

NATIONAL PARKS (1981, R1991, R2000, R2001, R2007, R2016)



Policy Statement

The American Society of Landscape Architects believes that National Parks are critical ecological reserves of biological diversity and serve as touchstones of our cultural and historical heritage. As scenic landscape, National Parks provide for restoration of mind and body, uniquely serve as models of environmental quality, and preserve a significant natural and cultural heritage. These sites provide environmental baselines and serve as indicators and laboratories for scientific inquiry, in addition to providing serve as environmental barometers and laboratories for scientific inquiry, in addition to providing educational opportunities that contribute to an environmentally literate population. The National Park System¹ is a source of national pride and identity. Management of the National Park System and its expansion are critical to the well-being of the nation.

Rationale

National parks had their origin when Yellowstone National Park was authorized by the Congress in 1872. By this action, the people of the United States established the idea of setting aside national and cultural areas of national significance for the benefit of future generations which "...preserve unimpaired the natural and cultural resources and values of the national park system for the enjoyment, education, and inspiration of this and future generations." The concept grew into the National Park System.

Population pressures are increasing and threatening a wide range of park resources. Air and water pollutants originating outside national parks are fouling park environments and intrusions of invasive plant species threaten native plant communities. The greatest threats to national parks are external, requiring that park authorities to implement external public relations efforts, conservation education, and regional planning programs. Merely setting aside large areas as national parks is not sufficient to protect these resources and efforts should be made to buffer our park areas from potential degradation. Where feasible, national parks should encompass viable ecosystems, complete and intact, watersheds and areas that fully protect the values of the resources they contain.

The National Park System should be managed so as to protect their resources in perpetuity. Management should be based on the best scientific data, resource inventories, monitoring systems and research on these natural and cultural resources. Enhancing and expanding National Park System assets and visitor experiences should be encouraged through acquisition and partnerships with local governments and private institutions.

National parks should be comprehensively planned using multi-disciplinary teams, an ecosystems based approach grounded in sustainability, user involvement and assessment of resource suitability and limitations. Visitor and management facilities should support resource values and be in character with their landscape and regional setting, and should be of the highest quality design, construction and maintenance standards. Carrying capacities should be established, with restrictions on visitation where

¹ The National Park System is constituted of numerous sites that have designations as National Parks, National Monuments, National Preserves, National Historic Sites, National Historical Parks, National Memorials, National Battlefields, National Cemeteries, National Recreation Areas, National Seashores, National Lakeshores, National Rivers, National Parkways, National Trails, and other affiliated areas.

needed, in order to preserve resources and to provide for quality visitor experiences. Alternative transportation systems, which replace private vehicles in the parks and lessen the resource damage caused by excessive traffic and facilities to accommodate that traffic, should be implemented.

