

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

January 1991

As Honorary Chairman for the 75th Anniversary of the National Park Service, I am delighted to join in celebrating three-quarters of a century of caring for our nation's scenic and historic treasures.

Like snapshots in a family album, our national parks tell the story of America -- its wondrous places, momentous events, and unforgettable people. The National Park System includes our most beloved and stirring sites -- Yellowstone, the Grand Canyon, Independence Hall, the Lincoln Memorial, and our welcoming Statue of Liberty.

For Americans and international visitors alike, our national parks offer splendid opportunities to explore this country's great beauty and to learn the rich lessons of our past. Parks exist for us to enjoy and to cherish -- now and for generations to come.

On this special anniversary, we owe a debt of thanks to the workers and volunteers who watch over our national estate and who share their knowledge and enthusiasm with millions of visitors every year.

At its outset the concept of a national park system was unique to our young country. Today we can take pride in knowing that this innovative idea -- this ethic of conservation -- has spread throughout the world. Happy anniversary to the National Park Service and to all of us who share in the infinite pleasures of America's national parks.

Barbara Bush

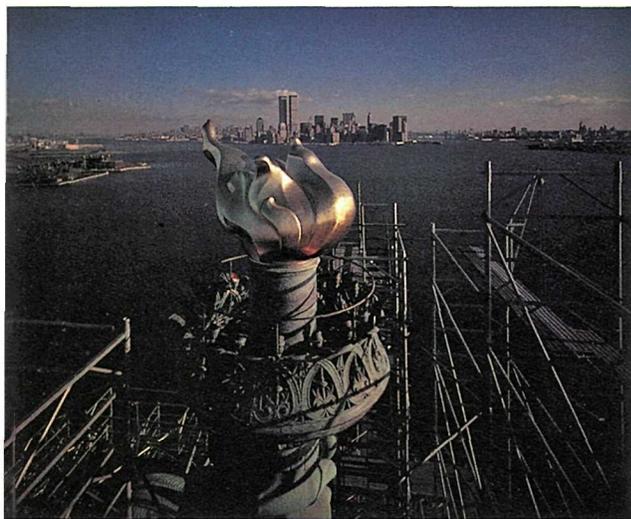


Cover: Center Peak and Mt. Stanford, Kings Canyon National Park, California. CARR CLIFTON PHOTOGRAPH. Above: Through an illumined mist, Rainbow Falls cascades down the middle fork of the San Joaquin River, Devils Postpile National Monument, California. CARR CLIFTON PHOTOGRAPH.

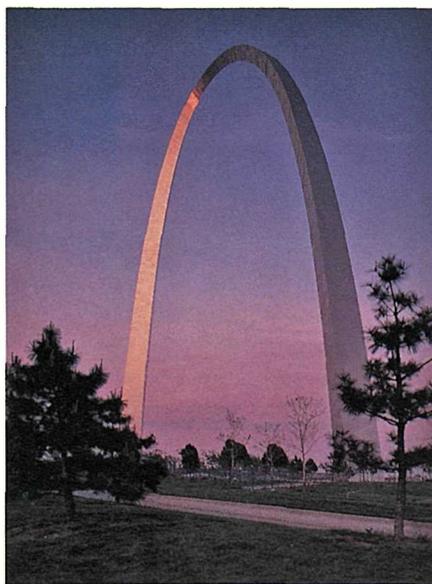
Our lives as Americans are enriched by a wealth of natural wonders. Inspiring us, uplifting our spirits, they serve as powerful reminders of our national origins and destiny.

Seventy-five years ago the National Park Service was entrusted with the stewardship of the very best of this vast legacy. Today's Park Service fills many other roles as well: guardian of our diverse cultural and recreational resources; environmental advocate; world leader in the parks and preservation movements; and pioneer in the drive to protect America's open spaces.

This publication tells the story of the National Park Service—its mission, history, and efforts to safeguard our national treasures.



