



September 23, 2015

United States Senate and House
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator/Representative:

On behalf of our over one million members and supporters, the National Parks Conservation Association (NPCA) urges you to work towards swift passage of a Fiscal Year 2016 temporary funding measure to avert a shutdown and then negotiate a full-year funding bill and a broader budget deal that replaces the damaging sequester and restores funding for national parks after five years of poor funding.

A government shutdown only brings into focus the families, communities, businesses and dedicated park rangers who struggle while our national treasures are shuttered. As you know, the 2013 government shutdown turned away almost eight million visitors, costing local communities nearly a half billion dollars in lost revenue. Today the shutdown would once again be a sad chapter in the struggle to adequately fund our nation's needs, including America's national parks. NPCA estimates that should a shutdown occur this October, more than 770,000 visitors would be turned away per day and more than \$42 million could be lost daily in visitor spending.

Keeping our nation's treasures open for business is critical, but insufficient when they are already struggling to meet visitor expectations and protect resources as they prepare for throngs of visitors in their 2016 centennial year.

Right now, the national parks are already threatened by more than a 7% cut to the budget to operate the parks over the last five years, in today's dollars. That has led to fewer rangers to protect parks and greet the public who comes to enjoy them and spend their tourism dollars in nearby communities. Roads, trails, visitor centers and other infrastructure elements are also crumbling, with a maintenance backlog that has grown to \$11.5 billion due to a significant decline in construction funding and insufficient investments in the transportation funding bill.

Rather than threatening another damaging shutdown, Congress should be preparing for the influx of visitors expected during the national parks' 2016 centennial year by pursuing a deal that can allow for needed restoration of funding for national parks.

We urge swift passage of a bipartisan continuing resolution clean of environmentally damaging policy riders, followed by a committed bipartisan effort to enact a budget deal that replaces the sequester and allows for the needed restoration of funding for the National Park Service in Fiscal Year 2016.

Thank you for your consideration. We look forward to celebrating the National Park System's 100th anniversary with you this year.

Sincerely,

Clark Bunting
President
National Parks Conservation Association