Dave set out to hike every trail in Shenandoah National Park — more than 500 miles in total. His accomplishment was not without challenges, "I got into a staring contest with a bobcat," Dave recounts. "I startled a black bear, who instantly charged me. 'DON'T RUN,' I told myself. Standing my ground worked, although I don't recommend the experience. But overall, the pilgrimage was immensely satisfying and gave me

an excuse to spend more time in one of my favorite national parks."

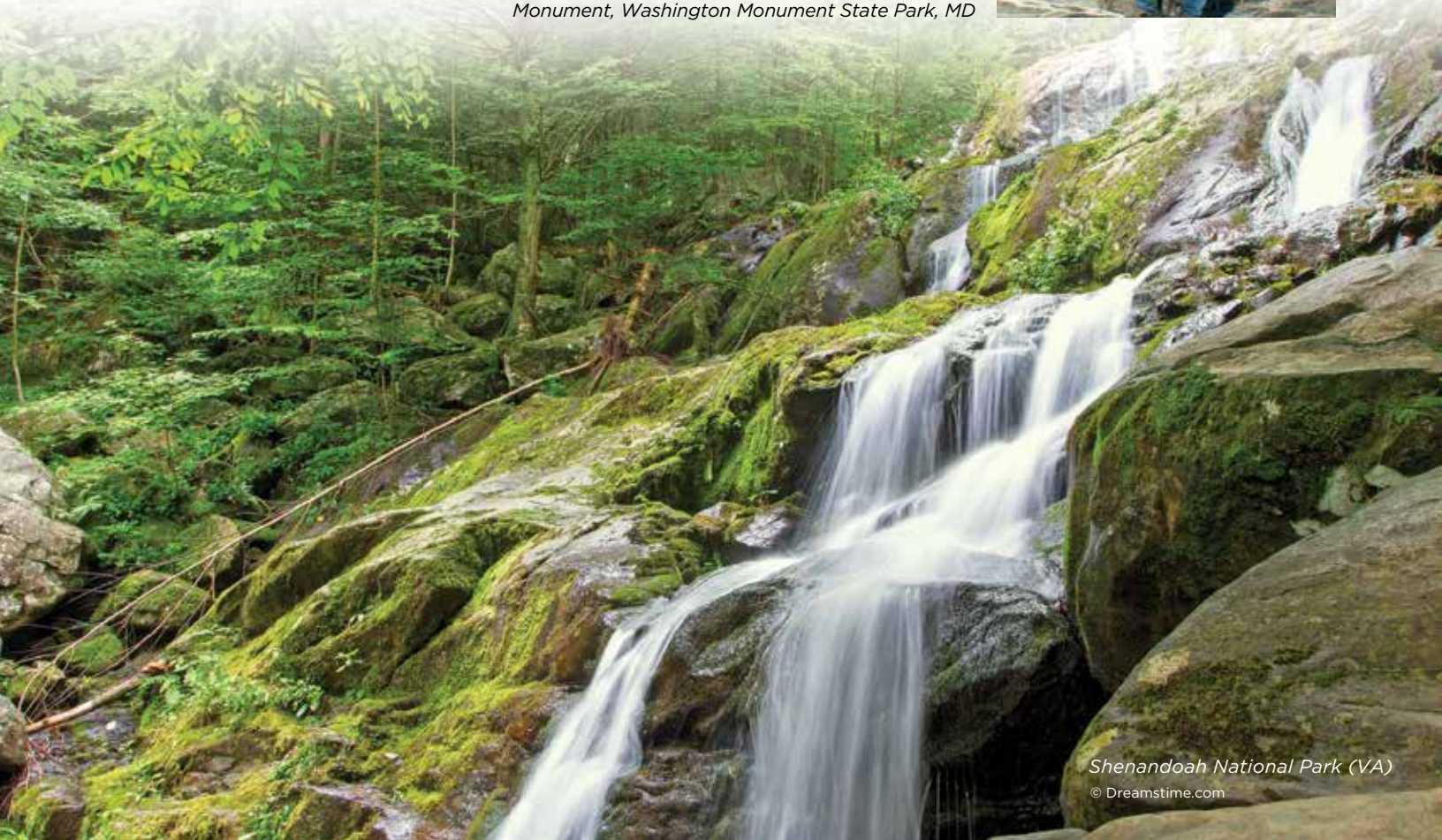
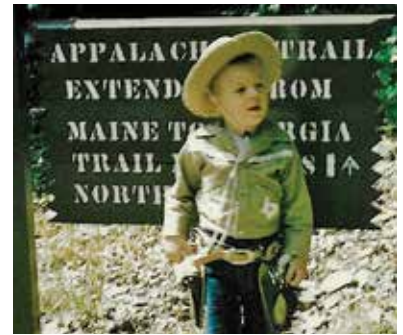
Reflecting on his many park trips, Dave says, "National parks are always there for us, our anchor, a place to revisit our lives. We need to make sure they stay that way, unchanged, for generations. Forever."