The entire spectrum of our irreplaceable resources—from unique scenery to stirring cultural landmarks—falls under the protection of the National Park Service. Top: Stand of cypress in Big Cypress National Preserve, Florida. CARR CLIFTON PHOTOGRAPH. Above: Torch with newly gold-leafed flame, Statue of Liberty National Monument, New York. NATIONAL PARK SERVICE PHOTOGRAPH.



The sun highlights Jefferson National Expansion Memorial Arch, St. Louis. NATIONAL PARK SERVICE PHOTOGRAPH. Opposite: View from Mather Point, South Rim, Grand Canyon National Park, Arizona. WILLARD CLAY PHOTOGRAPH.

The National Park Service is still guided by its founding mission, as expressed by Congress in 1916: to conserve park resources—"the scenery and the natural and historic objects and the wild life therein"—and to provide for their use by the public so as to leave them "unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations."

Over time this original mission was extended as the Park Service assumed responsibilities for other aspects of our national heritage. The Park Service's presence at Yellowstone, the Grand Canyon, and other great scenic parks is a time-honored tradition; but it also manages the Statue of Liberty, Independence Hall, and the battlefield at Gettysburg. In addition, cultural artifacts as diverse as ancient pottery, sailing vessels, Colonial-period clothing, and Civil War historic documents are all preserved under Park Service auspices.

To better understand our environment the Park Service monitors ecosystems, ranging from arctic tundra to coral atolls, conducts research on air and water quality, and participates in global studies of acid rain, climate change, and biological diversity.

Across the nation programs are currently underway to create systems of greenways, trails, scenic rivers, and other protected areas to enhance the quality of community life. The modern Park Service is at the forefront of these efforts, working with states and individual communities to plan recreation areas and heritage preservation projects.

Theodore Roosevelt said that nothing short of defending this country in wartime "compares in importance with the great central task of leaving this land even a better land for our descendants than it is for us...." The mission of the National Park Service, both past and present, is the embodiment of this ideal.





Above: The CCC's first camp at Death Valley National Monument, 1933. During the 1930s, the Civilian Conservation Corps aided the growing National Park System. Right: Stephen Mather, first director of the Park Service (right), at Yosemite with Interior Secretary Franklin K. Lane, who encouraged Mather to work toward the creation of a national parks bureau. NATIONAL PARK SERVICE PHOTOGRAPHS.



The national park idea first attracted attention in the second half of the nineteenth century, when America's receding wilderness left our unique natural resources vulnerable to misuse and exploitation. The Yellowstone National Park Act of 1872 set aside the world's first national park and paved the way for federal protection of exceptional lands for public use.

As the number of early parks increased, many recognized the need for their collective management. The cause was taken up by Stephen Mather, a

wealthy businessman and vigorous outdoorsman. Following his promotional efforts, the National Park Service was created by an act of Congress, signed by President Woodrow Wilson on August 25, 1916. This "organic act" united 36 national parks and monuments under Park Service direction as the National Park System. Mather was appointed as the Service's first director.

From its beginnings the National Park Service has been characterized by strong leadership and growth. The original parks were located only in the

western states. But in 1933, by executive order of Franklin D. Roosevelt, the Park Service acquired the War Department's national military parks and monuments, the Forest Service's national monuments, and the national capital parks—a total of 44 historical areas and 12 natural areas. These additions brought about a truly national system, east and west; and the National Park Service became the primary federal agency charged with preserving our natural and historic resources.

During the Great Depression the Park Service supervised some 600 Civilian Conservation Corps camps in national and state parks on far-reaching conservation, rehabilitation, and construction projects. World War II curbed park development and use, but the postwar years saw the national parks besieged by an admiring public. In response, President Dwight D. Eisenhower supported "Mission 66," a major program to upgrade park facilities, staffing, and resource management in time for the Service's 50th anniversary in 1966.

Recent years have seen phenomenal growth in the National Park System—97 parks were created between 1973 and 1990 alone. These include many new *kinds* of parks, such as urban recreation areas, free-flowing rivers, long-distance trails, and historic sites honoring our nation's social achievements. The growth of the Park System is a direct result of the American public's desire to preserve our environment and our history—the very best and most significant treasures of the nation.



