

Briefing Statement

Bureau: National Park Service
Issue: Climate Friendly Parks: Managing in the Face of Change
Office: National Park Service, Air Resources Division
Date: November 2, 2004

Background: Effects of climate change are being noted in many regions. Glaciers are melting, weather patterns are becoming more unpredictable, sea levels are rising, and animals and plants are moving into regions they never existed before because of changing habitats. The National Parks, because of their location and unique, protected resources, are places where the effects of these changes are particularly noticeable. With the establishment of the National Park System in 1916, responsibility was given to the NPS to preserve and protect resources for the enjoyment of future generations. Maintaining these resources requires practicing good stewardship within parks and on regional and global scales. The NPS should be a leader in demonstrating sustainable stewardship practices within parks and educating the public about them in all park areas.

The NPS is not alone in this idea. Several Executive Orders direct federal agencies to operate more efficiently and waste less. Examples include: EO 13101, Greening the Government Through Waste Prevention, Recycling, and Federal Acquisition; EO 13123, Greening Government Through Efficient Energy Management; EO 13148, Greening the Government Through Leadership in Environmental Management; and EO 13149, Greening the Government Through Federal Fleet and Transportation Efficiency. Not only will these directives make government operations "greener," implementing them will allow us to use less fuel, produce less waste that needs cleaning up, and get us closer to being an energy-independent nation.

Proposal:

In 2002, President Bush has established a goal of reducing the nation's greenhouse gas intensity of the U S economy by 18 percent by the year 2012. For the NPS to participate in achieving this voluntary goal, and to show the lay public how to reduce greenhouse gas (ghg) emissions, every park needs a baseline inventory of their own ghg emissions. A baseline assessment could help NPS to determine what ghg emissions and global warming mean for the NPS as a whole. The assessment could then be used for setting management goals, prioritizing activities, and demonstrating how to reduce emissions on a park-by-park basis, as well as servicewide.

Using the baseline assessment, the Climate Friendly Parks program will add the climate change/energy efficiency aspect to the Green Parks Partnership Program, which already collaborates with EPA's OPPTS in Green Purchasing. The Climate Friendly Parks Program will provide a means to bring to the public eye a voluntary, intergovernmental effort to respond to climate change; the parks

will take mitigation and sustainability actions and then educate the public about what they are doing and how and why they are doing it.

Actions such as changing lights and heating/air conditioning mechanisms to energy efficient ones; reducing vehicle traffic in the parks wherever possible; recycling all recyclable waste; buying recycled and recyclable products; and taking eco-friendly measures along coastlines can save money that can be put toward preserving natural resources. The Park Service Visitor Centers and other interpretive sites are ideal places in which to add the project's most valuable component, educating the public about the science of global change and voluntary responses for those who ask what they can do to protect the environment.

The Climate Friendly Parks program would begin with an emissions inventory and a follow-up workshop. The planning workshop for the park and its partners will assess their specific climate change vulnerabilities, show them how to reduce greenhouse gas (ghg) emissions significantly, and how to educate the public about ghg mitigation, sustainability efforts and climate change research occurring in the parks. NPS and EPA then follow up on each park at one month, six month and one year intervals after the initial workshops to both support and monitor implementation of each park's action plan.

Current Status/Next Steps:

The National Park Service and EPA have begun a collaborative pilot project in response to the President's February 2002 call for voluntary action on climate change. EPA has contributed approximately \$150,000 (\$75k per park) and NPS has contributed about \$15,000 and personnel time to two inventories and Climate Friendly Parks workshops (Gateway NRA and Glacier NP).

NPS obligated an additional \$10,000 in FY 04 to pay for an action plan-workshop report for a third pilot park (Zion NP). EPA will be contributing as before.

NPS has entered into an Interagency Agreement with EPA to cooperatively develop an emissions inventory tool that will calculate parks' criteria air pollutant emissions as well as their greenhouse gas emissions, and to clarify roles and responsibilities in future cooperation. EPA and NPS expect to share the costs and activities in this program; annual NPS funding of approximately \$90,000 per year (emissions inventory money) is our contribution .

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