Because of Dave's park adventures, he decided to become a part of NPCA's Mather Legacy Society to ensure the parks will be protected long into the future. To learn more about how to leave a legacy gift to NPCA in your will or trust or by beneficiary designation on your life insurance or retirement account with a gift that costs you nothing today, visit [www.MyParkLegacy.org](http://www.MyParkLegacy.org) or contact West Honeycutt, Director of Planned Giving at (202) 809-2787 or [whoneycutt@npca.org](mailto:whoneycutt@npca.org).

*PHOTOS: (top) Kirkwood on the Appalachian Trail at Washington Monument State Park c.1958.*

*(middle) Kirkwood and friends at the Grand Canyon c.1977*

*(bottom) Kirkwood at the First Washington Monument, Washington Monument State Park, MD*





Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial (DC)

© NPS/Victoria Stauffenberg

## Your Corporate Partner Benefits!

As a member, you'll be eligible to receive special offers from our corporate partners — including, but not limited to: a discounted membership package with Sam's Club, up to 20% off hotel stays at Travelodge nationwide, free tours of Limestone Branch Distillery and rebates off of solar power installation with SunPower.

For more information about our current offers, please visit: [npca.org/corporatepartners](http://npca.org/corporatepartners).

We've updated our giving policy. Read more here: <https://www.npca.org/about/our-accountability>

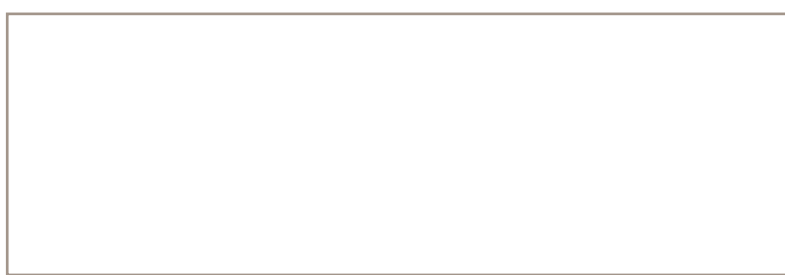


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# WELL-DESERVED RECOGNITION FOR A DESERT CHAMPION

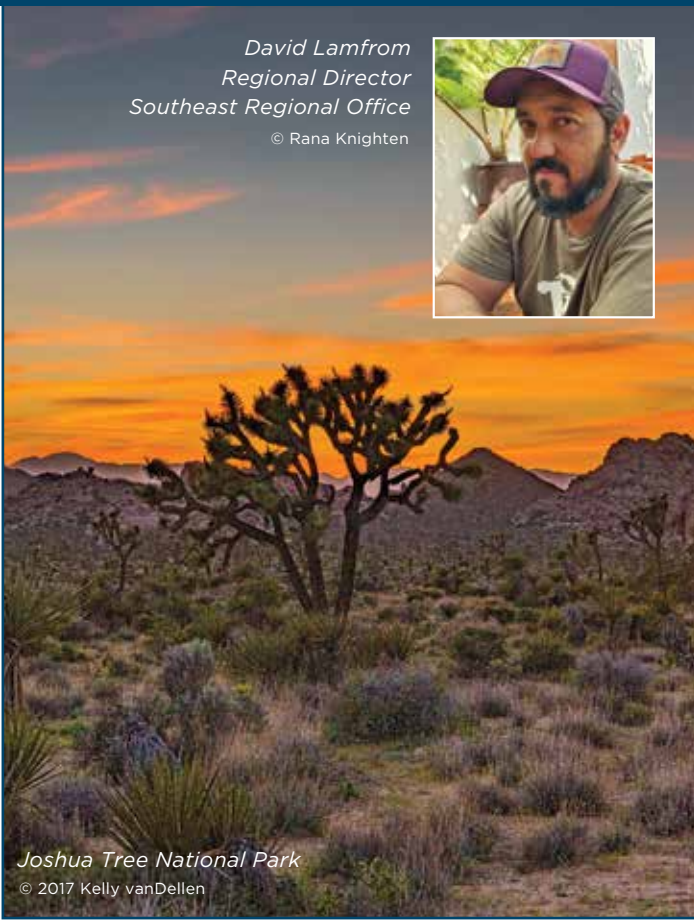
David Lamfrom  
Regional Director  
Southeast Regional Office  
© Rana Knighten



David Lamfrom is more comfortable working on behalf of communities and national parks than he is accepting applause. That is why he is humbled and so honored to have been named the recipient of the Joshua Tree National Park Association's 16th Annual Minerva Hoyt California Desert Conservation Award. He is in inspiring company.

David has served in a variety of roles during his 12 years with NPCA. He is currently our Southeast Regional Director. But for the great majority of his career he worked on behalf of the California Desert and its wildlife, including efforts to preserve 4 million acres of public lands in the American Southwest. Helping to establish Castle Mountains, Mojave Trails and Sand to Snow National Monuments is a big part of why the Joshua Tree National Park Association recognized him as such a dedicated and effective desert champion.

The association's Executive Director, Jacqueline Guevara, says David's years of conservation research and activism make him, "the perfect awardee." We couldn't agree more! It is great to have David as part of the NPCA family, and to see him receiving well-deserved recognition from the larger conservation community and from desert communities he cares about and respects so much.



Joshua Tree National Park  
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