Theodore Roosevelt Arch at the entrance to Yellowstone National Park, circa 1903. The first national park, Yellowstone set the precedent for federal protection of our natural resources. HAYNES FOUNDATION COLLECTION, MONTANA HISTORICAL SOCIETY PHOTOGRAPH.



Undisturbed National Park sites foster biological diversity of flora and fauna. Top: Paintbrush and lupine in spring splendor, Olympic National Park, Washington. NATIONAL PARK SERVICE PHOTOGRAPH. Above: White-furred Dall sheep, far northern relatives of the bighorn, thrive at Denali National Park, Alaska. DAN SUZIO PHOTOGRAPH.



The American artist Alan Gussow has defined the word “place” as “a piece of the environment . . . claimed by feelings.” The national parks are our collective “places,” the symbols of our experience as a people.

The National Park System covers more than 80 million acres and encompasses 357 different park areas. National park lands range in size from the 13-million-acre Wrangell–St. Elias National Park and Preserve in Alaska to the Thaddeus Kosciuszko National Memorial, a Philadelphia row house commemorating a hero of the American Revolution.

Total facilities of the national parks include some 8,000 miles of roads, 16,000 buildings, and 26 million objects and cultural artifacts—among them, John Wilkes Booth’s derringer, Carl Sandburg’s typewriter, and the surrender cannons from the battles of Saratoga and Yorktown. The national parks tally more than 265 million visits per year and offer a full range of services for visitors’ needs and safety.

The Park Service preserves much of our Civil War heritage. Cannons mark Grant’s Last Line at Shiloh National Military Park, Tennessee. DAVID MUENCH PHOTOGRAPH. Right: Tranquil beauty along the Little River near Tremont, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, Tennessee—our most visited national park. Such areas restore and renew a sense of place for millions of visitors each year. WILLARD CLAY PHOTOGRAPH.





Top: Locating a name at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, Washington, DC—one of the most significant contemporary sites administered by the Park Service.

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE PHOTOGRAPH. Right: Surf at sunrise, Assateague Island National Seashore, Maryland. Shoreline studies begun by the Park Service in the 1950s led to the creation of numerous seashore, lakeshore, river, and reservoir-related park areas. CARR CLIFTON PHOTOGRAPH.



Ecological concerns have become increasingly important. In the past, parks concentrated on preserving scenery—towering forests, majestic mountains, and spectacular flora and fauna. Now the focus is shifting to the vitality and diversity of each park's total ecosystem—including the protection of unique or endangered plant and animal species.

Our national parks are critical to the planet as a whole. A National Academy of Sciences study in the early 1960s described them as "biological banks." As commercial, industrial, and residential development impacts the landscape, parks often represent the least disturbed sites in the country—places where we can maintain biological diversity and study how natural processes change when the larger ecosystems on which they depend are altered. The parks function as our "canary in the coal mine," alerting us to the serious effects of pollution and leading us to take effective action.

The cultural and historic sites that are protected by the National Park System connect us with the spirit of our past. They form a national family tree, celebrating our triumphs and tragedies. Such locales as Bandelier National Monument give insight into the history of native Americans. Some sites spotlight the legacy of our great writers, inventors, and national humanitarians, such as Eugene O'Neill, the Wright brothers, and Clara Barton. Those commemorating Frederick Douglass and Martin Luther King, Jr., pay tribute to the civil rights movement.



Left: Costumed interpreters pay lively tribute to the civil rights movement at the Frederick Douglass National Historic Site, Washington, DC.

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE PHOTOGRAPH. Bottom: Early morning light is its own reward along the Firehole River, Yellowstone National Park, Wyoming. CARR CLIFTON PHOTOGRAPH.



A JOINING OF EFFORTS



Top: Historic preservation at work: Park Service employees repair Mary Todd Lincoln's cook stove at the Lincoln Home National Historic Site, Springfield, Illinois. Above: Public education is a primary goal of the Park Service. Visitors gather for an interpretive talk at Pictured Rocks National Lakeshore, Michigan. NATIONAL PARK SERVICE PHOTOGRAPHS.



An open-air performance at Wolf Trap Farm Park's Filene Center, Fairfax County, Virginia. Wolf Trap, donated to the U.S. in 1966, inaugurated the Park Service's participation in the performing arts. NATIONAL PARK SERVICE PHOTOGRAPH.





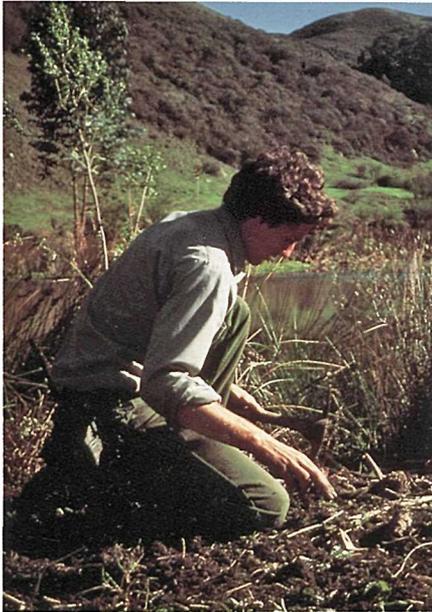
A sophisticated work force and exceptional programs are the hallmarks of today's National Park Service. The Service employs more than 13,000 permanent and 5,000 seasonal people working in every area of recreation and heritage management.

While they are still custodians of the nation's greatest scenic wonders, park professionals now perform an array of tasks far different from those of the first Park Service employees. They must be scientists, teachers, and providers of complex planning and technical assistance to local, state, and international communities. They are uniformed rangers, and also historians, biologists, naturalists, landscape architects, cultural anthropologists, archaeologists, engineers, carpenters, road and trail crews, writers and editors, planners, curators, exhibit designers, administrators and clerical workers. They are a team with diverse backgrounds and special skills, working together to meet the present-day challenges of park management.

The national parks have been called branch campuses of the largest university in the world. Here educational programs explain biological diversity, the importance of clean air and water, and how ecosystems work. Around campfires, along trails, and on the fields where great battles were once fought, visitors to the parks hear the stories of America's



Far left: Providing visitor assistance is an important duty of park rangers—highly skilled personnel trained in law enforcement, search and rescue, and resources management. Left: At Jamestown an interpretive tour explores our rich cultural heritage. Colonial National Historical Park, Virginia. NATIONAL PARK SERVICE PHOTOGRAPHS.

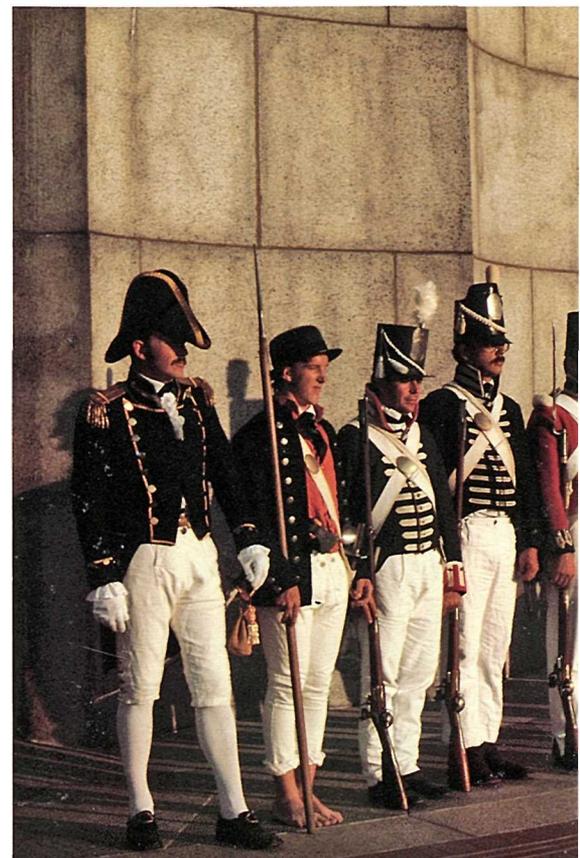
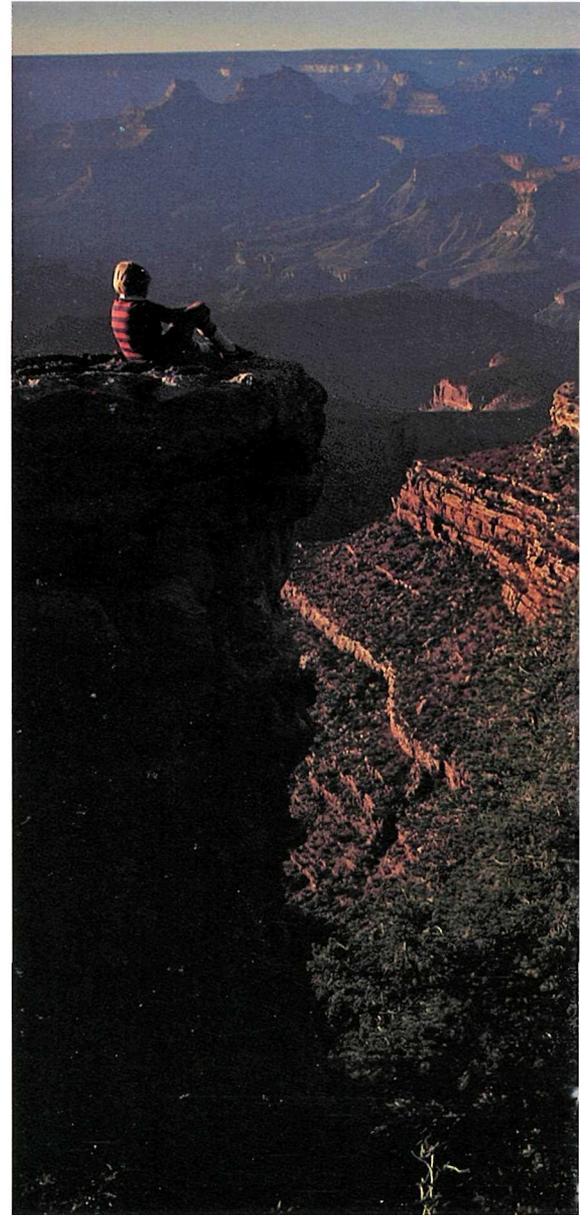


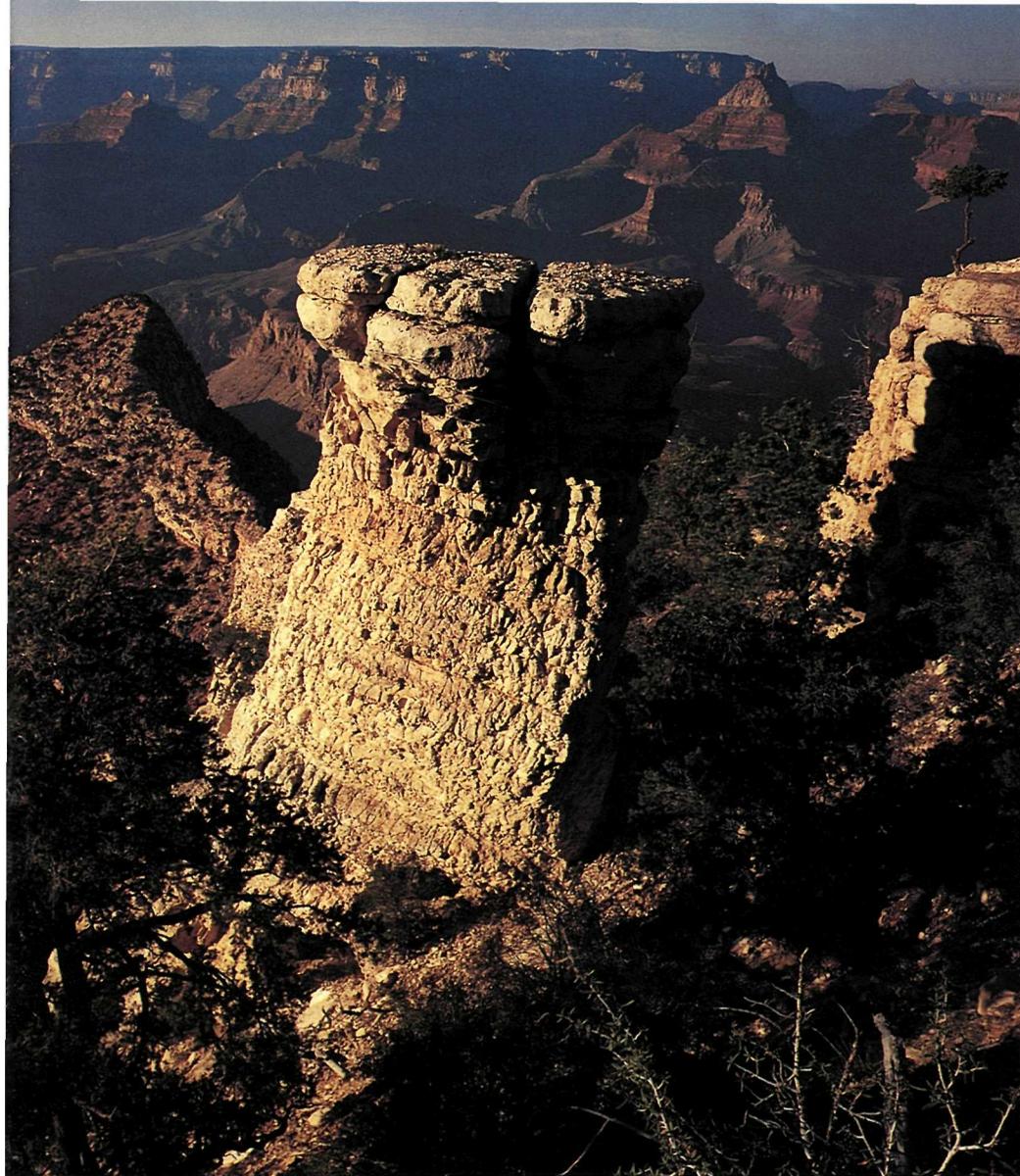
The Park Service maintains the integrity of local ecosystems. This employee is removing South African Capeweed, an invasive exotic plant, at Backdoor Pond, Golden Gate National Recreation Area, Marin County, California. NATIONAL PARK SERVICE PHOTOGRAPH.

natural and cultural history. They take away a better understanding of their own role and their own responsibilities for preserving these national treasures.

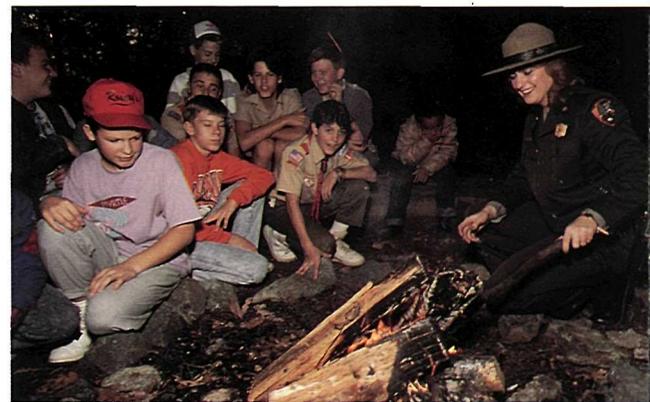
The complexity of protecting the nation's heritage encourages increased cooperation among local, state, and national groups. The National Park Service is reaching out to communities through programs, such as the Land and Water Conservation Fund, a matching grant program to localities and states, and the Rivers and Trails Program, to help communities create parks and develop recreation facilities. Historic preservation services are offered through programs including the National Register of Historic Places, the National Landmarks Program, the Historic American Building Survey, and the Historic American Engineering Record.

On the international scene the Service works with other nations to establish, plan, and protect heritage properties. National parks in Poland, the Caribbean, Thailand, Saudi Arabia, Australia, and India have been developed with Park Service assistance. Of major significance is a joint effort with the Soviet Union to develop a Beringian heritage park bridging Siberia and Alaska.





Above: The Park Service monitors air quality to protect our dramatic vistas, such as this one at Grandview Point, Grand Canyon, Arizona. DAVID MUENCH PHOTOGRAPH. Left: In a living history presentation, colonial soldiers parade at Perry's Victory and International Peace Memorial, Ohio. NATIONAL PARK SERVICE PHOTOGRAPH.



Top: An archaeology dig investigates Anasazi Indian ruins at Alamo Canyon, Bandelier National Monument, New Mexico. Above: Campfire circle at Greenbelt Park, an urban park in Maryland. The Park Service works with local communities to create a national system of parks and greenways. NATIONAL PARK SERVICE PHOTOGRAPHS.



Over the past 75 years the National Park Service has applied the values in its original mission statement to an ever-growing field of exploration and endeavor.

Biological challenges in existing parks have compelled the Park Service to take on expanded stewardship roles. Cooperation at all levels of government and with the private sector is necessary as park ecosystems are impacted by activities outside park boundaries. Some of the forces that influence our parks are global in scope, and the Park Service is being called upon to participate in worldwide research and to spread the conservation ethic at an international level.

The success of many local programs has demonstrated that cultural preservation stimulates community growth, and the Park Service now urges communities to place it high on their list of priorities. Local action to preserve valuable historic sites and cultural artifacts is strongly supported and encouraged.

Looking toward the future, the Park Service is advocating partnership efforts to preserve the American landscape. It is the leading voice for the idea of a national

system of parks—not just the “crown jewels” of the National Park System, but an extensive, interconnected network of protected public and private lands. This national system could link open areas already existing as national, state, and local parks with grasslands, forests, lakes, and reservoirs, providing to all Americans pathways that give access to the natural world close to home.

In all this activity there is evidence of a new understanding throughout America that the presence of parks maintains the life and vision of our communities. Parks reflect the desire we all have for greater connectedness with our surroundings. Our quality of life—our very health and well-being—depend in the most basic way on the accessibility of open space and recreation opportunities and on the preservation of landmarks that illustrate our historical continuity. By protecting these resources, we ensure a more complete understanding of the forces that shape our lives and our future.



Top left: Plant research in the city: tending a greenhouse at the Center for Urban Ecology, Washington, DC. NATIONAL PARK SERVICE PHOTOGRAPH. Above: The issues affecting our national parks are global in scope—and the Park Service is a world leader in environmental preservation. NASA PHOTOGRAPH. Opposite: Moose feeding on beaver pond, Grand Teton National Park, Wyoming. DAVID MUENCH PHOTOGRAPH.





The National Park Service has a mission for all time: to conserve America's most beloved natural, cultural, and recreational resources. The scenic facades of our national parks are still beautiful; but today's environmental threats have the power to undermine this beauty forever. And communities throughout the world need assistance to maintain their unique contributions to the whole. The National Park Service speaks for all these concerns, offering the skills, the experience, and the vision to safeguard these resources as a timeless trust "unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations."

Spiderworts and mustards brighten the forest floor, Shenandoah National Park, Virginia.
WILLARD CLAY PHOTOGRAPH
Back cover: Sunset storm clouds over Delicate Arch, Arches National Park, Utah. WILLIAM NEILL PHOTOGRAPH.

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NATIONAL PARK SERVICE



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